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# Council Meeting Agenda

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27 May 2024 at 5.00pm



Upper Hunter Shire Councillors - 2004 to 2024  
In recognition of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Amalgamation



Corporate Services

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**FINANCE REPORTS**

**F.05.1 LONG TERM FINANCIAL PLAN - PUBLIC EXHIBITION**

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:** Greg McDonald - General Manager

**AUTHOR:** Wayne Phelps - Manager Finance

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**PURPOSE**

Council is required to endorse the draft Long Term Financial Plan before being placed on public exhibition for a minimum of 28 days. Council will then consider submissions made by the community prior to adopting the final version at its July 2024 meeting.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council:

1. endorse the draft Long Term Financial Plan 2024/2025 to 2033/2034 and place the document on exhibition for a period of not less than 28 days, commencing on Monday, 3 June 2024 and closing on Friday, 5 July 2024;
2. undertake community consultation for the draft Long Term Financial Plan 2024/2025 to 2033/2034; and
3. receive a report back to Council on the outcome of any submissions made during the Community consultation with consideration given to these submissions prior to adopting the final Long Term Financial Plan 2024/2025 to 2033/20234.

**BACKGROUND**

The Long term financial plan must be reviewed in detail as part of the 4 yearly review of the Community Strategic Plan. Normally this would be undertaken with the commencement of a new Council, however with the consideration of a Special Rate Variation (SRV), the LTFP is being prepared in advance to demonstrate the impacts on Council's finances with and without the SRV in place.

**REPORT/PROPOSAL**

The draft Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP) 2024/2025 to 2033/2034 is formulated using the Delivery Program & Operational Plan as its cornerstone for future operational revenue and expenditure and the asset management plans forming the basis for capital expenditure assumptions.

The LTFP is the snapshot of the future financial progression and sustainability of Council and provides the ratios for the Office of Local Government's financial benchmarks over the next 10 years.

Assumptions used include multiplier calculations of future operational revenue and expenditure plus the proposed funding and delivery of the capital works program, which includes:

- Rate peg increases to general rates
- Possible Special Rate Variation (SRV) assumptions in future years commencing from the 2025/2026 financial year.
- Operating revenue and expenditure increased by consumer price indexes (CPI)

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- Assumed Government grants for operational purposes and capital grant funding associated with the proposed capital works program
- Employee Award % increases including Superannuation Guarantee Rises to the 12% ceiling.
- Any proposed borrowing at assumed market rates
- Proposed capital works programs depicted by the asset management plans and Council's affordability of the projects.

As Council has shown an intent at its January 2024 ordinary meeting to apply for a special rate variation commencing the 2025/2026 financial year the LTFP has been prepared on the basis of the potential options proposed for an SRV during the community consultation phase.

These option are as follows:

- No SRV with only rate peg increment to the general rate
- SRV of 7.5% over a 4 year period 2025/2026 to 2029/2030 with a permanent cumulative increase to the general rate of 33.55%
- SRV of 10.0% over a 3 year period 2025/2026 to 2028/2029 with a permanent cumulative increase to the general rate of 33.10%

It is noted that the future assumptions and projections are based on current assumptions with these projections requiring future revision and recalibration from actual performance which will be taken into account by Council through the review and adoption of its annual Delivery Program & Operational Plan prepared each year during the term of Council.

Documentation will be provided to Councillors under separate cover.

### **OPTIONS**

Either endorse as is or amend the draft Long Term Financial Plan 2022/2023 to 2031/2032 for the purpose of placing the document on public exhibition for a minimum of 28 days.

### **CONSULTATION**

The Long Term Financial Plan 2024/2025 to 2033/2034 will be placed on public exhibition between Tuesday, 3rd June 2024 and Friday, 5 July 2024.

The public will be able to make submissions during the exhibition period.

Council will consider these submissions before adopting the Long Term Financial Plan.

### **STRATEGIC LINKS**

#### **a. Community Strategic Plan 2032**

This report links to the Community Strategic Plan 2032 as follows:

#### **Responsible Governance**

Providing efficient and responsible governance in order to effectively serve the community.

- 5.1 Effectively and efficiently management the business of Council, while encouraging an open and participatory Council with an emphasis on transparency, community engagement, action and response.
- 5.3 Effective financial and asset management to ensure Council's long-term sustainability.

