Minutes

Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee
5 November 2026

Notice of Meeting
To the Committee Members
The next Audit Risk and Improvement Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, 5 November 2026 in the Council Chamber, 7 Thomas Street, Halls Creek commencing at 5.00 PM.

Baptiste Isambert
Independent Presiding Member
09 November 2026

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2026 AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MEETING DATES

The following Audit and Risk Committee Meeting dates and times have been resolved by Committee.

05 November 2026	Council Chamber, Halls Creek	5.00pm

INFORMATION

This information is provided on matters which may affect members of the public. If you have any enquiries on procedural matters, please contact shire@hcshire.wa.gov.au.

QUESTION TIME FOR THE PUBLIC

An opportunity is available at Committee meetings for members of the public to ask a question about any issue relating to the Shire. This time is available only for asking questions and not for making statements. Complex questions requiring research should be submitted as early as possible to allow the Shire time to prepare a response.

The Presiding Person may nominate a member of staff to answer the question and may also determine that any complex question requiring research be answered in writing. No debate or discussion can take place on any question or answer.

Any comments made by a member of the public become a matter of public record as they are minuted by Council. Members of the public are advised that they are deemed to be held personally responsible and legally liable for any comments made by them that might be construed as defamatory or otherwise considered offensive by any other party.

To ask a question, please complete the Public Question Time form available on the Shire website https://www.hallscreek.wa.gov.au/council/meetings.

DISCLAIMER

Members of the public should note that in any discussion during a meeting regarding any item, a statement or indication of approval by any council member, committee member or officer of the Shire is not intended to be, and should not be taken as, notice of approval from the Shire. No action should be taken on any item discussed at a meeting of a Committee prior to written advice on the Committee or Council's resolution being received.

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Order of Business

1. Opening of Meeting 4
2. Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners 4
3. Record of Attendance 4
3.1 Attendance 4
3.2 Attendance by Telephone / Instantaneous Communications 4
3.3 Apologies 4
3.4 Approved Leave of Absence 4
3.5 Disclosures of Interest 4
4. Application for leave of Absence 5
5. Public Participation 5
5.1 Response to questions taken on notice from public 5
5.2 Public Question Time 5
5.3 Petitions / Deputations / Presentations / Submissions 5
5.4 Correspondence 5
6. Questions from Members where due Notice has been given 5
7. Announcements by Presiding Member without Discussion 5
8. Declarations of All Members to have given due consideration to all matters contained in the Business Papers before the meeting 5
9. Confirmation of Minutes of Previous Meeting 5
10. Reports of Officers 6
10.1 Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee – 2027 Meeting Schedule 6
10.2 Development of a Continuous Improvement Framework – Independent Project Leadership 10
10.3 Proposed Establishment of an Annual Independent Assurance and Targeted Audit Programme 27
10.4 Rapid Platform – Digitalisation Program Update (Tender Outcomes, Organisational Achievements and Future Direction) 36
10.5 Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee Annual Work Plan 2027 47
11. New Business of an Urgent Nature (Late Items) 64
11.1 Council Member Interim Communication Protocol and Use of Question on Notice 65
12. Motions of Which Previous Notice has been given 88

13. Matters for Which Meeting May be Closed (Confidential Matter) [Nil] 88
14. Closure 88
14.1 Date of Next Meeting 88
14.2 Closure 88

1. Opening of Meeting

The Presiding Member is to declare the meeting open at 5.01 pm.

2. Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

The Shire of Halls Creek acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands on which we meet and pays our respects to Elders past and present.

We recognise and respect the deep and enduring connection Aboriginal people have to Country, culture, language and community, and acknowledge their ongoing contribution to the cultural identity and heritage of the Halls Creek region.

We also acknowledge the importance of working together in a spirit of respect, understanding and partnership to build a strong, inclusive and sustainable future for our communities.

3. Record of Attendance

3.1 Attendance

Scheduled Present	
Presiding Member	Baptiste Isambert
Deputy Presiding Member	Duy Vo
Shire President	Cr Brenda Garstone
Shire Deputy President	Cr Raymond Simpson
Councillor	Cr Patricia McKay
Scheduled for Attendance	
Chief Executive Officer	Susan Leonard
Director Governance and Sustainability	Margaret Glass
Principal Governance Officer	Tanay Bulich-Carroll
Local Government Monitor	Jeff Gooding

3.2 Attendance by Telephone / Instantaneous Communications

Tanay Bulich-Carrol and Jeff Gooding

3.3 Apologies

Nil

3.4 Approved Leave of Absence

Nil

3.5 Disclosures of Interest

Nil

4. Application for leave of Absence

Nil

5. Public Participation

5.1 Response to questions taken on notice from public

Nil

5.2 Public Question Time

Nil

5.3 Petitions / Deputations / Presentations / Submissions

Nil

5.4 Correspondence

Nil

6. Questions from Members where due Notice has been given

Nil

7. Announcements by Presiding Member without Discussion

Nil

8. Declarations of All Members to have given due consideration to all matters contained in the Business Papers before the meeting

This item requires all Committee Members to declare that they have reviewed and given due consideration to the full set of Business Papers prior to attending the meeting by show of hands.

The declaration confirms that Members have read the agenda, reports, and supporting documentation in advance, enabling informed participation, discussion, and decision-making in accordance with their responsibilities as outlined in the Local Government Act 1995.

Presiding Members indicating that they had reviewed the business papers: Shire President Brenda Garstone, Deputy Shire President Raymond Simpson, Shire Councillor Patricia McKay, Independent Presiding Member Baptiste Isambert and Presiding Member Duy Vo.

9. Confirmation of Minutes of Previous Meeting

Resolution Number: 2026/032

Moved: Cr Garstone, **Seconded:** Cr Simpson

That Council:

1. **Confirms** the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee minutes of 03 September 2026.

CARRIED (5/0)

For: Presiding Member Baptiste Isambert, Deputy Presiding Member Duy Vo, President Garstone, Deputy President Simpson, Cr McKay.

Against: Nil

10. Reports of Officers

10.1 Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee – 2027 Meeting Schedule

Author:	Director Governance and Sustainability
Authorising Officers:	Chief Executive Officer
Voting Requirements:	Simple Majority
Disclosure of Interest:	The Author and Authorising Officer declare that they do not have any conflicts of interest in relation to this item.
Attachments:	Nil

Matters for Consideration

1. The Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee is requested to consider and endorse the proposed meeting schedule for the 2027 calendar year.

Resolution Number: 2026/033

Moved: Cr Garstone, **Seconded:** Cr Simpson

That the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee recommends Council:

1. **approves** the following Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee meeting dates and commencement times for the 2027 calendar year;

Date	Time
Thursday, 4 March 2027	5:00 pm
Thursday, 3 June 2027	5:00 pm
Thursday, 2 September 2027	5:00 pm
Thursday, 2 December 2027	5:00 pm

2. **notes** that additional meetings may be convened where required to address urgent audit, financial management, risk, compliance or other matters within the Committee's functions.
3. **notes** the Administration will ensure the approved meeting dates are incorporated into the Shire's 2027 Corporate Meeting Calendar and communicated to Committee members and relevant officers.

CARRIED (5/0)

For: Presiding Member Baptiste Isambert, Deputy Presiding Member Duy Vo, President Garstone, Deputy President Simpson, Cr McKay.

Against: Nil

Background

2. The Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee is established under the *Local Government Act 1995* to assist Council in fulfilling its oversight responsibilities relating to financial management, audit, risk management, internal controls, legislative compliance and continuous improvement.
3. The Committee operates in accordance with its adopted Terms of Reference and relevant legislative requirements.
4. The establishment of an annual meeting schedule provides certainty for Committee members, Administration, external auditors and other stakeholders, while supporting the timely preparation and consideration of reports.
5. The Committee has traditionally met quarterly, with additional meetings convened where necessary to consider matters requiring attention outside the ordinary meeting cycle.
6. The proposed 2027 meeting schedule continues this approach.

Comments

7. Administration proposes that the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee holds four ordinary meetings during the 2027 calendar year, scheduled for the first Thursday of March, June, September and December.
8. The proposed dates provide a consistent quarterly meeting cycle and allow sufficient time between meetings for Administration to progress actions arising from Committee recommendations.

Proposed 2027 Meeting Schedule

9. The meeting schedule will support implementation of the Committee's 2027 Forward Work Plan and the ongoing monitoring of the Shire's priority governance and organisational improvement projects.
10. The proposed quarterly cycle will also provide opportunities for regular engagement with the Office of the Auditor General, external audit representatives and relevant professional advisers.

Additional Meetings

11. Additional meetings may be convened where required to consider matters including:
    a) annual financial statements and external audit reports.
    b) significant audit findings or matters requiring urgent consideration.
    c) statutory compliance or financial management concerns.
    d) emerging strategic or operational risks.
    e) matters referred to the Committee by Council.
12. Any additional meetings will be arranged in accordance with the Committee's Terms of Reference and applicable legislative requirements.

Meeting Arrangements

13. Meetings are proposed to commence at 5.00 pm, unless otherwise determined.
14. Meeting arrangements, including the venue and any electronic attendance arrangements, will be confirmed through the Shire's normal administrative processes.
15. Administration will coordinate the preparation and circulation of agendas and supporting reports in accordance with the applicable legislative requirements and the Committee's Terms of Reference.

Strategic, Legislation and Policy Implications

Strategic Pillar	
Objective	4. Civic: Working together to strengthen leadership and effective governance.
Outcome:	Civic - 4.1 A local government that is respected and accountable
Strategy:	Civic - 4.1.1 Provide strong, effective and functional governance and leadership in the Shire

Legislation and Policy	
Legislation:	*Local Government Act 1995* *Local Government Amendment Act 2024* *Local Government (Audit) Regulations 1996* *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996*
Policy:	Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee Terms of Reference Relevant Council meeting and governance policies

Financial Implications

16. Costs associated with the conduct of ordinary Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee meetings and Committee Member fees are accommodated within existing operational financial year 26/27 budget allocations.

Sustainability Implications

Sustainability	
Environmental:	There are no significant identifiable environmental impacts arising from adoption of the officer's recommendation.
Economic:	There are no significant identifiable environmental impacts arising from adoption of the officer's recommendation.
Social:	There are no significant identifiable environmental impacts arising from adoption of the officer's recommendation.
Risk Type:	Governance and Compliance
Risk Category:	Governance
Cause:	Failure to establish a coordinated annual meeting schedule for the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee.
Effect:	Delays in considering audit findings, financial management matters, compliance obligations and organisational improvement initiatives
Risk Treatment:	Treat

Adoption of an annual meeting schedule, supported by a structured Forward Work Plan, appropriate agenda preparation and regular monitoring of outstanding Committee actions.

Further information

17. Nil

10.2 Development of a Continuous Improvement Framework – Independent Project Leadership

Author:	Director Governance and Sustainability
Authorising Officers:	Chief Executive Officers
Voting Requirements:	Simple Majoirty
Disclosure of Interest:	The Author and Authorising Officer declare that they do not have any conflicts of interest in relation to this item.
Attachments:	Nil Attachment 1 – Proposed Terms of Reference: Temporary Continuous Improvement Framework Steering Committee Attachment 2 – Proposed Administration Service Landscape snapshot

Matters for Consideration

1. The Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee is requested to consider two governance options for developing a Council-led Continuous Improvement Framework: establishing a temporary Committee of Council or undertaking the project through the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee's existing functions, supported by dedicated special meetings.

Resolution Number: 2026/034 – Acceptance of Amended Report

Moved: Cr Garstone, **Seconded:** Cr McKay

That the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee:

1. **accepts** the amended officer recommendation for Item 10.2 Development of a Continuous Improvement Framework – Independent Project Leadership as tabled at the meeting, for consideration in place of the report contained in the published agenda.

CARRIED (5/0)

For: Presiding Member Baptiste Isambert, Deputy Presiding Member Duy Vo, President Garstone, Deputy President Simpson, Cr McKay.

Against: Nil

Resolution Number: 2026/035 – Substantive Decision

Moved: Cr Simpson, **Seconded:** Cr McKay

That the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee:

1. **notes** the recommendation of the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee that all Council Members participate in this critical governance and organisational improvement project;

2. **endorses** the development of a Shire of Halls Creek Continuous Improvement Framework to strengthen service delivery, governance, financial sustainability, internal controls and organisational performance;

3. **establishes**, under section 5.8 of the *Local Government Act 1995*, the temporary Continuous Improvement Steering Committee for the period ending 30 June 2027;

4. **adopts** the Continuous Improvement Steering Committee Terms of Reference contained in Attachment 1;

5. **appoints** all members of the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee and seeks support that all Council Members participate on the Continuous Improvement Steering Committee;

6. **notes** that the Committee will have no delegated authority and will make recommendations to Council only;

7. **requests** the Committee to oversee the preparation of a draft Continuous Improvement Framework addressing:

    a. service-review methodology;
    b. identification and prioritisation of improvement opportunities;
    c. governance and accountability responsibilities;
    d. performance measures and benefits realisation; and
    e. centralised recording, monitoring and reporting of improvement actions;

8. **requests** that the draft Continuous Improvement Framework be presented to Council by June 2027;

9. **requests** the Chief Executive Officer to prepare an implementation plan following Council's adoption of the Framework and present it to the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee by September 2027;

10. **requests** that Council consider allocating $10,000 through the 2026–27 statutory budget review to establish a Council-Led Projects account to support development of the Framework and obtain independent professional advice where required;

11. **confirms** that responsibility for implementing the adopted Framework will remain with the Chief Executive Officer, with ongoing oversight provided through the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee; and

12. **notes** that the temporary Continuous Improvement Steering Committee will cease on 30 June 2027 unless Council resolves otherwise.

CARRIED (5/0)

For: Presiding Member Baptiste Isambert, Deputy Presiding Member Duy Vo, President Garstone, Deputy President Simpson, Cr McKay.

