



PUBLIC ATTACHMENTS

Audit Committee Meeting

21 July 2022

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REVIEW

Note: I understand that some of these will be on the website. I was not sure whether the document on the website is the up-to-date reports.

1. Organizational Chart
2. Financial Statements for 30 June 2021 – submitted to council
3. Procedures documented (if any) for process in the following key financial areas
 - a. Rates
 - b. Custody and Collection of money held
 - c. Collection of money owed
 - d. Authorisation of Trust Transactions
 - e. Procurement
 - f. Purchases
 - g. Payroll
 - h. Stock control
 - i. Credit Cards
 - j. Preparation of budget and reviews
 - k. Preparation of financial reports
 - l. Risk Management
 - m. Changes to supplier and employee banking details
4. Policy Manual (Or individual policy documents if not all in one). Individual policies including: -
 - a. Procurement policy
 - b. Employee policies
 - c. Policies regarding rates collection, fees and charges etc
 - d. Investment policy
 - e. Asset management policy
 - f. Corporate credit card policy
 - g. Risk management policy
 - h. Council Policies
5. Delegations Register
6. Purchasing Authority Limit
7. Risk Register
8. Contracts Register
9. Notable Gift Register
10. Investment Register
11. Financial Interest Register
12. Tender Register
13. Training Register
14. Any other applicable registers held by the Shire
15. Last compliance annual review
16. Last FMR and Reg 17 Review report

17. Strategic plan
18. Business continuity plan
19. Asset management plan
20. ICT Strategic Plan
21. ICT Disaster Recovery Plan
22. Minutes of audit committee meetings for the year from 1 Jan 2021 – 31 Dec 2021
23. Details of all bank accounts
24. Latest Financial Interest Register
25. Latest Gifts and Benefits received register
26. Annual returns for the councillors and KMPs
27. Primary Returns for the new councillors, Shire President and new KMPs (FY 21/22)
28. List of employee access keys & key register
29. Software access permissions – ie who has access to which modules of the software
30. Software license renewals
31. Insurance policies and certificates of currency
32. Overhead Allocation (plant rates, admin rates, labour rates)
33. List of employees as of 31 Dec 2022 with their commencement date. Please also include the list of employees who were resigned or terminated during the FY 21/22.
34. Payments List submitted to the council for the months Jan 2021, May 2021, August 2021, and October 2021
35. IE Code Summary Report as at 31 Dec 2021



Local Government Reform

Improved financial management and reporting

Clear and accurate financial management and reporting is critical for public confidence in local government. Currently, local governments across Western Australia have to comply with the same financial reporting requirements, even though local governments range from less than 200 residents to a population of more than 200,000 people.



Model Financial Statements

New standardised templates will be established for local government financial statements:

- Large (band 1 and 2) local governments will have financial statements similar to those already used, with minor amendments and streamlining where possible
- Smaller (band 3 and 4) local governments will have more streamlined standard financial statements, reflecting the generally less complex operations of smaller local governments



Rates and Revenue Policy

All local governments will adopt a short Rates and Revenue Policy. The Policy will provide greater clarity for ratepayers by linking the cost of services and the maintenance of assets (such as roads and recreation facilities) to the setting of rates.



Reforms for Financial Ratios

The financial metrics reported on the MyCouncil website will be reviewed and adjusted to ensure they best reflect the underlying financial position of the local government.



Credit Card Statements Publicly Reported to Council

New reforms will introduce a requirement that employee credit card statements are to be provided to council at meetings on a monthly basis.



Other Minor Reforms

Other changes to the legislation will provide for general improvements for financial management:

- Changes to require Audit, Risk and Improvement Committees to bolster local government oversight, and allowing regional local governments to share Audit, Risk and Improvement Committees to reduce costs.
- Reforms will enable local governments to facilitate and manage fixed-interest loans to building owners undertaking environmental or heritage upgrades to their buildings. The loans will be provided and vetted by independent financiers.
- The cost of waste collection services provided to a property will be required to be separately stated on any rates notice for that property. This provides ratepayers with clear transparency for what waste collection services cost.

The State Government is also considering potential further reform for regional subsidiaries, and other financial and risk management initiatives.