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### **b. Delivery Program**

- Reporting systems to ensure "Fit for the Future" benchmarks and any improvement program instigated are maintained for Council's financial sustainability
- Leadership that reviews Council operations and Council wide continuous service improvement

### **c. Other Plans**

- The Long Term Financial Plan will link directly to the IP&R Framework.
- Council has met its requirements to date consistent with the IP&R Framework and will revise required documents as needed through this process.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### **a. Policy and Procedural Implications**

Council has met its requirements to date consistent with the IP&R Framework.

### **b. Financial Implications**

The LTFP provides the basis for sound financial management into the next 10 years.

### **c. Legislative Implications**

Legislative responsibilities will be met consistent with the planning and reporting activities in accordance with the Local Government Act 1993 and the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005.

### **d. Risk Implications**

Minimise risks by meeting the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) framework.

### **e. Sustainability Implications**

The Long Term Financial Plan provide the working framework for Council's long term financial sustainability.

### **f. Other Implications**

Nil

## **CONCLUSION**

Council is required to endorse the draft Long Term Financial Plan so that they can be placed on public exhibition for at least 28 days.

Council will consider all submissions and possible amendments to the Long Term Financial Plan prior to adopting the final document at its July 2024 Ordinary Council meeting.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

There are no enclosures for this report

Corporate Services

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**F.05.2** ***SPECIAL RATE VARIATION - COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTION PLAN***

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:** Greg McDonald - General Manager

**AUTHOR:** Wayne Phelps - Manager Finance

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**PURPOSE**

To advise Council of the proposed Community Engagement Action Plan for the Special Rate Variation (SRV) consultation process.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council note the Community Engagement Action Plan to be utilised during the Community consultation for the potential Special Rate Variation.

**BACKGROUND**

As tabled in the report titled "Proposed Special Rate Variation" at its January 2024 ordinary Council meeting, Council adopted to notify IPART of its intent to apply for a Special Rate Variation from the 2025/2026 financial year.

**REPORT/PROPOSAL**

To assist Council during the Community consultation phase of the SRV it has engaged Morrison Low consultants to facilitate the process.

A Community Engagement Action Plan has been prepared outlining:

- Engagement Plans Context:
  - SRV project background
  - Engagement purpose and goals
  - Stakeholder analysis
- Approach:
  - Impact & complexity of engagement
  - Levels of engagement
  - Timeline
  - Mechanics
  - Roles and responsibilities during engagement
- Key Messaging
  - Frequently asked questions

The Community Consultation is proposed to commence on 3 June 2024 and close on 15 July 2024 at which time all submissions and survey results will be tabulated and included into a Community Engagement Report.

**OPTIONS**

1. Note the Community Engagement Action Plan
2. Propose any amendments to the tabled Community Engagement Action Plan



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### **CONSULTATION**

- Council will engage the community through a number of mechanisms:
  - Direct mail out via flyer in annual rate notice
  - Newspaper advertisements
  - E-Newsletters
  - Dedicated web-page
  - Possible video content
  - Social media channels
  - Face-to-face community forums
  - Existing community group meetings
  - Council's Community Advisory Committees (CACs)
  - Drop-in information booth (Pop-ups)
- Councillors
- General Manager
- Director Environment and Community Services
- Director Infrastructure Services
- Manager Finance

### **STRATEGIC LINKS**

#### **a. Community Strategic Plan 2032**

This report links to the Community Strategic Plan 2032 as follows:

#### **Responsible Governance**

Providing efficient and responsible governance in order to effectively serve the community.

- 5.1 Effectively and efficiently management the business of Council, while encouraging an open and participatory Council with an emphasis on transparency, community engagement, action and response.
- 5.3 Effective financial and asset management to ensure Council's long-term sustainability.

#### **b. Delivery Program**

- Leadership that reviews Council operations and Council wide continuous service improvement

#### **c. Other Plans**

Preparation of the draft Long Term Financial Plan 2024/2025 to 2033/2034.

### **IMPLICATIONS**

#### **a. Policy and Procedural Implications**

As part for the IPART recommendations for a SRV application the community is required to be consulted with the submissions from the consultation phase to be reviewed by Council prior to any application being lodged.