Against: Nil

Background

2. The *Local Government Amendment Act 2024* introduced significant reforms to the governance arrangements of Western Australian local governments, including strengthening the distinction between Council's governing responsibilities and the Chief Executive Officer's operational management functions.
3. Section 2.7 of the *Local Government Act 1995* establishes Council's responsibility for governing the affairs of the local government, including determining policies, planning strategically, overseeing financial resources, determining services and facilities, and providing strategic direction to the Chief Executive Officer.
4. Section 5.41 of the Act establishes the Chief Executive Officer's responsibilities, including advising Council, implementing Council decisions, managing day-to-day operations and directing employees.
5. These provisions establish an important separation of responsibilities whereby Council determines the strategic direction, governance expectations and desired outcomes of the organisation, while the Chief Executive Officer is responsible for managing the operational arrangements necessary to deliver those outcomes.
6. The legislative reforms also expanded the functions of Audit, Risk and Improvement Committees (ARIC), placing greater emphasis on independent oversight, risk management and organisational improvement on behalf of Council.
7. At the previous ARIC meeting, Cr Garstone raised the importance of continuous improvement and the opportunity for Council to establish a formal framework to guide organisational improvement activities, including structured service reviews.
8. The discussion highlighted the distinction between an internal audit program, which primarily provides assurance over governance, risk management and internal controls, and a Continuous Improvement Framework, which establishes a broader approach to reviewing organisational performance, service delivery, operational efficiency and improvement opportunities.
9. While the Shire continues to progress a range of governance, financial management and operational improvement initiatives, a formal Continuous Improvement Framework has not yet been developed.
10. Establishing a Council-led framework would enable Council to articulate its expectations for organisational performance and service delivery, supported by consistent methodologies for identifying, prioritising, implementing and monitoring improvement initiatives.
11. The proposed approach also recognises the value of the Independent Presiding Member's professional expertise and experience in governance, assurance and organisational improvement, providing an opportunity for Council to draw upon independent specialist advice in developing the framework.
12. It is proposed that the framework be developed as a Council-led project, with Administration subsequently responsible for preparing the operational implementation arrangements necessary to give effect to Council's adopted framework.

Comments

Proposed Governance Arrangements

13. Administration considers the development of a formal Continuous Improvement Framework to be an important opportunity for Council to strengthen its strategic oversight of organisational performance, service delivery, financial sustainability and continuous improvement.

14. Following discussion at the previous Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee meeting, including the matters raised by Cr Garstone, two governance options have been identified for progressing the project.
15. Both options would provide Council with an opportunity to establish its expectations for organisational improvement, contribute to the framework's development and consider the completed framework before adoption.
16. The options also recognise the professional expertise of the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee's Independent Presiding Member and the opportunity to draw upon that expertise in developing a structured and practical approach to continuous improvement.

Option 1 – Establish a Temporary Committee of Council

1. Under this option, Council would establish a Temporary Continuous Improvement Framework Steering Committee pursuant to section 5.8 of the *Local Government Act 1995*. The Committee would be established specifically to guide the development of the Continuous Improvement Framework and make recommendations directly to Council.
2. It is proposed that the Committee comprise the Independent Members of the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee, together with elected members formally appointed by Council. The Committee would operate under Council-approved Terms of Reference, with no delegated financial or operational authority, and would conclude on 30 June 2027 unless otherwise determined by Council.

Advantages

a) Establishes a dedicated Council-led governance structure focused exclusively on developing the framework.
b) Provides formal opportunities for all elected member participation and collective consideration of the framework.
c) Enables the ARIC Independent Member to provide specialist leadership through a clearly defined committee role.
d) Establishes defined responsibilities, meeting procedures, reporting arrangements and a project completion date.
e) Provides a direct reporting pathway to Council for consideration and adoption of the completed framework.

Considerations

f) Requires Council to formally establish a new committee, appoint members and adopt Terms of Reference.
g) Introduces additional meeting administration, governance obligations and resource requirements.
h) May duplicate aspects of ARIC's existing continuous improvement functions.
i) Requires clear arrangements to manage independence, interests and the transition to ARIC's subsequent oversight responsibilities.

Option 2 – Undertake the Project Through ARIC

1. Under this option, the development of the Continuous Improvement Framework would be undertaken as a defined project within ARIC's existing governance and continuous improvement functions. Rather than establishing an additional Committee of Council, ARIC would coordinate the project through its existing membership, supported by special meetings convened specifically to consider the framework's development.
2. The Independent Member would provide specialist guidance, facilitate discussion and assist ARIC in developing recommendations for Council, consistent with the Committee's approved Terms of Reference.

3. All Councillors would be provided with opportunities to contribute to the development of the framework through appropriate consultation and participation arrangements.
4. Councillors who are not appointed members of ARIC may participate through appropriate consultation and meeting arrangements, without acquiring Committee membership or voting rights. Any entitlement to meeting fees would be determined in accordance with the applicable legislative requirements, in this option non-ARIC membership would not be renumerated.
5. Special meetings would be scheduled as required to consider the framework's principles, service review methodology, organisational performance expectations, reporting arrangements and proposed governance responsibilities. The completed draft framework would be presented to Council for consideration and adoption in March 2027.

Advantages

a) Utilises an existing statutory committee with functions relevant to organisational improvement.
b) Avoids establishing an additional committee and associated governance administration.
c) Maintains continuity between framework development and ARIC's subsequent monitoring and oversight responsibilities.
d) Enables focused project discussions through dedicated special meetings.
e) Draws upon the Independent Presiding Member's professional expertise without requiring a separate committee appointment.
f) Provides a potentially more efficient and streamlined governance arrangement.

Considerations

g) ARIC would need to allocate sufficient meeting time and resources to the project alongside its existing audit, risk and compliance responsibilities.
h) The project would require a clearly defined scope, milestones and reporting arrangements to maintain progress.
i) Appropriate consultation arrangements would be required to ensure all Councillors have an opportunity to contribute.
j) The Committee's Terms of Reference and statutory meeting arrangements would need to accommodate the proposed project activities.
k) Appropriate safeguards would be required where ARIC subsequently reviews or evaluates a framework it helped develop.

Comparison of Governance Options

Consideration	Option 1 – Temporary Committee	Option 2 – ARIC-Led Project
Governance structure	New temporary Committee of Council	Existing ARIC
Establishment	Formal Council resolution and Terms of Reference	Council endorsement and confirmation of ARIC's scope
Independent leadership	Independent Member as proposed committee members	Independent Presiding Member provides guidance through ARIC

Councillor involvement	Formal appointment to the temporary committee open to all Councillors to participate	Consultation and participation through agreed arrangements
Meetings	Dedicated temporary committee meetings	Special ARIC meetings as required
Reporting	Recommendations directly to ARIC	ARIC recommendations to Council
Administration	Additional committee administration	Existing committee administration
Project completion	Committee concludes 30 June 2027	Project concludes within ARIC's ongoing work program
Ongoing oversight	Transitions to ARIC	Remains with ARIC
Operational implementation	Chief Executive Officer	Chief Executive Officer

3. Both options provide a suitable pathway for Council to establish a formal Continuous Improvement Framework while maintaining the distinction between Council's strategic governance responsibilities and the Chief Executive Officer's operational management functions.
4. Option 1 provides a dedicated governance structure and a formal mechanism for elected member participation. It may be preferable where Council wishes to establish a separate, time-limited committee with an exclusive focus on framework development.
5. Option 2 provides a more streamlined approach by using ARIC's existing functions and governance arrangements. It would allow the project to progress through dedicated special meetings while maintaining continuity between framework development and ongoing oversight.
6. Regardless of the option selected, the framework would remain a Council-led governance initiative. Council would determine the overarching principles and strategic expectations, while the Chief Executive Officer would retain responsibility for operational planning, employee management, resource allocation and implementation.

Project Delivery and Timeframes

7. The proposed project milestones would remain substantially the same under either option.

Project Milestone	Proposed Timeframe
ARIC consideration of governance options	November 2026
Council determination of preferred governance arrangement	November 2026
Commencement of framework development	December 2026
Framework development and Councillor consultation	December 2026 – March 2027

Presentation of draft framework to Council	March 2027
Preparation of CEO operational implementation plan (TBC)	April–May 2027
Presentation of implementation plan to ARIC	June 2027
Conclusion of temporary committee or defined ARIC project	30 June 2027

8. The framework would be developed progressively, informed by Council's strategic priorities, organisational service delivery information, financial sustainability considerations and the Shire's existing governance and improvement programs.
9. The proposed Organisational Service Delivery Snapshot would provide an initial evidence base to support the framework's development, without constituting a formal service review or committing Council to changes in service delivery. The development process would not authorise Councillors, committee members or the Independent Presiding Member to direct employees or undertake operational management functions.
10. Following adoption of the framework, the Chief Executive Officer would prepare the operational implementation plan for ARIC consideration and subsequent Council determination of any initiatives requiring approval or additional funding.

Financial and Governance Arrangements

11. The proposed allocation of $10,000 through the 2026/27 Annual Budget Review would support the development of the framework under either governance option, subject to Council approval. All expenditure would remain subject to the Shire's procurement requirements, approved budget, applicable delegations and the Chief Executive Officer's financial management responsibilities.
12. The proposed approach would ensure that Council retains ownership of the strategic framework, ARIC provides appropriate governance and improvement oversight, and the Chief Executive Officer remains responsible for operational implementation.

Strategic, Legislation and Policy Implications

Strategic Pillar	
Objective	4. Civic: Working together to strengthen leadership and effective governance.
Outcome:	Civic - 4.1 A local government that is respected and accountable
Strategy:	Civic - 4.1.1 Provide strong, effective and functional governance and leadership in the Shire

Legislation and Policy	
Legislation:	*Local Government Act 1995* • *Section 2.7 — Role of Council.* • *Section 5.8 — Establishment of committees.* • *Section 5.9 — Committee composition.* • *Section 5.10 — Appointment of committee members.* • *Section 5.11 — Tenure of committee membership.*

	• *Section 5.12 — Appointment of committee Presiding Members.* • *Section 5.16 — Delegation of powers and duties to committees.* • *Section 5.19 — Committee quorum.* • *Section 5.41 — Functions of the Chief Executive Officer.* • *Part 5, Division 2 — Council and committee meeting requirements.* • *Part 5, Division 6 — Disclosure of interests.* • *Part 7 — Audit.*
Policy:	Applicable Shire policies relating to governance, elected member conduct, procurement, financial management and meeting procedures.

Financial Implications.

13. The establishment of a dedicated general ledger account titled "Council-Led Projects" is proposed, with an allocation of $10,000 to be considered as part of the 2026/27 Annual Budget Review. The proposed allocation would support eligible expenditure associated with development of the Continuous Improvement Framework and other Council-approved governance initiatives.
14. The final cost of developing the framework has not yet been determined and would depend on the approved project scope, resource requirements and any proposed professional services arrangements.
15. The establishment of a formal Committee of Council may also result in administrative costs associated with meeting preparation, agenda publication, minute-taking and recordkeeping.
16. Remuneration payable to the Independent Chairperson would be in accordance with the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal determination.
17. Expenditure would not be committed until the necessary budget and governance approvals have been obtained.

Sustainability Implications

Sustainability	
Environmental:	There are no significant identifiable environmental impacts arising from adoption of the officer's recommendation.
Economic:	There are no significant identifiable environmental impacts arising from adoption of the officer's recommendation.
Social:	There are no significant identifiable environmental impacts arising from adoption of the officer's recommendation.
Risk Type:	Governance and Operational
Risk Category:	Governance, Legislative Compliance and Organisational Performance
Cause:	Absence of a formal Continuous Improvement Framework and consistent processes for identifying, prioritising and monitoring organisational improvements.

Effect:	Reduced organisational efficiency, ineffective resource allocation, inconsistent service delivery and limited accountability for improvement outcomes.
Risk Treatment:	Treat
Establish a Temporary Continuous Improvement Framework Steering Committee under section 5.8 of the *Local Government Act 1995*, operating under Council-approved Terms of Reference until 30 June 2027. Maintain appropriate governance, independence and conflict-of-interest safeguards, with clear separation between Council's strategic responsibilities and the CEO's operational functions. Present the completed framework to Council in March 2027, followed by a CEO implementation plan to ARIC in June 2027, incorporating achievable priorities, resource requirements and ongoing performance monitoring.	

Further information

18. Nil

ATTACHMENT 1: TEMPORARY CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK STEERING COMMITTEE

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Committee Details	Description
Committee Name	Temporary Continuous Improvement Framework Steering Committee
Committee Type	Temporary Advisory Committee of Council
Establishment	Section 5.8, *Local Government Act 1995*
Responsible Body	Council
Chairperson	Independent Presiding Member of the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee
Delegated Authority	Nil
Commencement	Upon formal establishment by Council
Expiry	30 June 2027, unless otherwise resolved by Council
Reporting	Directly to Council
Council Resolution	To be inserted following adoption

Establishment

1. The Temporary Continuous Improvement Framework Steering Committee (the Committee) is established by Council pursuant to section 5.8 of the *Local Government Act 1995*.
2. The Committee is established for a defined period to guide and oversee the development of a formal Continuous Improvement Framework for the Shire of Halls Creek.
3. The Committee operates as an advisory Committee of Council and has no delegated powers or duties.
4. The Committee is accountable directly to Council and must operate in accordance with the Local Government Act 1995, applicable regulations, the Shire's meeting procedures and these Terms of Reference.
5. 1The Committee will conclude on 30 June 2027 unless Council resolves otherwise.

Purpose

6. The purpose of the Committee is to provide Council-led governance oversight and independent professional guidance in developing a formal Continuous Improvement Framework for the Shire of Halls Creek.
7. The framework will establish a structured and sustainable approach to organisational improvement, service review methodologies, performance measurement, accountability and reporting.
8. The Committee will support Council in establishing strategic expectations for continuous improvement while maintaining the statutory separation between Council's governance responsibilities and the Chief Executive Officer's operational management functions.

9. The Committee will provide an opportunity for elected members to participate in developing the framework and strengthen their understanding of organisational performance, financial sustainability and continuous improvement principles.