SHIRE OF VICTORIA PLAINS

Business Continuity Plan

June 2019

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Distribution List

Person / Organisation	No. Hard copies	Electronic copy
Councillors (7)	0	Yes
Staff – CEO, WSM, FAM, CESM	0	Yes
LEMC members and deputies	18	Yes
Wongan Hills Police	1	Yes
Toodyay Police	1	Yes
Local Government Insurance Services	0	Yes

Amendment Record

No.	Date	Details	By
1	June 2019	Draft	GO
2			
3			
4			
5			

INTRODUCTION

The Shire of Victoria Plains recognises that some events may exceed the capacity of routine management methods and structure. The Business Continuity Management Framework works to produce the Business Continuity Plan in order to provide a mechanism for the development of contingent capacity and plans that will enable management to focus on maintaining and resuming the Shire's most critical functions. The framework underpins and provides all extenuating data for the creation of the Business Continuity Plan and the following document is an integral part of the process prescribed within the framework.

Business Continuity Planning (BCP) is the creation of a strategy through the recognition of threats and risks facing an organisation with a specific aim to ensure that personnel and assets are protected and able to function in the event of a disaster. Business Continuity Planning involves defining potential risks, determining how those risks will affect operations, implementing treatment options designed to mitigate those risks, testing those procedures to ensure that they work, and periodically reviewing the process to make sure that it is up to date.

The purpose of developing a Business Continuity Plan is to ensure the continuation of the business during and following any critical incident that results in disruption to normal operational capability.

This Business Continuity Plan is the outcome of a risk assessment process. It is designed for the Shire's Core Business Areas, each business area designated is affected by various risks and hazards that are unavoidable within the Shire; it is noted that while treatment options are available there is never a 'sure fire' or 'quick fix' for these risks and that contingency and continuity planning will be required at stages defined by an incident.

Abbreviations

BCP	Business Continuity Plan
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CESM	Community Emergency Services Manager
EHO	Environmental Health Officer (including building functions)
FAM	Finance and Administration Manager
GO	Governance Officer
ICT	Information and communications technology
WALGA	WA Local Government Association
WSM	Works and Service Manager

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This plan was designed and produced using a robust business continuity management framework and contains information pertinent to the Shire of Victoria Plains' ability to maintain business continuity. The primary aim of this document is to prepare the Shire in the case of a catastrophic business failure due a variety of reasons. The Plan outlays response and recovery options as well as the responsibilities of the activating parties.

This Business Continuity Plan contains a broad outline of the core areas of business within the Shire and applies trigger points to plans established by the risk assessments conducted within the framework.

This Plan is designed to be read for response and recovery after a failure in terms of business. It has been designed to be used by the staff within the Shire and has been accordingly written.

Objectives

The aim of this Plan is to provide an effective procedure that equips the Shire to –

- ensure services that are critical to our strategic objectives continue despite the occurrence of a potentially disruptive event.
- stabilise the effects of a disruptive event and return to normal operations as quickly as possible.
- minimise financial effects and impacts on service delivery targets in the event of a disruption.
- protect the Shire's assets and reputation through the development of organisational resilience.
- capitalise on opportunities created by the disruptive event.

Section 1 - Administration and Governance Processes

Administration processes can be described as the underpinning authority in the management and production capability of the local government. It consists of processes and items that are intrinsic to the successful management of the Shire. Governance is the ability to both create and maintain a system of laws, policies and procedures directly affecting constituents of the local government in particular the Shire.

Maximum Acceptable Outage (MAO) Timeframe

This service has been assessed using the criteria found in the document 'Shire of Victoria Plains Business Continuity Plan' and designated as **MAO Timeframe – Critical: 1 Business Day or Less.**

Trigger Points

The trigger points for the activation of this plan is based in risk assessment process and is described as 'All Hazard or Worst Case Scenario' these consist of –

- loss of access to building, infrastructure or machinery or part there of
- loss of access to ICT inclusive of hardware or software or part there of
- significant number of staff unavailable
- combination of the above events

Response

The following incident response Plans present detailed plans to address the each of these risk areas as identified in the risk management assessment outlined in the BCP.

The Plans are not exhaustive, as any major incident will require more detailed and potential long term considerations; however the plans below provide a structured response to major incidents that are of the highest threat to service provision and Shire operations.