## Corporate Services

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### b. Financial Implications

Council has prepared its Long Term Financial Plan on the basis of:

- No SRV with only rate peg increment to the general rate
- SRV of 7.5% over a 4 year period 2025/2026 to 2029/2030 with a permanent cumulative increase to the general rate of 33.55%
- SRV of 10.0% over a 3 year period 2025/2026 to 2028/2029 with a permanent cumulative increase to the general rate of 33.10%

### c. Legislative Implications

Nil

### d. Risk Implications

If Council does not proceed with an application for the proposed SRV, services to the Community may be reduced in line with Council's financial ability to deliver the services.

### e. Sustainability Implications

Future financial sustainability of Council to continue to deliver service to the community at current levels will be determined by the proposed SRV options.

### f. Other Implications

Nil

## **CONCLUSION**

Council should note the Community Engagement Action Plan and the roles and responsibilities contained within.

The Community Engagement Action Plan provides the framework around the SRV consultation phase and will provide the community with informed information in order to understand the cumulative financial effect of the SRV on the general rate and be able to prepare a submission for consideration.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- [1↓](#) Upper Hunter SRV - Community Engagement Action Plan
- [2↓](#) Communications Campaign Fact Sheet



# Community Engagement Action Plan

Special Rate Variation consultation

May 2024





## Document status

Job #	Version	Written	Reviewed	Approved	Report Date
7782	1 -Document Outline (no content)	J McKenzie			9 April 2024
	2 Draft	J McKenzie	PD – G Smith QA – NN	G Smith	29 April 2024
	3 – Final	J McKenzie	PD – G Smith QA – NN	G Smith	17 May 2024

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## Context

Morrison Low Consultants has been engaged by Upper Hunter Shire Council ('Council') to provide support and advice through the proposed special rate variation (SRV) community engagement process.

This community engagement action plan outlines the approach, key messages and timeline for community consultation on the potential SRV. This plan has been developed to ensure that it meets the SRV assessment criteria set out by the NSW Office of Local Government, who sets policy and oversees the local government industry, and the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART), who will assess any SRV application submitted. It has also been developed in compliance with the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Australasia Quality Assurance Standard.

## SRV project background

Upper Hunter is considering two different options for a potential SRV, which is now seeking to consult the community on. The first option, Option 1, is a cumulative increase of 33.10% over three years as outlined in Table 1 below. The other option, Option 2, is a cumulative increase of 33.55% over four years, as outlined in Table 2 below

**Table 1 Option 1: SRV over three (3) years**

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	Cumulative
<b>Total proposed increase</b>	<b>10.00%</b>	<b>10.00%</b>	<b>10.00%</b>	<b>33.10%</b>

**Table 2 Option 2: SRV over four (4) years**

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Cumulative
<b>Total proposed increase</b>	<b>7.50%</b>	<b>7.50%</b>	<b>7.50%</b>	<b>7.50%</b>	<b>33.55%</b>

## Engagement purpose and goals

The purpose of this community engagement is to ensure that the community is adequately informed and consulted about the impact of the proposed special rate variation and the impact of not applying for a special rate variation.

The objectives of this community engagement process include:

- To present the proposed SRV.
- To identify the impact of the SRV on the average rates across each rating category.
- To exhibit an updated LTFP demonstrating the impact of the proposed SRV on Council's operating results from 2023-24 for feedback and final endorsement by Council.



- To communicate to the community the timeline and process for any potential SRV application.
- To gather and consider the community's feedback to inform Council's final decision on whether and how to move forward with an SRV application.

### Stakeholder analysis

The key impacted stakeholders are those that pay rates in the Upper Hunter Shire Local Government Area (LGA) or are renting property in the LGA, where there may be rent increases passed to cover the proposed rate increases fully or partly.

Stakeholder groups have been identified below to ensure that the specific considerations of these groups can be integrated into the community engagement plan. These groupings are not mutually exclusive, that is individuals may fall into a number of different stakeholder groups. For example, individuals who own multiple properties in the LGA may be both resident ratepayers and landlord ratepayers.