Objectives

The objectives of the Committee are to:

10. Develop a formal Continuous Improvement Framework for consideration and adoption by Council.
11. Establish proposed strategic principles and objectives for continuous improvement across the organisation.
12. Develop a consistent methodology for identifying, assessing and prioritising organisational improvement opportunities.
13. Establish a proposed methodology for undertaking organisational service reviews with CEO.
14. Consider appropriate performance measurement, governance, accountability and reporting arrangements.
15. Ensure the proposed framework recognises the Shire's financial, workforce and operational capacity.
16. Promote a progressive, prioritised and achievable approach to organisational improvement.
17. Provide Council with independent professional advice and elected member input during the development of the framework.
18. Establish arrangements for transitioning the adopted framework into ARIC's ongoing statutory oversight program.

Functions and Responsibilities

Framework Development

19. The Committee will:
    a. guide the development of the proposed Continuous Improvement Framework;
    b. consider appropriate continuous improvement principles, methodologies and governance arrangements;
    c. review relevant better-practice approaches to organisational improvement;
    d. consider the relationship between continuous improvement, strategic planning, financial sustainability, risk management and organisational performance; and
    e. recommend the completed draft framework to Council for consideration and adoption.

Organisational Service Reviews

20. The Committee will:
    a. consider a proposed methodology for organisational service reviews;
    b. review the high-level Organisational Service Delivery Snapshot prepared by Administration;
    c. identify potential areas that may warrant further assessment through future service reviews;
    d. consider appropriate criteria for prioritising improvement opportunities; and
    e. ensure the proposed methodology recognises statutory service obligations, community needs, financial implications and organisational capacity.

21. The Committee will not undertake operational service reviews or direct the Chief Executive Officer to commence individual reviews.

Governance and Accountability

22. The Committee will:
    a. establish proposed governance and reporting arrangements for the framework;
    b. consider mechanisms for recording, monitoring and evaluating improvement initiatives;
    c. identify appropriate reporting arrangements to support Council and ARIC oversight; and
    d. ensure operational implementation responsibilities remain with the Chief Executive Officer.

Financial and Organisational Sustainability

23. The Committee will:
    a. consider how the framework will support informed decisions about service delivery costs, resource allocation and financial sustainability;
    b. recognise that improvement initiatives may require additional employee resources, specialist advice, systems investment or other expenditure;
    c. support a progressive and prioritised approach to improvement that reflects available resources; and
    d. ensure the proposed framework provides for the assessment of implementation costs, anticipated benefits and organisational capacity.
24. The Committee will not approve expenditure, determine staffing arrangements or direct changes to service delivery.

Membership

25. The proposed membership of the Committee comprises:
    a. the Independent Members of the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee; and
    b. elected members of Council formally appointed by Council.
26. All elected members of Council will be provided the opportunity to nominate for appointment to the Committee.
27. Committee membership will be determined by Council resolution in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1995*.
28. The Committee must comprise at least three members and satisfy the statutory requirements relating to committee composition.
29. Membership will continue until 30 June 2027, unless otherwise determined by Council or affected by the statutory provisions governing committee membership.
30. The Chief Executive Officer and relevant employees may attend meetings to provide information and professional advice but will not be voting members unless formally appointed by Council.
31. The Committee may invite relevant external advisers or specialists to provide information, subject to applicable procurement, confidentiality and financial requirements.

Chairperson and Project Leadership

32. The Independent Members of ARIC are proposed to be appointed by Council as Project Lead and support of the Committee.

33. The Chairperson is to be elected at first meeting responsibilities include:
    a. Presiding over Committee meetings;
    b. Guiding the Committee's consideration of the framework's strategic principles and proposed structure;
    c. Providing professional advice on governance, organisational improvement and service review methodologies;
    d. Facilitating elected member participation and collective consideration of proposals;
    e. Working with the Chief Executive Officer to identify information and administrative support reasonably required for the project;
    f. Supporting preparation of the draft framework for Committee consideration; and
    g. Presenting the Committee's recommendations to Council.
34. The Chairperson will act within the authority of the Committee and these Terms of Reference.
35. The Chairperson will not exercise independent decision-making authority on behalf of Council or direct Shire employees.
36. Any separate professional services engagement as agreed by Committee must be considered and approved through the appropriate statutory, financial and procurement processes of Council.

Authority and Limitations

37. The Committee has no delegated powers or duties.
38. The Committee may consider matters within its approved scope and make recommendations to Council.
39. The Committee is not authorised to:
    a. direct the Chief Executive Officer or Shire employees;
    b. exercise operational management functions;
    c. approve or commit expenditure, CEO will administer finances;
    d. determine staffing levels or organisational structures;
    e. direct the commencement of individual service reviews;
    f. approve changes to service levels or delivery arrangements;
    g. enter into contracts or engage consultants; or
    h. make decisions reserved for Council.
40. All decisions concerning adoption of the Continuous Improvement Framework remain with Council.
41. All operational management and implementation responsibilities remain with the Chief Executive Officer in accordance with section 5.41 of the *Local Government Act 1995*.

Role of the Chief Executive Officer and Administration

42. The Chief Executive Officer will facilitate reasonable administrative support and access to relevant organisational information to assist the Committee in fulfilling its approved functions.
43. Administration will prepare a high-level Organisational Service Delivery Snapshot to support the Committee's understanding of the Shire's existing services, staffing resources, delivery arrangements and financial commitments.
44. The provision of information will be subject to applicable legislative requirements, confidentiality obligations and the Chief Executive Officer's statutory responsibilities.

45. The Chief Executive Officer will retain responsibility for directing employees, managing resources and determining the operational arrangements required to support the project.
46. Following Council's adoption of the framework, the Chief Executive Officer will prepare an implementation plan in consultation with the Project Lead to ensure alignment of Council expectations.
47. Any proposed initiatives requiring additional resources, changes to service levels or budget allocations will be referred to Council for consideration and determination through the appropriate processes.

Meetings and Procedures

48. The Committee will meet as required to achieve the approved project milestones.
49. Meetings will be convened and conducted in accordance with *the Local Government Act 1995*, applicable regulations and the Shire's adopted meeting procedures.
50. Meeting notices, agendas and supporting papers will be prepared and distributed in accordance with statutory requirements.

Quorum

51. The quorum for Committee meetings shall be at least 50% of the total number of Committee members formally appointed by Council, in accordance with section 5.19 of the Local Government Act 1995. Where the calculation results in a fraction, the number shall be rounded up to the next whole number.
52. Only formally appointed Committee members (by Council) will be counted towards the quorum.
53. Decisions of the Committee will be made in accordance with applicable statutory voting requirements.
54. Minutes will be recorded and maintained in accordance with the Shire's statutory recordkeeping obligations.
55. Committee meetings will be open to the public except where a meeting, or part of a meeting, is lawfully closed in accordance with the Act.
56. The Chief Executive Officer will arrange appropriate administrative support for meetings, subject to available resources and consultation with the Project Lead.

Conflicts of Interest and Independence

57. The Committee will operate in accordance with applicable legislative requirements concerning disclosure of interests, conduct and conflicts of interest.
58. The Independent Chairperson's involvement in both the development of the framework and ARIC's subsequent oversight does not, of itself, constitute a disqualifying conflict of interest.
59. The establishment of a formal Committee of Council provides a transparent and accountable structure through which the Independent Chairperson's professional expertise can be applied for Council's benefit.
60. Appropriate governance safeguards include:
    i. collective Committee consideration of framework development;
    j. formal Council appointment of Committee members and the Chairperson;
    k. Council-approved Terms of Reference;
    l. statutory meeting and disclosure requirements;
    m. no delegated financial or operational authority;
    n. direct reporting of the completed framework to Council; and

    o. final adoption of the framework by Council.

61. Members must disclose and manage relevant interests in accordance with applicable legislation.
62. The Independent Chairperson must comply with applicable disclosure requirements when matters associated with the framework are subsequently considered by ARIC.
63. Any actual, potential or perceived conflicts will be assessed and managed through the applicable statutory and governance processes.
64. The Committee will maintain appropriate independence from operational management while respecting the Chief Executive Officer's statutory responsibilities.

Reporting to Council

65. Committee is accountable directly to Council.
66. Committee recommendations will be presented to Council through the appropriate statutory meeting processes.
67. The Committee will provide progress updates to Council where required.
68. The completed draft Continuous Improvement Framework will be presented directly to Council for consideration and adoption in March or as soon as practical.

Attachment 2: Service landscape snapshot

Complete one row for each service. Costs should be calculated on a consistent full-cost basis and reconciled to the adopted budget or annual financial statements.

Service area	Service owner	Delivery model	FTE (#)	Annual Gross Cost	Revenue / Grants	Net cost	Statutory status
Governance and Council Support	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]
Executive Services and Corporate Strategy	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]
Financial Services	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]
Rates and Revenue	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]
Procurement and Contract Management	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]
Human Resources and Workforce Planning	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]
Work Health and Safety	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]
Information and Communications Technology	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]
Records, Information, Privacy and Freedom of Information	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]
Customer Service	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]
Communications and Community Engagement	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]
Community Development	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]
Youth Services	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]
Aboriginal Engagement and Remote Community Services	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]
Economic Development and Tourism	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]
Library Services	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]
Arts, Culture and Heritage	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]
Recreation and Sport	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]

Service area	Service owner	Delivery model	FTE (#)	Annual Gross Cost	Revenue / Grants	Net cost	Statutory status
Aquatic Services	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]
Community Facilities, Property and Housing	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]
Statutory Planning	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]
Building Services	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]
Environmental Health	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]
Public Health and Community Wellbeing	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]
Waste Management	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]
Roads, Drainage and Civil Works	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]
Parks, Gardens, Playgrounds and Public Spaces	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]
Asset Management	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]
Fleet, Plant, Workshop and Depot Operations	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]
Capital Projects and Major Works Delivery	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]
Emergency Management and Recovery	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]
Community Safety, Ranger Services and Local Law Enforcement	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]
Environmental Management, Sustainability and Climate Resilience	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]
Cemeteries	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]
Aerodromes and Airstrips	[Role]	[In-house / outsourced / shared / partnership]		$[ ]	$[ ]	$[ ]	[Mandatory / mixed / discretionary / agency-funded]

10.3 Proposed Establishment of an Annual Independent Assurance and Targeted Audit Programme

Author:	Director Governance and Sustainability
Authorising Officers:	Chief Executive Officer
Voting Requirements:	Simple Majority
Disclosure of Interest:	The Author and Authorising Officer declare that they do not have any conflicts of interest in relation to this item.
Attachments:	Nil

Matters for Consideration

1. The Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee is requested to consider recommending that Council endorse the establishment of a four-year rolling Independent Assurance and Targeted Audit Program, with one priority area independently reviewed each financial year, and provide appropriate funding through the annual budget process.
2. The proposal responds to the legislative reforms effective from 1 January 2026 and discussions at the previous Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee meeting regarding the benefits of a more transparent, targeted and independently assessed approach to organisational assurance.

Resolution Number: 2026/036

Moved: Cr Garstone, **Seconded:** Presiding Member Isambert

That the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee recommends that Council:

3. **endorses** the establishment of a four-year rolling Independent Assurance and Targeted Audit Program, incorporating annual independent reviews of priority governance, financial management, legislative compliance and internal control systems.
4. **supports** the proposed approach of undertaking targeted annual reviews, rather than the CEO commissioning a single consolidated review at the end of each statutory review cycle, provided the program satisfies the requirements of regulation 17 of the Local Government (Audit) Regulations 1996.
5. **endorses in principle** the following four-year review cycle, with the sequencing and scope of individual reviews to be determined following consultation between the Chief Executive Officer and ARIC:

   Year 1 – Risk Management;
   Year 2 – Financial Management;
   Year 3 – Legislative Compliance; and
   Year 4 – Internal Control and Organisational Systems.
6. **supports** the engagement of suitably qualified independent external professionals to undertake the annual reviews and provide evidence-based findings, risk assessments and recommendations for improvement.
7. **requests** the Chief Executive Officer to procure a proposed four-year Independent Assurance and Targeted Audit Program, including indicative scopes, priorities, estimated costs and reporting arrangements, for consideration by ARIC.

8. **requests** the Chief Executive Officer to identify an appropriate annual funding allocation for the program through the 2026/27 Annual Budget Review or subsequent annual budget processes, for Council's consideration and approval.
9. **requests** that the findings of each annual review, together with the Chief Executive Officer's response and proposed management actions, be presented to ARIC for consideration and recommendation to Council.
10. **endorse** the establishment of a consolidated management action register to monitor recommendations arising from independent reviews, with progress reporting to ARIC and Council through the Shire's established governance and assurance processes.

CARRIED (5/0)

For: Presiding Member Baptiste Isambert, Deputy Presiding Member Duy Vo, President Garstone, Deputy President Simpson, Cr McKay.

Against: Nil

Background

11. The *Local Government Amendment Act 2024* and associated regulatory reforms introduced significant changes to the governance and assurance arrangements applying to Western Australian local governments.
12. These reforms included amendments to the *Local Government (Audit) Regulations 1996* and the *Local Government (Financial Management) Regulations 1996*, which commenced on 1 January 2026.
13. Previously, local governments were required to undertake separate periodic reviews under:
    a) Regulation 5(2)(c) of the *Local Government (Financial Management) Regulations 1996*, concerning the appropriateness and effectiveness of financial management systems and procedures; and
    b) Regulation 17 of the *Local Government (Audit) Regulations 1996*, concerning risk management, internal control and legislative compliance.
14. Both reviews were subject to a three-financial-year review cycle.
15. The reforms removed the separate financial management review requirement under regulation 5(2)(c) and incorporated financial management into an amended regulation 17.
16. Under the amended regulation 17, the Chief Executive Officer must review the appropriateness and effectiveness of the local government's systems and procedures not less than once in every 4 financial years relating to:
    a) Financial management;
    b) Legislative compliance; and
    c) Risk management.
17. Each of these matters must be reviewed at least once every four financial years, with the Chief Executive Officer required to report the results of each review to ARIC. Although internal control is no longer expressly identified as a separate review category under regulation 17, it remains fundamental to effective financial management, legislative compliance, risk management and organisational governance.