1.1 Loss of access to administration building, infrastructure or machinery or part thereof

Causes might include natural or man-made disasters, threats or criminal activity. This task provides the necessary steps to assess and recover from a loss of the Shire administration facilities

1.1.1 Task One – Immediate Response

This task provides the necessary command and control to enable the Shire's Incident Response Team to conduct an initial assessment of the disaster and to co-ordinate the initial response to the disaster.

Incident Response Team

- Chief Executive Officer
- Works and Services Manager
- Finance and Administration Manager
- Community Emergency Services Manger

Recovery Procedure

Incident Response Team to undertake the following steps –

- ensure site has been evacuated and all personnel are accounted for
- secure site and prevent access
- contact emergency services and Police
- identify any injuries and render assistance
- undertake an initial assessment of damage and risks
- arrange diversion of phone lines to existing shire mobiles
- determine time frame to switch to the recovery location

Recovery Time Objective

Timeframe for this activity is within 3 hours of the incident

Recovery Location

- Primary Site – Calingiri Recreation Centre
- Secondary site – Calingiri Sports Pavilion

Resource requirements

- ICT

Other Considerations:

- liaise with emergency services and Police
- inform Council and employees
- inform local community where possible
- inform Local Government Insurance Services

1.1.2 Task Two – Commence operations from recovery location

This task provides the necessary steps to commence core Shire operations from the Recovery Location and commence the planning for restoration of services in the short and longer term.

Recovery Procedure

Undertake the following steps –

- establish the recovery location
- layout workspace utilising tables and chairs from the Recreation Centre
- source telephones and establish communications and redirect calls to mobile telephones
- allocate staff as applicable
- liaise with other Incident Response Team members to determine items to be immediately replaced and what is recoverable.
- contact ICT supplier
- recover backups
- recover software where appropriate
- assess damage and undertaken salvage operations
 - o undertake initial assessment of salvageable materials, items and records if applicable
 - o contact staff to remove items to a salvage site
- co-ordinate all communications, media and elected members, local government insurers and general co-ordination of recovery process
 - o liaise with Shire President to issue a media statement

Recovery Time Objective

Timeframe to achieve this task within 8 hours of the incident.

Resource Requirements

- office furniture and stationery
- administration and works staff
- ICT hardware and software
- communications (land line and internet)

1.1.3 Task Three – Assess damage and prepare Long Term Recovery Plans

This task provides the necessary steps to commence planning for long term operations from the disaster recovery location.

Recovery Procedure

Undertake the following steps –

- establish the disaster recovery site for full operations use in the long term
- recover data to pre disaster state
- bring all records up to date
- contact all necessary persons to inform of incident, expected delays and seek documentation where necessary including demountable buildings and other office accommodation.
- establish necessary equipment and infrastructure requirements to provide full operations from recovery location
- finalise damage assessment and commence planning for re-establishing services through full or partial rebuild of administration centre
- co-ordinate all communications, media and elected members, local government insurers and general co- ordination of recovery process
- oversee assessment and recovery

Recovery Time Objective

Timeframe for this activity is within 24 hours of the incident

Resource Requirements

- IT consultants
- additional infrastructure as identified
- contractors to clean up disaster site (if applicable)

1.2 Loss of access to ICT or part thereof, inclusive of hardware or software

This task provides the necessary steps to recover the Shire's IT system as a result of complete failure resulting in replacement of the IT system

Incident Response Team

- Chief Executive Officer
- Finance and Administration Manager
- IT consultants

Recovery Procedure

Undertake the following steps –

- assess severity of outage through the Shire's IT provider and determine likely outage time
- seek quotations and place orders for replacement components
- contact Shire's insurers and Police if necessary
- inform Council, community and business contacts (i.e. banks, creditors and contractors) of potential delays in providing services
- set up and install new hardware. Install all software and restore from backups
- reconcile and rebuild all data.

Recovery Time Objective

Timeframe for this activity is within 24 hours of the incident

Resource requirements

IT suppliers (hardware/software, Synergy, licensing, etc.)

1.3 Significant number of staff unavailable

This task provides necessary steps to recover in the case of a significant number of staff being unavailable to work for a variety of reasons.