**Table 3 Stakeholder groupings**

Stakeholder group	Who is in the group	Specific considerations
Resident ratepayers	Homeowners who are residents of the LGA	Proposed rate increases will be directly incurred by these stakeholders, although these costs may be passed on if the property is rented.
Residential Renters	Renters who are residents of the LGA	It will be a decision of the landlord on whether and when any rate increases are passed on to renters.
Business ratepayers	Business property owners within LGA	Proposed rate increases will be directly incurred by these stakeholders, although these costs may be passed on if the property is rented. Rates are business expense to this category of ratepayer.
Farming ratepayers	Farming property owners within the LGA	Proposed rate increases will be directly incurred by these stakeholders, although these costs may be passed on if the property is rented. Rates are business expense to this category of ratepayer.
Mining ratepayers	Mining property owners within the LGA	Proposed rate increases will be directly incurred by these stakeholders, although these costs may be passed on if the property is rented. Rates are business expense to this category of ratepayer.
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) members	Ratepayers, renters, landlords and business operators with CALD backgrounds	Council has considered the cultural and linguistic make up of their community and did not identify any need for non-English collateral and media to be included in the communications on the SRV.
Community stakeholder groups	Scone and Merriwa Chambers of Commerce Merriwa Progress Association Merriwa Branch of the	These groups have a direct interest in their members/residents and therefore, they need to understand why Council is proposing an SRV.



Stakeholder group	Who is in the group	Specific considerations
	NSW Farmers Federation	
Council's consultative committees	Aberdeen, Murrurundi, and Merriwa Community Advisory Committees.	The membership of these committees are directly consulted on issues that affect their area, many committee members represent other community groups or interests. These committees need to be informed and consulted.  Consultation with the wider community of general strategic issues is conducted through regular DP/OP forums. These have also been considered in the engagement plan.

Within each stakeholder group, there will be a range of socio-economic factors that will be considered through a capacity to pay analysis and report; this will further inform not only the affordability of any SRV, but also may provide further insight to improve the consultation plan and key messages.

## Approach

### Impact and complexity of engagement

This engagement is defined as 'high impact', which means that the issues will have a real or perceived impact across the whole LGA. The issue has the potential to create controversy and has a high level of potential community interest.

It is also considered to have 'high complexity', as the information presented to the community will be based on relatively complex financial analysis and needs to be expressed in terms that are easily understood.

### Levels of engagement

The level of engagement is defined from the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation in the figure below. This spectrum outlines the level of engagement required depending on the purpose and desired outcome of the project.

Figure 1 IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Australasia, 2018. *IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation*. Retrieved from: [https://iap2.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/2018\\_IAP2\\_Spectrum.pdf](https://iap2.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/2018_IAP2_Spectrum.pdf).



INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION

	<b>INFORM</b>	<b>CONSULT</b>	<b>INVOLVE</b>	<b>COLLABORATE</b>	<b>EMPOWER</b>
<b>PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL</b>	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
<b>PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC</b>	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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To meet the assessment criteria for an SRV application, Council must:

1. Demonstrate that the **need and purpose** of a different rate path for Council’s General Fund is clearly articulated and identified in Council’s Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) documents.
2. Show evidence that the **community is aware** of the need for and the extent of a rate rise.
3. Show that the **impact on affected ratepayers** is reasonable.
4. Exhibit, approve and adopt the relevant **IP&R documents**.
5. Explain and quantify the **productivity improvements and cost containment** strategies in its IP&R documents and/or application.
6. Address any other matter that IPART considers relevant.

To meet criterion two, Council would only need to undertake engagement at the “inform” level, but a “consult” level would ensure it more fully meets criteria one and four.





As a result, this community engagement action plan is drafted to meet both the **inform** and **consult** levels of engagement. This means that Council will provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, and preferred solution and to obtain the public's feedback on analysis and alternatives. Council will keep the public informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision made by Council.

Council is currently preparing a 2024-35 Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP) to be adopted in June 2024. This LTFP, which includes the proposed SRV, will be exhibited, approved and adopted by Council in parallel to this community engagement process.

### Engagement timeline

The proposed community engagement is expected to run over an six (6) week period commencing on 31 May 2024 and concluding on 15 July 2024.