18. The reforms provide an opportunity for the Shire to reconsider how its statutory review obligations are undertaken and establish a more structured approach to independent assurance.
19. At the previous ARIC meeting, the Deputy Presiding Member (Mr Duy Vo) raised the benefits of moving towards a more targeted and transparent approach to reviewing the Shire's governance and operational systems.
20. The discussion identified an opportunity to replace the previous practice of undertaking broad, consolidated periodic reviews with a structured annual program of independent assessments.
21. Such an approach would allow Council and ARIC to receive more frequent assurance regarding the effectiveness of the Shire's systems, identify deficiencies earlier and monitor corrective actions progressively.
22. The proposal is particularly relevant as the Shire continues to strengthen its governance arrangements, financial management practices, organisational controls and legislative compliance systems.

Comments

Legislative Reform and Regulation 17 Requirements

23. The amended regulation 17 provides greater flexibility in how local governments undertake their statutory reviews.
24. Rather than requiring all prescribed areas to be reviewed simultaneously, the regulation permits the Chief Executive Officer to review individual areas at different times, provided each prescribed area is reviewed at least once every four financial years.
25. This enables the Shire to establish a rolling review program that distributes assurance activities across the statutory cycle.
26. The Shire could therefore undertake a targeted review of one priority area each year, supported by an independent external assessment of the relevant systems, procedures and controls.
27. The use of an independent external reviewer would not transfer the Chief Executive Officer's statutory responsibility under regulation 17. The Chief Executive Officer would remain responsible for ensuring the required reviews are undertaken and reporting their results to ARIC.
28. ARIC would subsequently consider the findings, evaluate proposed management actions and make recommendations to Council regarding any improvements required.
29. This approach would satisfy the intent of the reforms by reducing duplication while strengthening the quality, frequency and transparency of organisational assurance.

Proposed Four-Year Independent Assurance Program

30. It is proposed that the Shire establish a rolling four-year Independent Assurance and Targeted Audit Program, with one principal review undertaken each financial year.
31. The following program is proposed for initial consideration, with the final sequence to be determined having regard to the Shire's current risk profile, outstanding audit findings and organisational priorities.

Review Year	Proposed Audit Area	Indicative Review Focus
Year 1 FY 26/27	Risk Management	Strategic and operational risk registers, risk identification and assessment, risk treatments, reporting

		arrangements and effectiveness of risk management practices.
Year 2 FY 27/28	Financial Management	Financial management systems, procurement, expenditure controls, delegations, reconciliations, payroll, revenue, asset accounting and financial reporting.
Year 3 FY 28/29	Legislative Compliance	Statutory obligations, compliance monitoring, delegations, governance procedures, statutory reporting, registers and legislative compliance controls.
Year 4 FY 29/30	Internal Control and Organisational Systems	Internal control effectiveness, segregation of duties, information systems, records management, fraud prevention, operational controls and implementation of previous recommendations.

32. The program would operate on a rolling basis, with the review cycle recommencing following completion of Year 4. The proposed annual sequencing would ensure that each of the three areas prescribed under regulation 17 is reviewed within the statutory four-financial-year period.
33. The fourth-year internal control review would provide additional assurance beyond the express requirements of regulation 17, while supporting the effectiveness of the other prescribed systems.
34. The program would also allow ARIC to recommend adjustments to review priorities where emerging risks, significant audit findings or changes in organisational circumstances warrant earlier attention.
35. The proposed program would be designed to complement, rather than duplicate, the Shire's annual financial statement audit, Compliance Audit Return and other statutory assurance activities.

Benefits of Independent External Reviews

36. Administration considers that engaging suitably qualified external professionals would provide several advantages over relying solely on internally prepared periodic reviews. An independent reviewer would bring specialist expertise, objective assessment methodologies and experience identifying governance and control deficiencies across comparable organisations.
37. External reviews would provide ARIC and Council with greater confidence that findings have been assessed independently of the officers responsible for operating the systems under review.
38. The proposed approach would also provide a more transparent basis for identifying deficiencies, determining their significance and prioritising corrective actions.
39. Independent reviews would typically involve:

    a) reviewing relevant policies, procedures and organisational records;
    b) assessing the design and effectiveness of key controls;
    c) testing selected transactions, processes or compliance requirements where appropriate;
    d) identifying control gaps, weaknesses and improvement opportunities;
    e) assessing the risks associated with identified deficiencies;
    f) providing practical, prioritised recommendations; and
    g) preparing a formal report for management response and Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee consideration.

40. The proposed reviews would therefore extend beyond a general assessment of whether policies and procedures exist, providing independent evidence regarding whether relevant systems and controls are operating effectively.
41. This approach would support a gradual transition towards a structured internal audit program, without requiring the immediate establishment of a permanent internal audit function.
42. The annual program would also enable the Shire to build an evidence base regarding organisational improvements and demonstrate progress over successive financial years.

Addressing Historical Deficiencies and Strengthening Organisational Assurance

43. The Shire has undertaken considerable work to strengthen its governance, financial management, risk management and organisational systems.
44. As the organisation continues to address previously identified deficiencies and improve its governance maturity, a structured independent assurance program would provide an opportunity to evaluate whether corrective actions are achieving their intended outcomes or prioritise where resources need to be allocated.
45. Rather than relying primarily on periodic broad-based reviews, targeted annual assessments would enable particular areas of risk to receive more detailed attention.
46. The findings would assist Council and ARIC in distinguishing between:

    a) historical deficiencies that have been satisfactorily addressed;
    b) existing controls that require further improvement;
    c) emerging risks or weaknesses requiring management attention; and
    d) opportunities to strengthen organisational systems and accountability.

47. This would support a more transparent assessment of the Shire's progress and provide assurance that governance improvements are being embedded into everyday operations.
48. Importantly, the proposed program would not be intended to attribute responsibility for historical deficiencies to individual employees.
49. Its purpose would be to provide an objective assessment of organisational systems and controls, identify opportunities for improvement and support the Shire's ongoing governance recovery and organisational development.

Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee Oversight and Management Action Reporting

50. The proposed program would strengthen the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee's ability to exercise its statutory oversight functions by providing a regular schedule of independent assurance reports. Each completed review would be accompanied by a management response prepared under the direction of the Chief Executive Officer.
51. The management response would identify proposed corrective actions, responsible officers, implementation priorities, resource requirements and indicative completion dates.
52. Findings and recommendations would be incorporated into a consolidated management action register, allowing ARIC to monitor implementation and identify overdue or unresolved matters.
53. Where significant deficiencies are identified, ARIC may recommend that Council consider additional resources, policy amendments or other governance measures. Responsibility for implementing management actions would remain with the Chief Executive Officer.
54. Council would retain responsibility for considering recommendations requiring changes to strategic direction, policy, service levels or approved financial resources.

55. This reporting arrangement would establish a clear assurance pathway between the independent reviewer, Chief Executive Officer, ARIC and Council.

Relationship with the Continuous Improvement Framework

56. The proposed Independent Assurance and Targeted Audit Program would complement the separate proposal to establish a formal Continuous Improvement Framework.
57. The two initiatives would serve related but distinct purposes. The independent assurance program would assess whether the Shire's governance, financial management, legislative compliance and risk management systems are appropriate and effective. The Continuous Improvement Framework would establish a broader methodology for assessing organisational performance, service delivery, operational efficiency and improvement opportunities.
58. Findings arising from independent reviews could inform the Shire's continuous improvement priorities, while ARIC would maintain oversight of agreed corrective actions.
59. The proposed arrangements would provide Council with a more integrated approach to assurance, accountability and organisational improvement without unnecessarily duplicating existing statutory functions.

Financial and Resourcing Considerations

60. Establishing an annual independent assurance program would require Council to consider a recurring financial allocation for external professional services. The cost of each review would depend on its scope, complexity, testing requirements and the level of specialist expertise required.
61. A targeted annual approach would allow the Shire to plan and distribute review expenditure across successive financial years, rather than incurring the cost of a broad consolidated review at the end of each statutory cycle.
62. While independent reviews would involve an additional annual expenditure commitment, the program may provide longer-term benefits through earlier identification of deficiencies, reduced exposure to governance and financial risks, and more effective prioritisation of corrective actions.
63. It is proposed that the Chief Executive Officer obtain indicative costings for the four-year program and identify an appropriate annual budget allocation. The proposed allocation would be presented for Council's consideration through the 2026/27 Annual Budget Review or subsequent annual budget processes.
64. No external engagement or expenditure would be committed until the necessary procurement, financial and budget approvals have been obtained.
65. The scope of individual reviews would be developed in consultation with ARIC, with procurement and contract administration remaining the responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer.

Strategic, Legislation and Policy Implications

Strategic Pillar	
Objective	4. Civic: Working together to strengthen leadership and effective governance.
Outcome:	Civic - 4.1 A local government that is respected and accountable

Strategy:	Civic - 4.1.1 Provide strong, effective and functional governance and leadership in the Shire

Legislation and Policy	
Legislation:	*Local Government Act 1995* • *Section 2.7 – Role of Council.* • *Section 5.41 – Functions of the Chief Executive Officer.* • *Part 7 – Audit.* *Local Government (Audit) Regulations 1996* • *Regulation 16 – Functions of the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee.* • *Regulation 17 – Chief Executive Officer's review of certain systems and procedures.* *Local Government (Financial Management) Regulations 1996* • *Regulation 5 – Chief Executive Officer's financial management responsibilities.*
Policy:	Applicable Shire policies relating to: • Governance and internal control; • Risk management; • Financial management; and • Procurement and contract management.

Financial Implications

66. The proposal would establish an ongoing requirement for annual independent assurance reviews, subject to Council approval and budget availability. The financial commitment has not yet been determined and would depend on the scope and complexity of each review.
67. The Chief Executive Officer would prepare indicative costings and identify an appropriate annual allocation for Council's consideration through the budget process. The proposed program may also identify corrective actions requiring additional operational or capital expenditure. Such expenditure would be subject to separate assessment and approval.
68. The estimated cost of an independent assurance review is approximately $20,000 per financial year. It is proposed that Council make provision through the 2026/27 Annual Budget Review to engage an independent specialist to assess the Shire's risk management environment.
69. Thereafter, an annual budget allocation would be established to support independent assurance reviews commencing in January of each financial year, subject to Council approval and available funding.

Sustainability Implications

Sustainability	
Environmental:	There are no significant identifiable environmental impacts arising from adoption of the officer's recommendation.

Economic:	The proposed program would support the Shire's long-term financial sustainability by strengthening financial management, risk management and internal controls. Independent assurance reviews would assist in identifying control weaknesses, financial risks, inefficiencies and opportunities for improvement, potentially reducing future financial exposure and supporting more effective allocation of Council resources.
Social:	The proposed program would strengthen public confidence in the Shire's governance, transparency and accountability. Independent assessment of organisational systems and controls would support improved decision-making, responsible management of public resources and the Shire's capacity to deliver reliable and sustainable services to the community.
Risk Type:	Strategic and Operational
Risk Category:	Governance
Cause:	The absence of a structured, independently assessed assurance program may result in weaknesses within the Shire's risk management, financial management, legislative compliance and internal control systems remaining unidentified or inadequately addressed. Reliance on periodic internal reviews without independent verification may also limit Council's and ARIC's ability to obtain objective assurance regarding the effectiveness of organisational systems and corrective actions.
Effect:	Failure to identify and address deficiencies may expose the Shire to increased financial, operational, legislative and reputational risks, including ineffective internal controls, non-compliance with statutory obligations, financial loss, inefficient resource allocation and reduced community confidence.
Risk Treatment:	Treat

Establish a four-year rolling Independent Assurance and Targeted Audit Program, incorporating annual reviews undertaken by suitably qualified independent external professionals.

The proposed risk treatments include:

- undertaking an independent review of the Shire's risk management environment during the 2026/27 financial year.
- establishing an annual review program covering financial management, legislative compliance and internal control systems over the subsequent three financial years.
- providing an indicative annual budget allocation of $20,000, subject to Council approval, procurement requirements and the scope of each review.
- scheduling annual independent reviews to commence in January of each financial year.
- presenting independent review findings and the Chief Executive Officer's management responses to ARIC for consideration and recommendation to Council.
- maintaining a consolidated management action register to monitor identified deficiencies, corrective actions, responsible officers and implementation timeframes.

- reporting progress against outstanding recommendations to ARIC and Council through established governance and assurance processes.
- reviewing and adjusting the annual assurance program in response to emerging organisational risks, significant audit findings and changing legislative requirements.

The proposed treatment would strengthen the Shire's assurance arrangements, provide greater transparency regarding the effectiveness of organisational controls and support the progressive improvement of governance and risk management practices.

Further information

Nil

10.4 Rapid Platform – Digitalisation Program Update (Tender Outcomes, Organisational Achievements and Future Direction)

Author:	Governance and Sustainability
Authorising Officers:	Chief Executive Officer
Voting Requirements:	Simple Majority
Disclosure of Interest:	The Author and Authorising Officer declare that they do not have any conflicts of interest in relation to this item.
Attachments:	Nil

Matters for Consideration

1. The Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee is requested to consider the progress and outcomes of the Shire's Rapid Platform Digitalisation Program against the original Digital Solutions Development and Implementation tender objectives, including achievements to date, developments underway and the proposed transition to ongoing operational funding and staff change management.

Resolution Number: 2026/037

Moved: Cr Garstone, **Seconded:** Cr Simpson

That the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee recommends Council:

2. **receives** the Rapid Platform – Digitalisation Program Update (Tender Outcomes, Organisational Achievements and Future Direction) report.
3. **notes** the significant progress achieved against the original Digital Solutions Development and Implementation tender objectives, including the completion and deployment of 24 digital modules across governance, compliance, workforce administration and operational services.
4. **acknowledges** the successful establishment of an organisation-wide digital platform supporting improvements to internal controls, statutory compliance, administrative efficiency and organisational accountability.
5. **notes** the five additional modules currently under development or testing and the extensive pipeline of future digitalisation opportunities identified across the organisation.
6. **supports** the proposed transition to an ongoing operational digitalisation model, with future development requirements to be considered through relevant directorate operational budgets, subject to annual budget approval and applicable procurement requirements.
7. **acknowledges** the ongoing staff change management program and the importance of embedding digital systems into everyday organisational operations.