Incident Response Team

- Chief Executive Officer
- Works and Services Manager
- Finance and Administration Manager

Recovery Procedure

Undertake the following steps –

- assess the severity of staff shortage
- rearrange existing staff to cover the shortage areas
- inform Council, community and business contacts (i.e. banks, creditors and contractors) of potential delays in providing services
- request trained personnel from surrounding Shires if appropriate
- source staff through recruitment agencies as appropriate

Recovery Time Objective

Timeframe for this activity is within 24 hours of the incident

Resource Requirements

Nil

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Section 2 - Road & Infrastructure related Maintenance & Construction

This refers to the maintenance, replacement or construction of designated Shire roads, streets, gardens and recreation areas.

MAO Timeframe

This service has been assessed using the criteria found in the document 'Shire of Victoria Plains Business Continuity Plan' and designated as **MAO Timeframe – Major: 1-3 Business Days**.

Trigger Points

The trigger points for the activation of this plan is based in risk assessment process and is described as 'all hazard or worst case scenario' these consist of –

- loss of access to building, infrastructure or machinery or part there of
- loss of access to ICT inclusive of hardware or software or part there of
- significant number of staff unavailable
- combination of the above events

Response

The following incident response Plans present detailed plans to address the each of these risk areas as identified in the risk management assessment outlined in the BCP.

The Plans are not exhaustive, as any major incident will require more detailed and potential long term considerations; however the plans below provide a structured response to major incidents that are of the highest threat to service provision and Shire operations.

2.1 Loss of access to buildings, infrastructure or machinery or part thereof

Causes include natural or man-made disasters, threats or criminal activity. This task provides the necessary steps to assess and recover from a loss of Depot facilities or essential machinery.

2.1.1 Task One – Loss of access to Depot

This task provides a procedure to follow in regards to the loss of the Shire Depot.

Incident Response Team

- Chief Executive Officer
- Manager Works and Services
- Community Emergency Services Manger

Recovery Procedure

Incident Response Team to undertake the following steps –

- ensure site has been evacuated and all personnel are accounted for
- secure site and prevent access
- contact emergency services and Police
- identify any injuries and render assistance
- undertake an initial assessment of damage and risks
- arrange diversion of phone lines to existing shire mobiles
- determine time frame to switch to Recovery Location
- prioritise immediate and continuing works services
- liaise with other Incident Response Team members to determine items to be immediately replaced and what is recoverable.
- redirection of works phone numbers from hard line to mobile

Recovery Time Objective

Timeframe for this activity is within 24 hours of the incident

Recovery Location

- Primary Location – Shire Administration Offices
- Secondary Location – Calingiri Recreation Centre

Resource requirements

- Consideration of space for extra staff

Other Considerations:

- liaise with emergency services and Police
- inform Council and employees
- inform local community where possible
- inform Local Government Insurance Services

2.1.2 Task Two – Loss of essential machinery

This task provides a procedure to follow in regards to the loss of essential machinery for the purposes of road and infrastructure related maintenance and construction.

Incident Response Team

- Chief Executive Officer
- Manager Works and Services

Recovery Procedure

Incident Response Team to undertake the following steps –

- prioritisation of works services
- hire of appropriate equipment to maintain services
- request machinery from surrounding Shires as appropriate
- contact all necessary persons to inform of incident, expected delays and seek documentation where necessary

Recovery Time Objective

Timeframe for this activity is within 72 hours of the incident

Other Considerations:

- backlog of works and services
- priority of immediate and continuing works services
- staffing requirements
- wait time on new, hired or borrowed machinery

2.2 Loss of access to ICT or part thereof, inclusive of hardware or software

This task provides the necessary steps to recover a loss of all works related IT systems as a result of complete failure resulting in replacement of the IT system.

Incident Response Team

- Chief Executive Officer
- Manager of Works and Services
- IT Consultant

Recovery Procedure

Undertake the following steps –

- assess severity of outage through the shire's IT provider and determine likely outage time

- seek quotations and place orders for replacement components
- contact Shire's insurers and Police if necessary
- inform Council and community of potential delays in providing services
- set up and install new hardware. install all software and restore from backups
- reconcile and rebuild all data.