This community engagement will build from inform to consult:

1. Inform: to raise awareness and inform all stakeholder groups of the options being considered.
2. Consult: to seek considered community feedback on these options to inform Council in their final deliberations on a potential SRV application.

At the conclusion of the engagement a detailed outcomes report will be prepared outlining the results of the engagement and summarising the feedback received.

### Engagement mechanisms

The proposed mechanisms to be used for this engagement are outlined in the table below.

Table 4 Engagement mechanisms

Mechanism	Level of consultation	Reach (stakeholder groups)
Direct mail out Flyer with Rates Instalments	Inform	All ratepayers
Newspaper advertisements	Inform	All residents Small in Aberdeen Hunter River Times doesn't go to all UHSC LGA
Include in-language information, e.g. via printed inserts, in local newspapers	Inform	CALD communities
e-Newsletters	Inform	Ad-hoc, but can be deployed if needed. Database needs some reviewing.
Dedicated web-page	Inform and Consult	Public notice page with online survey



Mechanism	Level of consultation	Reach (stakeholder groups)
Video content (TBC)	Inform	
Social media channels	Inform	
Face-to-face sessions (no more than 40 people at a time, leveraging the DP/OP forums)	Inform & consult	DPOP All residents and ratepayers
Community group sessions (leveraging any scheduled meetings)	Inform & consult	
Council community consultative committees	Inform & consult	
Drop-in information booth	Inform & consult	

These external community engagement mechanisms will be coupled with internal communications to inform all staff about the proposed SRV and process and provide them with information to direct questions from members of the public that may arise in their day-to-day interactions. This will include:

- A managers’ briefing
- Staff briefings by executive / managers
- Information and scripting for customer service and frontline teams
- Updates in staff e-news.

**Roles and responsibilities**

The roles of councillors, Council officers and Morrison Low in the engagement process are defined in the table below.

**Table 5 Roles and responsibilities**

Role	Responsibility
Morrison Low (consultant)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop the community engagement plan</li> <li>• Support the development of background paper / information on the SRV and advise on translation into key engagement collateral</li> </ul> Facilitate face to face sessions, assist Council in preparation presentation and taking notes at each forum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare report on community engagement outcomes</li> </ul>
Council’s communications and engagement team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop collateral for the various written mechanisms, based on information provided</li> <li>• Publish and release materials in line with this community engagement action plan, including internal communications</li> <li>• Gather community feedback and provide to Morrison Low for</li> </ul>



	analysis
Council CFO and finance team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update the LTFP model and document for exhibition</li> <li>Support the development of background papers and other collateral with financial analysis and modelling</li> <li>Manage the exhibition process and finalisation of the updated 2024-35 LTFP (which includes the SRV)</li> </ul>
Council executive and management team (including General Manager)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brief staff on SRV, process and community engagement activities</li> <li>Attend community face to face sessions</li> <li>Answer questions raised by the community in the engagement process</li> </ul>
Mayor / Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approve community engagement plan</li> <li>Attend face to face community sessions (optional, but recommended)</li> </ul>
General Manager	Approve / Endorse community engagement plan, approve any adjustments to community engagement process as required <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate in media interviews</li> </ul>

### Key messages

The key messages for the community should clearly communicate what is not negotiable and what aspects are open for community feedback to inform the decision-making process.

Non-negotiables include:

- the legislative requirement for Council to employ sound financial management principals.
- the current core deficits in the General Fund need to be addressed, targeting sufficient surpluses over time to ensure the ongoing financial sustainability of Council.

Community feedback is sought to:

- assess the level of community understanding of the proposed SRV and its impacts and why it is needed.
- seek submissions on the proposed SRV and the updated Long Term Financial Plan.

To support these key messages and the development of collateral for the community engagement activities, a background paper will be developed to articulate the need for and level of SRV being sought.

In addition, Council will also have the following reports:

- A capacity to pay report which will investigate, analyse and report on the community’s capacity to pay against Council’s rating categories and proposed SRV. This includes research of specific areas across the LGA and will undertake a range of comparisons and assessments of information for areas/locations within the LGA, and associated land use.
- An improvement plan outline the costs savings and revenue raising opportunities that it has implemented and those that are planned in the future.