CARRIED (5/0)

For: Presiding Member Baptiste Isambert, Deputy Presiding Member Duy Vo, President Garstone, Deputy President Simpson, Cr McKay.

Against: Nil

Background

8. The Shire of Halls Creek commenced its Digital Solutions Development and Implementation Program as part of a broader organisational improvement initiative aimed at strengthening governance, internal controls, statutory compliance and operational efficiency. Previous external audits and independent reviews identified weaknesses within the Shire's internal control environment, including reliance on manual administrative processes, fragmented business systems, inconsistent recordkeeping and limited management oversight.
9. In June 2025, Council adopted the Shire's ICT Roadmap, establishing a strategic direction for modernising business systems, improving ICT governance and strengthening organisational capability. To support these objectives, the Shire undertook a competitive procurement process to establish a modern, cloud-enabled digital platform capable of supporting administrative and operational functions across the organisation.
10. The original project sought to introduce a coordinated digital environment that would automate manual workflows, improve information management, strengthen governance and compliance controls, and provide greater consistency and accountability in organisational processes.
11. At its Ordinary Council Meeting held on 27 November 2025, Council resolved under Resolution 2025/161 to appoint Rapid Platform Projects Pty Ltd as the preferred supplier for the Shire's Digital Solutions Development and Implementation project.
12. Since commencement, the program has delivered 24 completed digital modules across governance, compliance, workforce administration, financial administration and operational services, with a further five modules progressing through development or testing.
13. The implementation has demonstrated the platform's capacity to support a broad range of organisational functions and provides a foundation for continued improvements to internal controls, administrative efficiency and service delivery.
14. As the initial implementation program progresses towards completion, the Shire is considering a transition from a centrally funded implementation project to an ongoing operational digitalisation model, supported by directorate planning, annual budget processes and progressive staff change management.

Comments

Original Tender Objectives and Outcomes Achieved

15. The Rapid Platform Digitalisation Program has delivered substantial progress towards the Shire's original digital transformation objectives and established a coordinated platform supporting multiple organisational functions.
16. The original tender was intended to address longstanding weaknesses in administrative systems, internal controls and information management through the implementation of a unified digital business platform.
17. The proposed solution was designed to automate manual processes, strengthen governance and compliance, improve management reporting and provide a scalable digital environment capable of supporting future organisational requirements.
18. The implementation has resulted in 24 completed and deployed modules, representing significant progress in establishing the digital infrastructure necessary to support these objectives.
19. The following table summarises the original tender expectations and the outcomes achieved to date.

Original Tender Expectations	Outcomes Achieved	Assessment
Establish a unified digital business platform.	A coordinated platform supporting 24 completed digital modules across multiple organisational functions.	Substantial progress achieved.
Automate administrative workflows and reduce reliance on manual processes.	Digital workflows introduced for recruitment, onboarding, delegations, remuneration, grants and regulatory administration.	Significant progress achieved.
Strengthen governance, compliance and internal controls.	Strategic and Operational Risk Registers, Delegations Register, Financial Delegations, Policy Register and Statutory Compliance Calendar deployed.	Significant improvement in internal control infrastructure.
Improve statutory reporting and organisational accountability.	Primary and Annual Returns, Contract Register, Grants Register and compliance monitoring systems completed.	Significant progress achieved.
Improve information management and management reporting.	Centralised registers and selected dashboards introduced, with further reporting capabilities identified.	Progressing.
Provide an accessible digital environment across the organisation.	User Landing Page and operational workflows established to support multiple directorates.	Progressing through staff adoption.
Establish a scalable platform supporting future organisational requirements.	Extensive future development pipeline identified across governance, finance, workforce, infrastructure and community services.	Strong organisational capability established.
Strengthen cybersecurity, resilience and data integrity.	Technical requirements established through the original procurement and broader ICT transformation program.	Ongoing technical verification and assurance required.

20. The outcomes demonstrate that the original procurement has provided the Shire with more than a series of individual digital applications. It has established a flexible platform capable of supporting ongoing organisational improvement and progressively replacing fragmented administrative systems.
21. The most significant benefit is the ability to continue developing digital solutions in response to operational requirements without the need to establish a separate technology platform for each business function.

Current Implementation Status

22. As at October 2026, 24 digital modules have been finalised and deployed, with five additional modules progressing through development, configuration or testing.

23. The completed modules are outlined below.

Governance, Risk and Compliance	Workforce, Community and Operational Services
Common Seal Register	Recruitment
Communications Agreement	Workforce Establishment
Contract Management	Offer of Employment
Councillor Remuneration	Onboarding Checklist
Delegations Register	Induction and Mandatory Training
Financial Delegations	WHS Incident Register
Operational Risk	Community Grants
Policy Register	Pool Attendance Register
Primary and Annual Returns	Food Premises Inspections
Statutory Compliance Calendar	Food Licences
Strategic Risk Register	Crime Dashboard
Strategic Risk Data Migration	User Landing Page
Compliance Calander	
Grants Register	
Contracts Register	
15 Completed Modules	*12 Completed Modules*

24. Of particular significance is the recent completion of the Statutory Compliance Calendar, Grants Register and Contract Register, which provide improved mechanisms for monitoring legislative obligations, funding agreements, contractual commitments and associated responsibilities.
25. These developments represent important improvements to the Shire's internal control infrastructure, providing greater visibility of organisational obligations, responsible officers and reporting requirements.

Developments Currently Underway

26. Five additional modules are currently progressing through development, configuration or testing.

Development	Current Status
Conflict of Interest Register	Development underway.
Digital Agenda and Minutes – Council and Committees	Agenda component currently in testing.
Gifts and Benefits Register	Development underway.
Weapons Register	Development underway.
Probation Assessment Program	Development underway.

27. The Digital Agenda and Minutes development represents a significant component of the current program and is intended to support the preparation and administration of Council and Committee meeting documentation through a structured digital environment.
28. The agenda component is currently undergoing testing, with further development and verification required before operational implementation.
29. The Tender Value development is also approaching completion and is expected to further strengthen procurement administration and oversight by the end of the FY.

Organisational Achievements and Benefits

30. The Rapid Platform has made a significant contribution to strengthening the Shire's governance, internal controls and administrative capability.
31. Historically, many organisational processes were managed through separate spreadsheets, manual registers, email correspondence and paper-based forms. These arrangements created administrative duplication, inconsistent recordkeeping and limited management visibility.
32. The introduction of structured digital workflows and centralised registers has provided improved consistency, accountability and accessibility of organisational information.
33. The principal benefits achieved include:
    a) Governance and compliance: Improved monitoring of statutory obligations, delegations, policies, disclosures and organisational risks.
    b) Financial accountability: Stronger administration of financial delegations, contracts, grants and remuneration.
    c) Workforce management: More consistent recruitment, onboarding, induction and employment administration.
    d) Operational efficiency: Reduced reliance on fragmented manual systems and duplicated administrative processes.
    e) Management oversight: Improved visibility of responsibilities, reporting requirements and organisational information.
    f) Organisational capability: Establishment of a scalable digital platform capable of supporting future developments across all directorates.
34. The implementation represents substantial progress in addressing historical governance and administrative weaknesses identified through previous audits and independent reviews.
35. While the deployment of digital systems does not automatically demonstrate that every underlying control is operating effectively, the program has established a significantly improved framework for organisational accountability, monitoring and assurance.

Future Direction and Operational Funding

36. The successful implementation has demonstrated the broader capability of the Rapid Platform to support digitalisation across the organisation. An extensive pipeline of future developments has been identified across governance, finance, procurement, workforce management, regulatory services, infrastructure and community services.
37. These opportunities include procurement management, financial reporting dashboards, workforce administration, regulatory inspections, asset management, fleet administration, capital works monitoring, customer requests and records management.

38. As the original implementation program progresses towards completion, the Shire is positioned to transition from a centrally funded project to an ongoing operational digitalisation model.
39. Under this approach, individual directorates will identify and prioritise future developments through their normal operational planning and annual budget processes.
40. This will enable digitalisation expenditure to be considered against operational requirements, organisational risks, available resources and expected benefits.
41. The Governance Directorate will continue to support coordination and consistency across the platform to ensure future developments align with organisational governance, information management and internal control requirements.
42. The transition represents an important milestone, establishing digitalisation as an ongoing organisational improvement activity rather than a project limited to the original tender implementation.

Staff Change Management

43. While the technical implementation of the Rapid Platform has been extremely successful, the long-term benefits will depend on the continued adoption and effective use of the systems by staff. A progressive staff change management process is underway to support the transition from established manual processes to structured digital workflows.
44. This includes reviewing existing administrative practices, standardising processes, clarifying responsibilities and supporting staff to become familiar with the new systems.
45. Change management is progressing alongside the implementation of additional modules and will remain a priority as the organisation builds its internal capability.
46. The next stage will place greater emphasis on staff adoption, data quality, management reporting and ensuring completed systems are embedded into everyday operations.

Overall Assessment

47. The Rapid Platform Digitalisation Program is considered an extremely successful organisational improvement initiative, having substantially progressed the objectives of the original tender and established a practical digital solution capable of supporting the Shire's broader operational requirements.
48. The delivery of 24 digital modules demonstrates significant implementation progress and provides tangible improvements to the Shire's governance, administrative and internal control infrastructure.
49. Importantly, the program has established a platform that can continue to evolve as organisational requirements change, providing opportunities for ongoing improvements across all directorates.
50. The transition to operational funding, supported by continued staff change management, will enable the Shire to progressively embed digitalisation into its normal business planning and service delivery arrangements.
51. The program has therefore moved beyond the implementation of individual digital applications towards establishing an organisation-wide capability for continuous improvement, stronger governance and more efficient operations.

Future Development Pipeline

52. In addition to the 24 completed modules and five developments currently underway, the Shire has established an extensive pipeline of potential digital developments across its governance, corporate and operational functions.
53. The consolidated development register identifies 131 digital processes, registers, applications, reporting tools and workflow opportunities, demonstrating the significant potential for the Rapid Platform to support ongoing organisational improvement across all directorates.
54. The register includes completed modules, developments currently underway, proposed enhancements and additional opportunities identified through consultation with officers. Accordingly, the pipeline is not intended to represent 131 outstanding developments or an approved program of works.
55. The identified opportunities span the following organisational functions:

Functional Area	Identified Development Opportunities
Governance, Risk and Compliance	PRIS Compliance Module, Executive Task Register, ARIC Workspace, FOI Register, Public Interest Disclosure Register, Code of Conduct Register, Complaints Management, Legislative Obligations Reporting, Policy Review Tracker and Records Management
Finance and Procurement	Budget versus Actual Dashboard, Procurement Register, Procurement Spend Analytics, Purchasing Card Register, Financial Reporting Library, Rates, Budget Management Repository and Reimbursements
Workforce and Human Resources	Workforce Analytics, Performance Review System, Staff Training Register, Training Compliance Tracking, Staff Housing Register, Housing Allowances, Probation Assessment Program and Learning and Development
Health and Regulatory Services	Water Sampling, Food Inspections, Building Applications, Development Application Management, Caravan Park Licensing, Septic Applications, Public Buildings Register, Fire Inspections and Inspection Management
Ranger and Community Safety	Animal Management Register, Cat Trapping, Abandoned Vehicles, Illegal Dumping, Ranger Activity Logs, Parking and Littering Infringements, Weapons Register and Fire Permits
Infrastructure and Assets	Capital Works Program, Fleet Management System, Vehicle Prestart Checklist, Maintenance Backlog Register, Asset Management Plans Repository, Road Condition Notifications and Asset Register Amendments
Community and Recreation Services	Facility Hire Applications, Library Membership, Aquatic and Recreation Memberships, Pool Operations, Volunteer Registration, Event Applications and Community Grants Management

Strategic Planning and Reporting	Strategic Community Plan, Annual Operational Planning, Integrated Planning and Reporting Library, Tourism Metrics Dashboard, Economic Data Repository, Community Metrics Dashboard and Investment Pipeline Tracker
Customer Service and Administration	Customer Request CRM, CRM Case Management, Digital Forms, Electronic Attendance Approvals, Media and Promotion Approvals and Records Disposal Tracking

56. The scale of the development pipeline demonstrates that the original investment has established a digital platform capable of supporting a much broader range of organisational activities than initially implemented.
57. The next stage of the program will focus on consolidating completed developments, progressing modules already underway and establishing a structured approach to assessing and prioritising future requirements.
58. Proposed developments will be evaluated against statutory obligations, organisational risk, operational efficiency, existing system capabilities, implementation costs, available resources and expected benefits.
59. As the original implementation program approaches completion, it is proposed that responsibility for identifying and funding future developments progressively transition to individual directorates through their annual operational planning and budget processes.
60. The Governance Directorate will continue to coordinate the broader digitalisation program to support consistency in system design, governance requirements, information management, internal controls and reporting arrangements.
61. A consolidated development register will be maintained to distinguish completed modules, developments underway, proposed enhancements and future opportunities. This will support transparent prioritisation, prevent duplication and provide a basis for monitoring the Shire's ongoing digitalisation activities.
62. The future development pipeline represents a significant opportunity to continue modernising the Shire's administrative and operational systems while ensuring that additional investment remains aligned with organisational priorities, available resources and Council-approved budgets.