Recovery Time Objective

Timeframe for this activity is within 72 hours of the incident

Resource requirements

IT suppliers (hardware/software, Synergy, Licensing, etc.)

2.3 Significant number of staff unavailable

This task provides necessary steps to recover in the case of a significant number of staff being unavailable to work due to a variety of reasons.

Incident Response Team

- Chief Executive Officer
- Works and Services Manager
- Finance and Administration Manager

Recovery Procedure

Undertake the following steps –

- assess the severity of staff shortage
- rearrange existing staff to cover the shortage areas
- inform Council and community of potential delays in providing services
- request trained personnel from surrounding Shires if appropriate
- source staff through recruitment agencies as appropriate
- prioritise works and services

Recovery Time Objective

Timeframe for this activity is within 72 hours of the incident

Resource Requirements

Nil

Section 3 - Regulatory Services

This refers to all regulatory services within the Shire Community including but not limited to –

- health services
- building services
- ranger services – inclusive of animal and reptile control

MAO Timeframe

This service has been assessed using the criteria found in the document 'Shire of Victoria Plains Business Continuity Plan' and designated as **MAO Timeframe – Major: 1-3 Business Days.**

Trigger Points

The trigger points for the activation of this plan is based in the Risk Assessment Process and described in the Framework as 'All Hazard or Worst Case Scenario' these consist of:

- loss of access to building, infrastructure or machinery or part there of
- loss of access to ICT inclusive of hardware or software or part there of
- significant number of staff unavailable
- combination of the above events

Response

As Regulatory Services are based out of the Shire Administration Offices Response plans for this service are noted within Section 1 – Administration and Governance Processes.

Section 4 - Rehearse, Maintain and Review

It is critical that the plan is rehearsed to ensure that it remains relevant and useful. This may be done as part of a training exercise and is a key factor in the successful implementation of the plan during an emergency.

The Shire must also ensure that they regularly review and update the plan to maintain accuracy and reflect any changes inside or outside the business.

This plan is to be reviewed every 5 years, as needed or after an activation.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Event Log

Event	Time	Date

(Please note the event log is to include all rehearsals, tests and actual activations of the BCP)

Appendix 2 – Immediate Response Checklist

Incident Response	✓	Actions Taken
Severity of incident assessed?		
Site evacuated? (as applicable)		
All staff accounted for?		
Injuries identified?		
Emergency services contacted?		
Implemented Response Plan?		
Implemented Event Log?		
Activated staff and resources?		
Briefed Incident Response Team?		
Allocated roles and responsibilities?		
Identified damages?		
Identified critical disruptions?		
Staff informed?		
Stakeholders contacted?		
Initiated community information?		

Appendix 3 – Incident Recovery Checklist

Incident Response	✓	Actions Taken
Severity of incident assessed?		
Site evacuated? (as applicable)		
All staff accounted for?		
Injuries identified?		
Emergency services contacted?		
Implemented Response Plan?		
Implemented Event Log?		
Activated staff and resources?		
Briefed Incident Response Team?		
Allocated roles and responsibilities?		
Identified damages?		
Identified critical disruptions?		
Staff informed?		
Stakeholders contacted?		
Initiated community information?		

Appendix 4 – Insurance List

As at 12 June 2019

Principal Insurance Type	Policy Coverage	Policy Excess	Insurance Company
Bushfire Injury (Various categories)	\$500,000 (sub-limits apply)	Nil	LGIS Bushfire
Crime	\$500,000 (sub-limits apply)	\$1,000	LGIS Liability
Cyber	Up to \$1,000,000 (sub-limits apply)	\$5,000	Chubb Insurance Australia Ltd
Liability	Up to \$600,000,000	Nil (public liability)	LGIS Liability
Motor Vehicle (includes plant and bushfire vehicles) (various categories)	Up to \$35,000,000 (sub-limits apply)	\$300 – basic (subject to category)	Zurich Australia Insurance Ltd
Pollution (various categories)	Up to \$50,000,000 (sub-limits apply)	\$50,000	AIG Australia Ltd
Property (various categories)	Up to \$600,000,000 (sub-limits apply)	\$1,000 – standard (subject to category)	LGIS Property

All insurances are reviewed annually during the period of April-May.