3. An updated LTFP that will demonstrate the impact of the SRV on the ongoing financial sustainability of Council.

Key messages in any community communications and collateral will also include:

- how community members can seek further information or have their questions answered.
- how community members can provide their feedback on the proposed SRV.

what to expect after the community engagement activity is completed, including IPART's public submission and assessment process.

### Frequently asked questions

A set of frequently asked questions (FAQs) and their responses will be developed for this engagement process. While every effort is made to ensure that this is a complete list of FAQs at the commencement, these questions will be regularly reviewed and updated throughout the engagement process.

The below is a starting list of the questions we expect to develop for the FAQs:

- How will the proposed special rate variation impact my rates?
- Why do we need an increase to our rates?
- What is the alternative to the proposed rates increase?
- What action has Council taken to address its financial situation?
- How does Council work out what rates to charge each resident?
- What is Council doing to keep rates low?
- Can't you get more funding from other levels of government to help pay for things?
- What if I can't afford to pay my increased rates? (Hardship Policy)
- When would a rate increase be applied from?
- How has Council identified the priority initiatives?
- Who is IPART and what do they do?



## Detailed action plan

Table 6 Action plan

Ref	Action	Responsible	By when	Dependency
1	Draft Background Paper / information for SRV	Finance Team and Morrison Low (consultant)	17 May 2024	
2	Finalise updated LTFP for exhibition	Finance team	17 May 2024	
2	Develop FAQs	Communications & Engagement team and Morrison Low (consultant)	24 May 2024	1,2
4	Draft 'Direct Mail' content	Communications & Engagement team and Morrison Low (consultant)	24 May 2024	1,2
5	Draft Newspaper advertisements	Communications & Engagement team	24 May 2024	1,2
6	Draft e-Newsletter content	Communications & Engagement team	24 May 2024	1,2
7	Develop video on SRV (TBC)	Communications & Engagement team	24 May 2024	1,2
8	Develop survey	Communications & Engagement team and Morrison Low (consultant)	24 May 2024	1,2
9	Build Council SRV webpage	Communications & Engagement team	24 May 2024	1,2
10	Schedule face-to-face community sessions	Communications & Engagement team	29 May 2024	
	DPOP meetings – 2 week cycle starting mid-May.	Communications & Engagement team	13 May 2024	



Ref	Action	Responsible	By when	Dependency
11	Develop media release and social media content for commencement of engagement	Communications & Engagement team	24 May 2024	1,2
12	Develop and distribute information and scripting for customer service and frontline staff	Communications & Engagement team	24 May 2024	1,2
13	Council resolves to proceed to community consultation on an SRV	Council	27 May 2024	1,2
14	Brief managers on Council decision and next steps	General Manager / Directors	28 May 2024	14
15	Publish first newspaper advertisement on SRV	Communications & Engagement team	31 May 2024	5,14
16	Open the SRV webpage and Survey to the community	Communications & Engagement team	31 May 2024	9,14
17	Engagement period commences		31 May 2024	14
18	Publish e-Newsletter	Communications & Engagement team	3 June 2024	6,17
19	Release direct mail out	Communications & Engagement team	29 May 2024	4,17
20	Manage social media	Communications & Engagement team	31 May 2024 – 15 July 2024	11,17
21	Manage media enquires	Communications & Engagement team	31 May 2024 – 15 July 2024	11,17
22	Conduct face to face community sessions	Communications & Engagement team Morrison Low (consultant) to facilitate public forums Council executive and councillors to attend.	16-19 June 2024	10,17
23	Publish second newspaper advertisement	Communications & Engagement team	30 June 2024	5,17





Ref	Action	Responsible	By when	Dependency
24	Release reminder of SRV community engagement closing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• E-Newsletter</li> <li>• Social media</li> </ul>	Communications & Engagement team	5 July 2024	6,11,17
25	Close engagement, exhibition of updated LTFP and survey, and gather all community feedback	Communications & Engagement team	15 July 2024	17
26	Analyse submissions and survey results and draft community engagement report	Morrison Low (consultant)	22 July 20224	25
27	Finalise updated LTFP based on feedback over exhibition period	Finance team	22 July 2024	25
28	Draft report to Council		22 July 2024	25
29	Council resolves on whether to proceed with SRV application	Council	29 July 2024	28



**Special Variation (SV) Proposal**  
***Achieving community awareness***

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) requires councils to actively engage residents in discussions about proposed Special Variations (SV). IPART will consider how effective each council’s community engagement and inclusion has been before determining its application to increase rates above the rate peg.