Strategic, Legislation and Policy Implications

Strategic Pillar	
Objective	4. Civic: Working together to strengthen leadership and effective governance.
Outcome:	Civic - 4.1 A local government that is respected and accountable
Strategy:	Civic - 4.1.1 Provide strong, effective and functional governance and leadership in the Shire

Legislation and Policy	
Legislation:	*Local Government Act 1995* *Local Government Amendment Act 2024* *Local Government (Financial Management) Regulations*
Policy:	The program supports the implementation and administration of the Shire's existing governance, risk management, procurement, financial management, information management and recordkeeping policies. The program also aligns with the Shire's ICT Roadmap and broader organisational improvement initiatives.

Financial Implications

63. The Rapid Platform Digitalisation Program was established through a competitive procurement process, with Council resolving on 27 November 2025, under Resolution 2025/161, to appoint Rapid Platform Projects Pty Ltd as the preferred supplier for the Digital Solutions Development and Implementation project.
64. The original implementation program has delivered 24 completed digital modules, with a further five modules progressing through development or testing, representing a significant investment in strengthening the Shire's governance, administrative and operational systems.
65. As the original implementation program approaches completion, it is proposed that the Shire transition from a centrally funded digitalisation project to an ongoing operational funding model, with future developments identified and prioritised through directorate operational planning.
66. The financial implications of future digitalisation requirements are not yet known. These will be assessed as part of the Shire's forthcoming Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Business Case Review, including consideration of existing software investments, ongoing licensing and support costs, system integration requirements and any proposed additional software applications or modules.
67. The ERP Business Case Review will provide an opportunity to assess the Shire's broader digital systems environment, identify potential duplication, evaluate future development priorities and determine the most appropriate and financially sustainable approach to ongoing software investment.
68. Any future digital developments, software acquisitions or enhancements will be subject to further assessment, available funding, applicable procurement requirements and Council approval through the annual budget process.
69. No additional expenditure is authorised through adoption of the officer's recommendation. Future financial commitments will be considered following the ERP Business Case Review and through the Shire's established operational planning and budget processes.

Sustainability Implications

Sustainability	
Environmental:	There are no significant identifiable environmental impacts arising from adoption of the officer’s recommendation.
Economic:	There are no significant identifiable environmental impacts arising from adoption of the officer’s recommendation.

Social:	There are no significant identifiable environmental impacts arising from adoption of the officer's recommendation.
Risk Type:	Strategic and Operational
Risk Category:	Governance and ICT management
Cause:	Continued reliance on manual administrative processes, fragmented information systems and inconsistent recordkeeping may result in weaknesses in organisational controls, statutory compliance, information management and management oversight. Further risks may arise where digital systems are implemented without appropriate staff training, clearly defined responsibilities, effective change management, system security controls and ongoing monitoring.
Effect:	Failure to effectively implement and embed digital systems may result in: • Continued administrative inefficiencies and duplication of processes. • Incomplete or inconsistent organisational records. • Increased risk of statutory non-compliance. • Weaknesses in internal controls and management reporting. • Reduced visibility of organisational obligations and responsibilities. • Data quality, privacy and information security risks. • Underutilisation of the Shire's investment in digital infrastructure. • Reduced organisational accountability and operational effectiveness.
Risk Treatment:	Treat

Continue the implementation and progressive consolidation of the Rapid Platform Digitalisation Program through a coordinated organisational approach.

Risk treatments include:

- Completing and verifying the functionality of modules currently under development or testing.
- Maintaining a consolidated development register identifying completed modules, developments underway and future digitalisation opportunities.
- Prioritising future developments according to statutory obligations, organisational risks, operational requirements and available resources.
- Implementing ongoing staff training, change management and clearly defined system ownership responsibilities.
- Establishing consistent procedures for data management, user access, information security and system administration.
- Monitoring the effectiveness of digital workflows and internal controls following implementation.
- Ensuring future developments align with the Shire's ICT Roadmap, governance requirements and existing corporate systems.
- Transitioning future development expenditure to directorate operational planning and annual budget processes, subject to Council approval.
- Reporting significant implementation risks, control deficiencies and improvement opportunities through the Shire's established governance and assurance processes.

These treatments would support the effective use of the Rapid Platform, strengthen organisational controls and ensure the Shire continues to realise benefits from its investment in digital infrastructure.

Further information

Nil

10.5 Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee Annual Work Plan 2027

Author:	Governance and Sustainability
Authorising Officers:	Chief Executive Officers
Voting Requirements:	Simple Majority
Disclosure of Interest:	The Author and Authorising Officer declare that they do not have any conflicts of interest in relation to this item.
Attachments:	Attachment 1: Terms of Reference Attachment 2: Annual Work Plan 2027

Matters for Consideration

1. Council is requested to consider and endorse the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee (ARIC) Annual Work Plan 2027, as detailed in Attachment 1. The proposed work plan establishes a coordinated reporting schedule across four quarterly meetings, aligned with the Committee's Terms of Reference, statutory obligations, the Shire's financial-year reporting cycle and current governance and organisational improvement priorities.

Resolution Number: 2026/038

Moved: Cr Garstone, **Seconded:** Cr Simpson

That the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee recommends Council:

2. **notes** that the Annual Work Plan establishes a structured program of reporting aligned with the Committee's adopted Terms of Reference, statutory responsibilities and the Shire's financial-year reporting and external audit cycles.
3. **notes** that the Annual Work Plan provides for quarterly oversight of strategic and operational risks, audit findings and management actions, together with scheduled consideration of financial management, legislative compliance, internal controls, independent assurance and continuous improvement initiatives.
4. **requests** the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the ARIC Presiding Member, to coordinate the delivery of reports in accordance with the Annual Work Plan, with any material changes or deferred reporting requirements identified for the Committee's consideration.
5. **supports** an annual review of the work plan to ensure continued alignment with legislative requirements, emerging organisational risks and Council's governance priorities.

CARRIED (5/0)

For: Presiding Member Baptiste Isambert, Deputy Presiding Member Duy Vo, President Garstone, Deputy President Simpson, Cr McKay.

Against: Nil

Background

6. The Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee is established under sections 5.8 and 7.1A of the *Local Government Act 1995* to provide independent oversight and assistance to Council in fulfilling its audit, risk management, financial reporting, legislative compliance and internal control responsibilities.
7. The Committee operates under Terms of Reference adopted by Council on 3 December 2025, which establish its purpose, functions, membership, reporting responsibilities and meeting arrangements.
8. The Terms of Reference require the Committee to meet at least four times annually, with meetings scheduled to align with the Shire's audit and risk reporting cycles.
9. The Committee's responsibilities include oversight of the external audit process, strategic and operational risk management, internal controls, legislative compliance, business continuity and disaster recovery, and the monitoring of recommendations arising from audit and assurance activities.
10. The development of an Annual Work Plan provides a structured mechanism for coordinating these responsibilities, ensuring that statutory reporting obligations and key governance matters are considered throughout the year.
11. The proposed Annual Work Plan 2027 has been developed with reference to the Committee's adopted Terms of Reference and incorporates the Shire's current audit, risk, compliance and organisational improvement priorities.
12. The proposed work plan is presented as Attachment 1 and identifies the reporting activities scheduled for each quarterly meeting, together with references to the relevant provisions of the Committee's Terms of Reference.

Comments

Annual Work Plan Structure

13. The proposed Annual Work Plan 2027 establishes a coordinated reporting program across the Committee's four scheduled meetings.
14. The work plan comprises 30 reporting activities, distributed across the year to balance the Committee's workload while accommodating statutory reporting deadlines, financial-year requirements and significant project milestones.
15. Reporting activities are organised around the Committee's principal areas of responsibility, including:
    a. Committee governance and performance.
    b. External audit and financial reporting.
    c. Financial management and internal controls.
    d. Strategic and operational risk management.
    e. Independent assurance and audit recommendations.
    f. Legislative compliance and governance.
    g. Continuous improvement and organisational development.
16. Each activity is linked to the relevant Committee Terms of Reference provision, providing a clear relationship between the proposed reporting schedule and the Committee's established responsibilities.
17. The proposed reporting program balances recurring quarterly oversight with targeted annual and periodic reviews, reducing unnecessary duplication while ensuring that significant governance matters receive appropriate consideration.

Alignment with the Financial-Year Reporting Cycle

18. Particular consideration has been given to aligning the Annual Work Plan with the Shire's financial year, which operates from 1 July to 30 June. The March and June 2027 meetings will provide opportunities to consider outstanding matters arising from the 2025/26 external audit, financial management improvements and preparations for the conclusion of the 2026/27 financial year.
19. The September 2027 meeting will focus on relevant financial-year-end reporting, external audit progress and the implementation of outstanding financial management and audit recommendations.
20. The December 2027 meeting is the proposed reporting point for consideration of the 2026/27 Annual Financial Report and associated external audit outcomes, subject to completion of the audit and availability of the auditor's report. The work plan also provides for the ongoing monitoring of management actions arising from external audit findings, ensuring that outstanding recommendations remain subject to Committee oversight throughout the year.
21. These arrangements will assist the Committee in meeting its financial reporting and external audit responsibilities while maintaining appropriate flexibility to accommodate changes in audit scheduling.

Strategic and Operational Risk Management

22. Risk management remains a core component of the Committee's responsibilities, with quarterly reporting incorporated into the Annual Work Plan. The Committee will receive regular updates on the Strategic Risk Register and Operational Risk Register, including changes to risk ratings, emerging risks, control effectiveness and progress against identified risk treatments.
23. The work plan also provides for scheduled consideration of the Shire's Risk Management Framework, Risk Appetite Statement, ICT and cybersecurity risks, Business Continuity Plan and Disaster Recovery Plan.
24. These reporting arrangements will support the Committee in assessing whether the Shire's risk management systems remain effective and responsive to its operating environment.

Independent Assurance and Internal Controls

25. The Annual Work Plan incorporates reporting associated with the Shire's proposed Four-Year Independent Assurance and Targeted Audit Program, subject to Council endorsement and the availability of approved funding.
26. The proposed assurance program provides for a structured cycle of independent reviews across risk management, financial management, legislative compliance and internal control systems.
27. The work plan provides for consideration of independent review outcomes, management responses and the implementation of corrective actions.
28. A consolidated management action register will support the Committee's oversight of outstanding recommendations arising from independent assurance activities, external audits and other governance reviews.
29. The Committee will provide oversight and recommendations to Council, while responsibility for implementing corrective actions and managing operational systems will remain with the Chief Executive Officer.

Legislative Compliance and Governance

30. The proposed work plan includes consideration of the annual Compliance Audit Return, legislative compliance reporting and other significant statutory obligations.
31. The 2026 Compliance Audit Return is scheduled for consideration at the March 2027 meeting, consistent with the annual compliance reporting cycle (date TBC).
32. The work plan also incorporates monitoring of relevant governance and legislative reforms, including the implementation of Privacy and Responsible Information Sharing requirements.
33. These activities will support the Committee's oversight of the Shire's compliance environment and assist in identifying legislative or governance matters requiring further action.

Continuous Improvement and Organisational Development

34. The proposed Annual Work Plan recognises the Committee's role in supporting continuous improvement through independent oversight of governance systems, organisational controls and the implementation of audit recommendations.
35. Subject to Council endorsement, the work plan incorporates reporting associated with the development and implementation of the Shire's Continuous Improvement Framework.
36. The work plan also provides for oversight of significant organisational improvement initiatives, including the Enterprise Resource Planning Business Case Review, Chart of Accounts Review and Rapid Platform Digitalisation Program.
37. Reporting on these initiatives will be aligned with relevant project milestones and will focus on governance, risk management, internal controls, financial accountability and the implementation of identified improvements.
38. The Committee's role will remain advisory, with operational implementation and management responsibilities retained by the Chief Executive Officer.

Workload Distribution and Monitoring

39. The proposed Annual Work Plan distributes reporting requirements across the four quarterly meetings, with consideration given to the complexity of individual reports and the timing of statutory obligations.
40. The proposed reporting allocations are summarised below:

Meeting Date	Scheduled Reporting Activities
Thursday, 4 March 2027	12
Thursday, 3 June 2027	14
Thursday, 2 September 2027	12
Thursday, 2 December 2027	14

41. The distribution provides for a manageable reporting program while maintaining consistent oversight of the Committee's principal responsibilities. The Annual Work Plan is intended to remain flexible to accommodate emerging risks, significant audit findings, legislative changes and matters referred by Council.
42. The Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the ARIC Presiding Member, will coordinate the scheduling and preparation of reports in accordance with the approved work plan.

43. Where a scheduled report cannot be presented within the proposed reporting period, the reasons for deferral and revised reporting arrangements will be identified for the Committee.
44. The Annual Work Plan will be reviewed annually to ensure its continued relevance and alignment with the Committee's statutory responsibilities, Terms of Reference and Council's governance priorities.
45. Adoption of the proposed Annual Work Plan will strengthen accountability for scheduled reporting, support more effective Committee oversight and provide Council with greater assurance that significant governance, financial, risk and compliance matters are being monitored.

Strategic, Legislation and Policy Implications

Strategic Pillar	
Objective	4. Civic: Working together to strengthen leadership and effective governance.
Outcome:	Civic - 4.1 A local government that is respected and accountable
Strategy:	Civic - 4.1.1 Provide strong, effective and functional governance and leadership in the Shire

Legislation and Policy	
Legislation:	*Local Government Act 1995* *Local Government Amendment Act 2024* *Local Government (Financial Management) Regulations*
Policy:	Nil

Financial Implications

46. Adoption of the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee Annual Work Plan 2027 does not, of itself, create any additional financial commitment or authorise expenditure.
47. The proposed work plan incorporates statutory and governance reporting activities that form part of the Shire's existing administrative responsibilities and will be coordinated through available organisational resources.
48. Certain activities, including independent assurance reviews and specialist financial or governance improvement projects, may require additional external professional services.
49. Any expenditure associated with these activities will be subject to separate consideration through the Shire's annual budget processes, applicable procurement requirements and approved financial delegations.
50. The Annual Work Plan will assist in identifying future resource requirements and coordinating the delivery of audit, risk management and governance improvement activities within available financial resources.