For all insurances, contact - Local Government Insurance Services
(08) 9483 8888

Appendix 5 – Contact Lists (Internal)

As at 14 June 2019

Name	Position	Telephone	Email
David Lovelock	Shire President	0427 548 026 (personal)	crdlovelock@victoriaplains.wa.gov.au
Pauline Bantock	Deputy Shire President	0416 131 837 (personal)	crpbantock@victoriaplains.wa.gov.au
Glenda Teede	Chief Executive Officer	0429 117 758	ceo@victoriaplains.wa.gov.au
Bob Edwards	Works & Services Manager	0429 926 562	works@victoriaplains.wa.gov.au
TBA	Finance & Administration Manager		fm@victoriaplains.wa.gov.au
TBA	Community Emergency Services Manager	0409 137 645	cesm@moora.wa.gov.au
Allan Ramsay	Health / Building Surveyor (Consultant)	0419 952 043 (personal)	ehobs@victoriaplains.wa.gov.au
Shayne Willcocks	Ranger	0428 149 174	ranger@victoriaplains.wa.gov.au

Appendix 6 – Contact List (External)

Key Contacts	Contact Number/s
EMERGENCY	000
WA Police, Wongan Hills	08 9691 1333
Dept of Fire and Emergency Services, Northam	08 9690 2300
Wongan Hills Hospital	08 9691 1222
Local Government Insurance Services	08 9483 8888
Software Support – IT Vision	1300 042 669
IT hardware Support – Wallis Computing Solutions	08 966 1803

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Appendix 7 – Emergency Kit

Emergency Kit is designed to be taken and transported easily the following items should be included –

Item	Amount
Building site plans including location of gas, electricity and water shut off points. (hard copy)	1
Local Emergency Management Arrangements (hard copy)	1
Business Continuity Plan	1
Copy of templates (including templates of printed forms specific to each unit)	1
Two reams of Shire letterhead	1
Box of envelopes	1
Basic stationery items	1
Spare keys/security codes.	1
Shire maps	1

Located in – Hallway near kitchen

First Aid kit – Office	Located in	1
First Aid kit – Depot	Located in	1

The Emergency Kit also contains a thumb drive with copies of the above documents saved on it, together with staff list, contact details, phone numbers, and updated templates on thumb drives.

Emergency Packs must be collected and updated annually with the plan to ensure contents are current and accurate.

Appendix 8 – Evacuation Plans

(To be added to hard copy document only)

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT

LG301

Local Government Act 1995

**Local Government (COVID-19 Response)
Amendment Order 2022**

SL 2022/107

Made by the Minister under section 10.3 of the Act.

1. Citation

This order is the *Local Government (COVID-19 Response) Amendment Order 2022*.

2. Commencement

This order comes into operation as follows —

- (a) clauses 1 and 2 — on the day on which this order is published in the *Gazette*;
- (b) the rest of the order — on the day after that day.

3. Order amended

This order amends the *Local Government (COVID-19 Response) Order 2020*.

4. Clause 3 amended

In clause 3(1) insert in alphabetical order:

2022/23 annual budget, in relation to a local government, means the annual budget adopted by the local government under section 6.2 for the 2022/23 financial year;

2022/23 financial year means the financial year ending on 30 June 2023;

5. Clause 8 amended

- (1) In clause 8(1):
 - (a) in paragraph (b) delete “budget.” and insert:

budget; or
 - (b) after paragraph (b) insert:

(c) its 2022/23 annual budget.
- (2) In clause 8(3):
 - (a) in paragraph (b) delete “exceed 7%.” and insert:

exceed 7%; and
 - (b) after paragraph (b) insert:

(c) in its 2022/23 annual budget — is not to exceed 7%.

6. Clause 13 amended

- In clause 13(2):
- (a) in paragraph (b) delete “year.” and insert:

year; or
 - (b) after paragraph (b) insert:

(c) the 2022/23 financial year.

7. Clause 14 amended

- (1) In clause 14(1):
 - (a) in paragraph (b) delete “year.” and insert:

year; or
 - (b) after paragraph (b) insert:

(c) the 2022/23 financial year.