Councils need to successfully demonstrate to IPART that there is:

- a demonstrated need for the proposed SV,
- community awareness of the proposed increase, the need for it and its impact on average rates,
- a reasonable impact on ratepayers,
- a process to exhibit relevant documents to the public, and
- a history of well-documented organisational productivity improvements and cost containment strategies.

**Building community awareness**

What IPART looks for:	What we recommend:
<p>Evidence that the community is aware of the need for, and extent, of a rate rise</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Producing a Community Awareness and Engagement Outcomes Report clearly setting out the strategies used by Council to raise community awareness and understanding of the need for, and extent of, a rate rise. The report should:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Summarise all communication tools and strategies used,</li> <li>○ Outline how the engagement and awareness opportunities were promoted,</li> <li>○ Demonstrate a variety of channels used to engage the community, this must include specific SRV face to face sessions with community,</li> <li>○ Demonstrate clear and easy channels to for the community to provide feedback, including a survey that allows the community to demonstrate the level of awareness and understanding they have gotten from the engagement,</li> <li>○ Include clear metrics illustrating community awareness and participation (e.g. social media engagements, website visits, number of media releases published, number of advertisements ran, etc.),</li> <li>○ Document the engagement findings, including the key themes and issues raised via the consultation period, and</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



What IPART looks for:	What we recommend:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Outline how Council has/will respond to the key themes and issues raised via the consultation period.</li> </ul>
Evidence that the council has clearly set out the extent of the General Fund rate rise under the proposed SV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reviewing and refining Council’s LTFP to reflect the extent of the General Fund rate rise under the proposed SV, including each individual SV option.</li> </ul>
Evidence that the council has communicated the full cumulative increase of the proposed SV in percentage terms, and the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer, by rating category.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Producing a Rates Calculator to enable ratepayers to calculate what their rates could be under each of the proposed SV options.</li> <li>● Ensuring that all written communications (e.g. flyers, print advertisements, website content, etc.) clearly communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed SV in percentage terms, and the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer, by rating category.</li> </ul>
Evidence that the council has communicated its ongoing efficiency measures and its progress against these measures, in its explanation of the need for the proposed SV.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Producing an Organisational Improvement Plan setting out the various productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has already achieved, as well as those it plans to achieve.</li> </ul>
Evidence that the council’s Community Engagement Strategy for the proposed SV incorporated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness and input occurred.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Developing a comprehensive Community Engagement Strategy incorporating a range of engagement methods that are appropriate for the local community, including a combination of digital, print and an in-person feedback mechanisms.</li> <li>● The Engagement Summary Report must demonstrate that Council has delivered on all aspects of the Engagement Strategy.</li> </ul>

**Compiling your Community Engagement and Awareness Outcomes Report**

- Prior to the consultation period, develop a strong communications plan clearly identifying the various communication tools Council will use to raise awareness of the proposed SRV and engage the community in the process. Communication tools should include:
  - Social media posts,
  - Media releases,
  - Advertisements (print, radio, social media, etc.),
  - Surveys and online platforms for information and feedback, and
  - Community forums/information sessions.
- During the consultation period, establish a dedicated page on Council’s website and ensure that all relevant documents are publicly available for download. Documents should include:
  - Revised LTFP and other revised IP&R documents,
  - Capacity to Pay Report,



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- Organisational Improvement Plan,
  - Proposal-specific media releases (if any), and
  - Fact sheets (if developed).
- During the consultation period, actively monitor local newspapers for any media coverage of the proposed SRV, including both news articles and letters to the editor/opinion pieces. Scan copies of all print coverage (including letters to the editor) and document the name of the publication they appeared in, and date of publication.
  - Following completion of the consultation period, capture screenshots of all posts published to Council's social media channels, including date/time published, as well as reach and engagement metrics.
  - Following completion of the consultation period, export all relevant metrics from Council's website, specifically the number of page visits and document downloads (e.g. LTFP, Capacity to Pay Report, fact sheets, etc.)