Sustainability Implications

Sustainability	
Environmental:	There are no significant identifiable environmental impacts arising from adoption of the officer's recommendation.
Economic:	There are no significant identifiable environmental impacts arising from adoption of the officer's recommendation.
Social:	There are no significant identifiable environmental impacts arising from adoption of the officer's recommendation.
Risk Type:	Strategic
Risk Category:	Governance
Cause:	The absence of a coordinated annual reporting program may result in statutory obligations, audit findings, emerging risks and organisational improvement priorities not being considered or monitored in a timely and consistent manner.
Effect:	Inadequate or inconsistent oversight may result in delayed corrective actions, unresolved governance deficiencies, increased exposure to financial and compliance risks and reduced accountability to Council and the community.
Risk Treatment:	Adopt and implement the ARIC Annual Work Plan 2027 to establish a coordinated reporting program aligned with statutory requirements, the Committee's Terms of Reference and the Shire's financial-year reporting cycle. The treatment will include quarterly monitoring of strategic and operational risks, financial management, audit findings and outstanding management actions, together with scheduled reviews of legislative compliance, internal controls and continuous improvement initiatives. The Annual Work Plan will be monitored throughout the year, with deferred reporting requirements identified and an annual review undertaken to maintain alignment with emerging risks and Council's governance priorities.

Further information

51. Nil

Attachment 1: Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee Annual Work Plan 2027.

Description	4 March 2027	3 June 2027	2 Sep 2027	2 Dec 2027	ToR and Clause
Committee Governance					
2027 Annual Work Plan					7; 8 (general)
Quarterly action register and outstanding decisions					8 – Audit (d); Compliance (c)
ARIC Terms of Reference and committee effectiveness					1–3; 7; 8
2028 Annual Work Plan and meeting schedule					7; 8 (general)
External Audit					
Annual Financial Report and audit outcomes					8 – Audit (b), (d), (f)
Financial Management					
Outstanding Debtors (including rates)					8 – Internal Control (a), (c), (e)
Chart of Accounts Review – findings and implementation					8 – Internal Control (a), (d)
ERP Business Case Review – systems, controls and options					8 – Internal Control (a), (d)
Risk Management					
Strategic Risk Register Review					8 – Risk (a)–(c)
Operational risk register Review					8 – Risk (a)–(c)
Risk Appetite Statement Review, Risk Management Policy Review					8 – Risk (a), (c)
ICT and cybersecurity risk assessment					8 – Risk (d)
Business Continuity					
Business Continuity Plan / Disaster Recovery Plan – testing and assurance					8 – Risk (e); BCP/DRP (a)–(c)
Independent Assurance					

Audit and assurance recommendations – consolidated action register					8 – Audit (d); Compliance (c)
Compliance					
2026 Compliance Audit Return – review and recommendation					8 – Compliance (a)
Legislative compliance exceptions and remediation					8 – Compliance (b), (c)
PRIS privacy and information sharing compliance					8 – Compliance (c); Internal Control (c)
Internal Controls					
Delegations, key policies and compliance controls					8 – Internal Control (b), (c), (e)
Grants, procurement and contract management assurance					8 – Internal Control (a), (c)
Internal Audit Plan FY 26/27 - Risk					8 – Internal Control (a), (c)
Continuous Improvement					
Continuous Improvement Framework – development and Council consideration					3; 8 – Internal Control (d)
Continuous Improvement Framework – CEO implementation plan					3; 8 – Internal Control (d)
Continuous improvement register and delivery progress					8 – Internal Control (d); Compliance (c)
Digital Governance					
Rapid Platform digitalisation – governance, controls and benefits					8 – Internal Control (a), (d)
Emerging Matters					
Material emerging audit, risk and compliance matters					8 – Audit; Risk; Compliance
ERP Review					

Shire of Halls Creek Integrity Framework					
Integrated Planning Framework Progress					

Attachment 2

Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee Terms of Reference

Adopted: 03 December 2025

Last Reviewed: 28 Aug 2025

Associated Legislation

- *Local Government Act 1995*, s.5.8 and s.7.1A
- Local Government (Audit) Regulations 1996, Regulations 16 and 17
- Local Government (Financial Management) Regulations 199

Associated Documents

- AS ISO 31000:2018 – as the governing standard for risk management
- Local Government (Model Code of Conduct) Regulations 2021 – especially Regulation 22
- Standing Orders Local Law 2015 – for meeting procedures
- Shire of Halls Creek Risk Management Policy
- Shire of Halls Creek Risk Management Procedures
- Shire of Halls Creek Risk Management Framework
- Strategic and Operational Risk Registers
- Shire of Halls Creek Councillor Code of Conduct
- Shire of Halls Creek Code of Conduct for Employees
- Shire of Halls Creek Standing Orders Local Law 2015

Establishment

The Committee is established pursuant to Section 5.8 and 7.1A of the *Local Government Act 1995*.

4.0 Section 7.1A of the *Local Government Act 1995* sets out the following:

(1) A local government is to establish an audit committee of 3 or more persons to exercise the powers and discharge the duties conferred on it.

(2) The members of the audit committee of a local government are to be appointed* by the local government and at least 3 of the members, and the majority of the members, are to be council members.
**Absolute majority required.*

(3) A CEO is not to be a member of an audit committee and may not nominate a person to be a member of an audit committee or have a person to represent him or her as a member of an audit committee.

(4) An employee is not to be a member of an audit committee.
[Section 7.1A inserted: No. 49 of 2004 s. 5; amended: No. 5 of 2017 s. 11.]

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1. Purpose
The Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee ("the Committee") provides independent oversight and assistance to Council in fulfilling its responsibilities for:

- financial reporting and audit processes;
- strategic and operational risk management;
- internal control systems;
- legislative compliance;
- business continuity and disaster recovery planning.

The Committee is a formally appointed Committee of Council and is responsible to that body. It does not have executive powers, authority to implement actions in areas where the CEO has legislative responsibility, delegated financial authority, or any management functions.

2. Objectives
The Committee will:

1. accept responsibility for the annual external audit and liaise with the local government's auditor so that Council can be satisfied with the performance of the local government in managing its statutory, fiscal, and governance affairs.
2. oversee the Shire's integrated risk management framework, including strategic, operational, governance, compliance, environmental, reputational, work health and safety, ICT/cybersecurity, and community/cultural risks.
3. support the effective management of all categories of risk through oversight of the consolidated Strategic and Operational Risk Registers.
4. Facilitate:
    - the enhancement of the credibility and objectivity of internal and external financial and performance reporting;
    - effective management of financial and non-financial risks, and the protection of Shire assets;
    - compliance with laws, regulations, and best practice guidelines for audit, risk management, internal control, and legislative compliance;
    - coordination of internal and external audit programs;
    - effective communication between the external auditor, any internal auditor, the CEO, and Council.

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3. Powers of the Committee
In accordance with Regulation 16 of the Local Government (Audit) Regulations 1996, the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee is established to provide guidance and assistance to Council on matters within its approved Terms of Reference. The Committee plays an important advisory role in supporting informed decision-making

by Council, particularly in relation to its legislative functions and responsibilities that have not been delegated to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

The Committee is a formally constituted advisory committee of Council and is directly accountable to the Council. These Terms of Reference take effect from the date the Committee is formally established by resolution.

The Committee:

- does not hold executive powers;
- has no authority to implement actions in areas under the legislated responsibility of the CEO;
- has no delegated financial authority;
- does not have decision-making powers, the ability to bind the Council, or the authority to commit Council to expenditure;
- cannot involve itself in management activities, operational decision-making, or staff matters.

All Committee members are required to adhere to the Shire of Halls Creek's confidentiality obligations. In particular:

- no confidential information obtained, discussed, or generated by the Committee is to be disclosed to any unauthorised person;
- information must only be shared in accordance with Council policy and resolutions, or where authorised by the Committee or Council.

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4. Membership

4.1 Composition

The Committee will comprise five voting members, appointed by Council:

a. Presiding Member – an independent person appointed via public advertisement, in accordance with section 87 of the *Local Government Amendment Act 2024*.
b. Deputy Presiding Member – an independent person, also appointed via public advertising, subject to the same eligibility requirements as the Presiding Member.
c. Three Elected Members of Council, two of whom are the President and Deputy President (who cannot serve as Presiding or Deputy Presiding Member).

Council may appoint deputy members for the elected member positions in accordance with *Section 5.11A* of the *Local Government Act 1995*, to serve in the absence of an appointed Council member.

4.2 Induction

All appointed Committee members will participate in a formal induction session at or prior to their first meeting. This induction will cover:

a. legislative responsibilities and committee purpose
b. governance and integrity expectations
c. risk and audit functions
d. code of conduct requirements
e. declaration

4.3 Conflict of Interest and Conduct

Obligations Committee members must

comply with:

- Regulation 22 of the Local Government (Model Code of Conduct) Regulations 2021
- *Local Government Act 1995*, including conflict and financial interest provisions
- Shire of Halls Creek Code of Conduct for Elected Members, Committee Members and Candidates

All members must:

- Declare any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest or pecuniary interests, including commercial affiliations or associations that may impact the impartiality of the Committee's business.
- Submit such declarations in writing to the CEO before the meeting, or verbally at the meeting immediately prior to the relevant item being considered.

4.4 Appointment of Presiding and Deputy Presiding Member

The Presiding Member and (if appointed) Deputy Presiding Member of the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee must be independent persons, in accordance with *Section 87 of the Local Government Amendment Act 2024*. These individuals must not be:

- An elected member of any local government; or
- An employee of any local government.

4.5 Appointment Process

- The positions will be advertised publicly, inviting expressions of interest from suitably qualified and experienced individuals.
- The CEO will assess all nominations and make a recommendation to Council, supported by a report outlining each candidate's suitability.
- Council will appoint the Presiding and Deputy Presiding Members by absolute majority resolution.

4.6 Selection Criteria

Candidates will be assessed on their demonstrated qualifications and experience in two or more of the following areas:

- Internal or external audit
- Risk management
- Financial management or reporting
- Information and Communications Technology (ICT)
- Audit or governance committee practices

4.7 Acting Presiding Member

In accordance with *Section 7.1B(3) of the Local Government Act 1995*, where:

- The Presiding Member position is vacant, or
- The Presiding Member is unavailable, unwilling, or unable to act,

In accordance with Section 87(4) of the *Local Government Amendment Act 2024*, where the Presiding Member is absent, unwilling, or unable to act, the Deputy Presiding Member must assume the role of Presiding Member for the duration of that meeting.

If the Deputy Presiding Member is also unavailable, the committee may elect another independent member to chair for that meeting.

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5. Terms of Membership

All members have full voting rights.

The CEO or his/her nominee is to be available to attend meetings to provide advice and guidance to the committee (non-voting).

Council's Auditor may be invited to attend meetings of the Committee and should attend meetings relating to the draft annual financial report and results of the external audit.

The members of the Committee are appointed until:

a. The person no longer holds the office by which the person became a member. or
b. The person resigns from membership of the committee; or

c. The next ordinary elections day.

Whichever happens first, in accordance with section 5.11 of the *Local Government Act 1995*.

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6. Quorum

A quorum for Committee meetings shall be three voting members, and must include either the Presiding Member or Deputy Presiding Member if the Chair is unavailable.

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7. Meeting Frequency

- The Committee will meet at least four (4) times annually, timed to align with audit and risk reporting cycles.
- Additional meetings may be convened by the Presiding Member.
- Meetings are open to the public under s.5.23(2) of the *Local Government Act 1995*.

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8. Duties and Responsibilities

The Committee will operate in accordance with all relevant provisions of the *Local Government Act 1995*, the Local Government (Audit) Regulations 1996, and the Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996.

In accordance with Regulation 16 of the Local Government (Audit) Regulations 1996, the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee is established to provide independent guidance and assistance to the Council on matters within its remit. This includes matters relating to financial reporting, risk management, internal controls, audit functions, and continuous improvement.

The Committee's role is to support informed decision-making by Council in fulfilling its legislative responsibilities, particularly in areas that have not been delegated to the Chief Executive Officer, ensuring that governance standards are upheld and legislative obligations are met.

The Committee will:

Audit Functions

(a) provide guidance and assistance to Council on its internal and external audit functions.
(b) meet with the auditor at least once annually.
(c) liaise with the CEO to ensure that the auditor is assisted in conducting audits efficiently and effectively.
(d) examine auditor reports, determine if matters require action, and ensure that appropriate follow-up occurs.
(e) review the scope and effectiveness of the audit plan and methodology.

(f) recommend adoption of the Annual Financial Report to Council.

Risk Management Functions

(a) oversee the Shire's integrated risk management framework.
(b) receive quarterly reports on key risk trends, including changes to risk ratings, control effectiveness, and mitigation progress.
(c) review and recommend updates to the Strategic and Operational Risk Registers.
(d) review the Shire's approach to ICT and cybersecurity risk management.
(e) monitor business continuity and disaster recovery planning.
(f) consider community and cultural risk factors in the Shire's operating environment.
(g) recommend a risk-based internal audit plan and review its outcomes.
(h) ensure internal audit findings are linked to the risk register and actioned.

Compliance Functions

(a) review the Annual Compliance Audit Return.
(b) review the CEO's triennial Regulation 17 review of risk management, internal control, and legislative compliance.
(c) monitor implementation of recommendations from internal and external audits, risk reviews, and compliance assessments.

Internal Control Functions

(a) review whether management's internal control framework is effectively designed, implemented, and maintained.
(b) assess whether relevant policies, procedures, and delegations are in place, and periodically reviewed and updated.
(c) review whether appropriate mechanisms exist to monitor compliance with key policies and procedures.
(d) assess how management identifies and responds to required changes in internal controls or control environments.
(e) review the control systems supporting the exercise and oversight of delegated authority.

Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery

(a) evaluate whether the Shire has adopted a structured and effective approach to business continuity planning, including the development, maintenance, and testing of Business Continuity Plans (BCPs) and Disaster Recovery Plans (DRPs).
(b) assess whether these plans are reviewed periodically to ensure currency, relevance, and alignment with the organisation's operational and strategic risk environment.
(c) consider the adequacy of resourcing, roles, and responsibilities assigned for ensuring service continuity in the event of a disruption.