- (2) In clause 14(3):
 - (a) in paragraph (b) delete “exceed 7%.” and insert:

exceed 7%; and
 - (b) after paragraph (b) insert:

(c) for the 2022/23 financial year — is not to exceed 7%.

J. CAREY, Minister for Local Government.



Responsible Areas	Administration
Responsible Officer	Manager Finance and Administration
Affected Staff	Finance Staff

Objective

To give effect to our commitment to support the whole community to meet the unprecedented challenges arising from the COVID19 pandemic, the Shire of Victoria Plains recognises that these challenges will result in financial hardship for our ratepayers.

This Policy is intended to ensure that we offer fair, equitable, consistent and dignified support to ratepayers suffering hardship, while treating all members of the community with respect and understanding at this difficult time.

Scope

This policy recognises the requirements of the applicable legislation (see the statutory listing including the relevant orders in the Legislation/Local Law Requirements section of this policy) and applies to:

1. Outstanding rates and service charges as at the date of adoption of this policy; and
2. Rates and service charges levied for each financial year from, and including, 2020/21 year onwards.

It is a reasonable community expectation, as we deal with the effects of the pandemic that those with the capacity to pay rates will continue to do so. For this reason the Policy is not intended to provide rate relief to ratepayers who are not able to evidence financial hardship and the statutory provisions of the *Local Government Act 1995* and *Local Government (Financial Management) Regulations 1996* will apply.

Policy

1. Payment difficulties, hardship and vulnerability¹

Payment difficulties, or short term financial hardship, occur where a change in a person's circumstances result in an inability to pay a rates or service charge debt.

Financial hardship occurs where a person is unable to pay rates and service charges without affecting their ability to meet their basic living needs, or the basic living needs of their dependants. The Shire of Victoria Plains recognises the likelihood that COVID19 will increase the occurrence of payment difficulties, financial hardship and vulnerability in our community. This policy is intended to apply to all ratepayers experiencing financial hardship regardless of their status, be they a property owner, tenant, business owner etc.

2. Anticipated Financial Hardship due to COVID19

We recognise that many ratepayers are already experiencing financial hardship due to COVID-19. We respect and anticipate the probability that additional financial difficulties will arise when their rates are received.

¹ Adapted from the Ombudsman Western Australia publication, **Local government collection of overdue rates for people in situations of vulnerability: Good Practice Guidance**: <http://www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/>

We will write to ratepayers at the time their account falls into arrears, to advise them of the terms of this policy and encourage eligible ratepayers to apply for hardship consideration. Where possible and appropriate, we will also provide contact information for a recognised financial counsellor and/or other relevant support services.

3. Financial Hardship Criteria

While evidence of hardship will be required, we recognise that not all circumstances are alike. We will take a flexible approach to a range of individual circumstances including, but not limited to, the following situations:

- Recent unemployment or under-employment;
- Sickness or recovery from sickness;
- Low income or loss of income;
- Unanticipated circumstances such as caring for and supporting extended family.

Ratepayers are encouraged to provide any information about their individual circumstances that may be relevant for assessment. This may include demonstrating a capacity to make some payment and where possible, entering into a payment proposal. We will consider all circumstances, applying the principles of fairness, integrity and confidentiality whilst complying our statutory responsibilities.

4. Payment Arrangements

Payment arrangements facilitated in accordance with Section 6.49 of the Act are of an agreed frequency and amount. These arrangements will consider the following:

- That a ratepayer has made genuine effort to meet rate and service charge obligations in the past;
- The payment arrangement will establish a known end date that is realistic and achievable;
- The ratepayer will be responsible for informing the Shire of Victoria Plains of any change in circumstance that jeopardises the agreed payment schedule.

In the case of severe financial hardship, we reserve the right to consider waiving additional charges or interest (excluding the late payment interest applicable to the Emergency Services Levy).

5. Interest Charges

A ratepayer that meets the Financial Hardship Criteria and enters into a payment arrangement may request a suspension or waiver of interest charges. Applications will be assessed on a case by case basis.

6. Deferral of Rates

Deferral of rates may apply for ratepayers who have a Pensioner Card, State Concession Card or Seniors Card and Commonwealth Seniors Health Care Card registered on their property. The deferred rates balance:

- remains as a debt on the property until paid;
- becomes payable in full upon the passing of the pensioner or if the property is sold or if the pensioner ceases to reside in the property;
- may be paid at any time, BUT the concession will not apply when the rates debt is subsequently paid (deferral forfeits the right to any concession entitlement); and

- does not incur penalty interest charges.

7. Debt recovery

We will suspend our debt recovery processes whilst negotiating a suitable payment arrangement with a debtor. Where a debtor is unable to make payments in accordance with the agreed payment plan and the debtor advises us and makes an alternative plan before defaulting on the 3rd due payment, then we will continue to suspend debt recovery processes.

Where a ratepayer has not reasonably adhered to the agreed payment plan, then for any Rates and Service Charge debts that remain outstanding on 1 July each year, we will offer the ratepayer one further opportunity of adhering to a payment plan that will clear the total debt by the end of that financial year (1 July – 30 June).

Rates and service charge debts that remain outstanding at the end of the financial year, will then be subject to the rates debt recovery procedures prescribed in the *Local Government Act 1995*.

8. Review

We will establish a mechanism for review of decisions made under this policy, and advise the applicant of their right to seek review and the procedure to be followed.

9. Communication and Confidentiality

We will maintain confidential communications at all times and we undertake to communicate with a nominated support person or other third party at your request.

We will advise ratepayers of this policy and its application, when communicating in any format (i.e. verbal or written) with a ratepayer that has an outstanding rates or service charge debt.

We recognise that applicants for hardship consideration are experiencing additional stressors, and may have complex needs. We will provide additional time to respond to communication and will communicate in alternative formats where appropriate. We will ensure all communication with applicants is clear and respectful.

Definitions

Nil

Relevant management practices/documents

Executive Policy regarding Debt Management/Recovery

Procedures regarding Debt Management/Recovery

Legislation/local law requirements

Local Government Act 1995 – s6.49

Local Government (Financial Management) Regulations 1996

Local Government Amendment (COVID-19 Response) Act 2020

Local Government (COVID-19 Response) Amendment Order 2021

Local Government (COVID-19 Response) Amendment Order 2022

Office Use Only			
Relevant delegations	Delegations 3.4; 3.5 & 3.6		
Initial Council adoption	Date	27 May 2020	Resolution # 2005 - 07
Last reviewed	Date	27 July 2022	Resolution #
Next review due	Date	June 2023	



Elected Member Training Matrix – 18 July 2022

Cr P Bantock	Understanding Local Government	Conflicts of Interest	Serving on Council	Meeting Procedures	Understanding Financial Reports and Budgets
Completion Date	5/11/2020	5/11/2020	26/10/2020	5/11/2020	3/11/2020
Cr N Clarke	Understanding Local Government	Conflicts of Interest	Serving on Council	Meeting Procedures	Understanding Financial Reports and Budgets
Completion Date	5/11/2020	5/11/2020	26/10/2020	3/11/2020	3/11/2020
Cr S Woods	Understanding Local Government	Conflicts of Interest	Serving on Council	Meeting Procedures	Understanding Financial Reports and Budgets
Completion Date	10/07/2022	10/07/2022	E Link sent through.	E Link sent through.	24/05/2022
Cr G O'Brien	Understanding Local Government	Conflicts of Interest	Serving on Council	Meeting Procedures	Understanding Financial Reports and Budgets
Completion Date	12/04/2021	27/04/2021	15/05/2021	13/06/2021	13/08/2021
Cr J Kelly	Understanding Local Government	Conflicts of Interest	Serving on Council	Meeting Procedures	Understanding Financial Reports and Budgets
Completion Date	5/11/2020	5/11/2020	E Link sent through.	3/11/2020	22% completed.
Cr S Penn	Understanding Local Government	Conflicts of Interest	Serving on Council	Meeting Procedures	Understanding Financial Reports and Budgets
Completion Date	21/04/2022	18/04/2022	21/04/2022	18/04/2022	19/04/2022
Cr D Lovelock	Understanding Local Government	Conflicts of Interest	Serving on Council	Meeting Procedures	Understanding Financial Reports and Budgets
Completion Date	E Link sent through	E Link sent through.	E Link sent through.	E Link sent through.	E Link sent through