10. Members must

comply with:

- *Local Government Act 1995* (including conflict of interest provisions);
- Shire of Halls Creek Councillor Code of Conduct;
- Standing Orders Local Law 2015;
- Local Government (Rules of Conduct) Regulations 2007 (Elected Members).

11. Administrative Support

The CEO will provide secretarial and administrative support to the Committee, including preparation and distribution of agendas and minutes.

11. New Business of an Urgent Nature (Late Items)

Resolution Number: 2026/039 – Tabling of Late Report

Moved: Cr Garstone, **Seconded:** Cr Simpson

That the late officer report titled *Council Member Interim Communication Protocol and Use of Question on Notice* be tabled for consideration as Item 11.1.

CARRIED (5/0)

For: Presiding Member Baptiste Isambert, Deputy Presiding Member Duy Vo, President Garstone, Deputy President Simpson, Cr McKay.

Against: Nil

Resolution Number: 2026/040 – Acceptance of Late Report

Moved: Cr Simpson, **Seconded:** Presiding Member Isambert

That Council accepts the late officer report for Item 11.1 - Council Member Interim Communication Protocol and Use of Question on Notice as tabled at the meeting and agrees to consider the matter.

CARRIED (5/0)

For: Presiding Member Baptiste Isambert, Deputy Presiding Member Duy Vo, President Garstone, Deputy President Simpson, Cr McKay.

Against: Nil

11.1 Council Member Interim Communication Protocol and Use of Question on Notice

Author:	Governance and Sustainability
Authorising Officers:	Chief Executive Officer
Voting Requirements:	Simple Majority
Disclosure of Interest:	The Author and Authorising Officer declare that they do not have any conflicts of interest in relation to this item.
Attachments:	Attachment 1: Interim Communication Protocol

Matters for Consideration

1. The Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee is requested to consider the proposed EMP-GOV-18 Council Member Communication Protocol and recommend its adoption by Council as an interim governance policy.
2. The protocol is intended to:
    a. reinforce the statutory separation between Council's governance role and the Chief Executive Officer's responsibility for administration and operations;
    b. establish the correct process for questions on notice;
    c. prevent routine operational matters from unnecessarily occupying Council decision-making time;
    d. centralise formal Council Member requests through the Rapid Platform;
    e. ensure requests and responses are monitored, reported and properly recorded; and
    f. reduce the risk of Council Members, employees or the Shire inadvertently breaching the Local Government Act 1995 or the Model Code of Conduct.

Resolution Number: 2026/041

Moved: Presiding Member Isambert, **Seconded:** Cr Garstone

That the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee:

1. **receives** the report concerning the separation of Council and administrative functions and the use of questions on notice for operational matters.
2. **notes** that:
    a. Council exercises its functions collectively through properly constituted Council and Committee meetings;
    b. individual Council Members do not independently exercise the powers or functions of Council;
    c. the Chief Executive Officer is responsible for managing the Shire's administration, operations, employees, contractors and operational priorities;
    d. questions on notice must not be used as a service-request process, to direct operational activity or to circumvent the Chief Executive Officer's administrative responsibility; and
    e. submitting an operational matter as a question on notice does not convert it into a matter requiring a Council decision.

3. **recommends** that Council adopt EMP-GOV-18 Council Member Communication Protocol as an interim governance policy.
4. **recommends** that Council approve the Rapid Platform Online Form as the central channel for formal Council Member requests, including:
    a. administrative support;
    b. agenda information and clarification;
    c. formal questions on notice;
    d. proposed briefing or workshop matters;
    e. operational information;
    f. community service requests; and
    g. integrity, conduct or confidential matters.
5. **notes** that EMP-GOV-18:
    a. has been prepared having regard to the draft communications agreement regulations and draft Ministerial default communications agreement;
    b. is an interim protocol and does not yet constitute a statutory communications agreement under section 5.92A of the Local Government Act 1995;
    c. will be reviewed with Shire lawyers when sections 5.92A–5.92C and the associated regulations and Ministerial order commence; and
    d. will remain subject to any amendments necessary to comply with the final statutory requirements.
6. **recommends** that the Chief Executive Officer be authorised to:
    a. allocate each request to the appropriate employee for response;
    b. maintain a separate administrative register of nominated employees and their authorised subject areas; and
    c. provide a de-identified implementation and compliance report to the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee after six months.
7. **notes** that the timeframe for finalisation and commencement of the regulations and Ministerial order is presently unknown and **requests** that, once the final statutory communication requirements, regulations and Ministerial order are released and commenced:
    a. EMP-GOV-18 Council Member Interim Communication Protocol be referred to the Shire's legal advisers to confirm compliance with sections 5.92A–5.92C of the *Local Government Act 1995* and the final prescribed requirements;
    b. any amendments recommended by the Shire's legal advisers be incorporated into a revised draft communications agreement; and
    c. the revised communications agreement and legal compliance advice be reported back to ARIC for consideration and before formal adoption.

CARRIED (5/0)

For: Presiding Member Baptiste Isambert, Deputy Presiding Member Duy Vo, President Garstone, Deputy President Simpson, Cr McKay.

Against: Nil

Background

8. Council has experienced recurring uncertainty about the distinction between questions on notice, notices of motion and operational service requests.
9. This was demonstrated in matters submitted by Cr Robson and considered under Council Resolution 2026/115. The matters concerned the flying and replacement of flags and notification to Council Members about service disruptions and infrastructure breakdowns. Although submitted as questions on notice, the matters included proposed policy directions and operational requirements.
10. The Local Government Monitor advised that questions on notice should be submitted in advance and that their acceptance at the meeting was a matter for the Acting Presiding Member. The second matter was not accepted and was subsequently withdrawn.
11. Questions on notice are not intended to operate as a maintenance request system, a substitute for a notice of motion or a means of directing the Administration. These matters demonstrate the need for a clear protocol distinguishing Council's governance role from the Chief Executive Officer's operational responsibilities.
12. Questions on notice provide Council Members with a formal mechanism to obtain information relevant to the performance of their statutory functions and to support informed consideration of matters within Council's governance responsibilities.
13. They should be used where a written response is required on a strategic, policy, financial or Council decision-making matter and must be submitted in accordance with the Standing Orders.
14. They are not intended to operate as a maintenance request system, a substitute for a notice of motion or a means of directing the Administration. These matters demonstrate the need for a clear protocol distinguishing Council's governance role from the Chief Executive Officer's operational responsibilities.

Comments

15. Sections 2.7 and 5.41 of the *Local Government Act 1995* establish a clear separation between Council's governing role and the Chief Executive Officer's responsibility for managing the Shire's administration and operations.
16. Council acts collectively to determine policy, service levels through budget, strategic direction and the allocation of finances and resources. Individual Council Members do not have authority to direct employees, reprioritise works, commit resources or determine how operational matters will be resolved.
17. Routine maintenance, service complaints and operational requests should not continue to occupy Council's formal decision-making time. Submitting an operational matter as a question on notice does not convert it into a matter requiring a Council decision.
18. EMP-GOV-18 establishes an interim communication protocol and makes Rapid the central channel for formal Council Member requests. The automated workflow will ensure that requests are:
    a. recorded and categorised;
    b. allocated to the appropriate employee by the CEO;
    c. acknowledged within two working days;
    d. responded to, or provided with an estimated response date, within ten working days;
    e. appropriately shared with Council Members; and
    f. monitored through a complete audit trail.
19. Individual employees should not be permanently listed in the policy as direct points of contact. The CEO should maintain a separate register of nominated employees and

allocate requests through Rapid. This preserves the CEO's responsibility for managing employees while meeting the intent of the proposed reforms.

20. Sections 5.92A–5.92C have already been enacted and establish the core statutory requirements for communications agreements. The outstanding regulations and Ministerial order will prescribe the detailed requirements and default agreement. Their final content and commencement date remain unknown.
21. EMP-GOV-18 has therefore been prepared as an interim protocol based on the enacted provisions and consultation drafts and will be legally reviewed once the final instruments are released and commenced.
22. Once sections 5.92A–5.92C of the *Local Government Act 1995* commence, every local government will be required to have a communications agreement in place. Council and the Chief Executive Officer may agree to a locally developed agreement that meets the prescribed requirements. If a local agreement is not adopted, the default communications agreement established by Ministerial order will apply automatically.
23. Establishing an interim protocol now represents good governance and best practice. It provides clear and consistent communication pathways, supports timely and equal access to information, maintains the statutory separation between governance and administration, and enables Council and the Administration to work collectively and respectfully in delivering outcomes for the community.
24. Establishing an interim protocol now is considered best practice. It provides clear and consistent communication pathways, supports timely and equitable access to information, preserves the statutory separation between governance and administration, and enables Council and the Administration to work collectively and respectfully to deliver outcomes for the community.

Strategic, Legislation and Policy Implications

Strategic Pillar	
Objective	4. Civic: Working together to strengthen leadership and effective governance.
Outcome:	Civic - 4.1 A local government that is respected and accountable
Strategy:	Civic - 4.1.1 Provide strong, effective and functional governance and leadership in the Shire

Legislation and Policy	
Legislation:	*Local Government Act 1995* *Local Government (Audit) Regulations 1996* *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996* *Local Government (Financial Management) Regulations 1996* *Local Government (Functions and General) Regulations 1996* *Local Government (Constitution) Regulations 1998* *Local Government (Elections) Regulations 1997*

	Local Government Amendment Act 2024 *Shire of Halls Creek Standing Orders Local Law 2015 clause 3.10 which due notice has been given*
Policy:	EMP-GOV-001 Code of Conduct for Council Members, Committee Members and Candidates. Proposed EMP-GOV-18 Council Member Interim Communication Protocol. Shire of Halls Creek Recordkeeping Plan and Records Management Policy.

Financial Implications

25. Implementation of EMP-GOV-18 will primarily use the Shire's existing Rapid Platform and governance resources. Any minor costs associated with configuring workflows, access controls, automated notifications, monitoring and reporting can be met from existing operational budgets.
26. A future legal review will be required once sections 5.92A–5.92C of the *Local Government Act 1995*, the supporting regulations and the Ministerial order are finalised and commenced. The cost cannot presently be determined and will be charged to the Shire's legal expenses budget.
27. The protocol is expected to improve administrative efficiency by reducing duplicated or misdirected requests, limiting the unnecessary escalation of operational matters through Council meetings and providing a central audit trail for monitoring and reporting. No additional budget allocation is currently required.

Sustainability Implications

Sustainability	
Environmental:	There are no significant identifiable environmental impacts arising from adoption of the officer's recommendation.
Economic:	There are no significant adverse economic impacts arising from adoption of the officer's recommendation. Centralising Council Member requests through Rapid is expected to improve administrative efficiency, reduce duplicated work and ensure operational resources are allocated through approved budgeting and prioritisation processes.
Social:	The protocol will support respectful and constructive working relationships between Council Members and employees, improve the consistent handling of community concerns and strengthen public confidence in the Shire's governance and decision-making processes.
Risk Type:	Compliance
Risk Category:	Governance and Legislative Compliance
Cause:	Unclear or inconsistently applied communication processes, limited understanding of the statutory separation between Council and

	Administration, and the use of questions on notice or informal channels for operational matters.
Effect:	Council involvement in administrative or operational matters, unauthorised direction of employees, inappropriate operational prioritisation, incomplete records, inconsistent access to information, inefficient use of Council and employee time, confidentiality breaches, regulatory intervention and reduced community confidence.
Risk Treatment:	Treat
Adopt EMP-GOV-18 Council Member Communication Protocol; centralise formal Council Member requests through Rapid; establish automated acknowledgement, allocation, monitoring and reporting; maintain a register of nominated employees; provide Council Member guidance and training; and report implementation performance to ARIC.	

Further information

28. Nil

Elected Member Policies| *Corporate Services and Governance*

EMP-GOV-18| Council Member Interim Communication Protocol

Strategic Context

Strategic Link	Objective
☑ United ☑ Safe & Healthy ☑ Beautiful & Respected ☑ Prosperous & Equitable	The objective of this policy is to establish clear, respectful and accountable communication between Council Members, Committee Members, the Chief Executive Officer and Shire employees. It supports timely access to information and administrative assistance while protecting confidentiality, maintaining accurate records and preserving the separation between Council and administration.

Introduction

1. Effective communication between Council Members and the Administration is essential to good governance, informed decision-making and responsive service delivery. Communication must also respect the statutory functions of Council, individual Council Members and the Chief Executive Officer.
2. This policy establishes the Shire of Halls Creek interim governance framework for formal communications, information requests, administrative assistance and the referral of community concerns. It has been prepared having regard to the communication agreement reforms proposed under the *Local Government Amendment Act 2023*. It will be reviewed when sections 5.92A to 5.92C of the *Local Government Act 1995* and associated regulations or orders commence.

Commitment

3. The Council and its Council Members and the Administration and its Officers of the Shire of Halls Creek express their commitment to work in partnership to deliver good government for the district and recognise the unique and essential contribution that each makes.
4. The Council and its Council Members and the Administration and its Officers of the Shire of Halls Creek agree to abide by this Communication Protocol as a policy of the local government.

Status and Agreement

5. This document operates as the Shire of Halls Creek interim Council Member Communication Protocol.

6. Upon commencement of sections 5.92A–5.92C of *the Local Government Act 1995* and the associated regulations and Ministerial order, this document must be reviewed against the final prescribed requirements.

7. Subject to that review, Council and the Chief Executive Officer may agree that this document will operate as the Shire's communications agreement for the purposes of section 5.92A.
8. Council's agreement must be given by resolution carried by an absolute majority. The Chief Executive Officer's agreement must be recorded by signing the document.
9. The statutory communications agreement will take effect on the date it is agreed by both Council and the Chief Executive Officer.
10. If Council and the CEO do not adopt an agreement of their own, the default communication agreement prescribed by Ministerial order will apply.
11. Once adopted as the statutory communication agreement, it will remain in effect until the earlier of:
    a. the end of the caretaker period following the next ordinary local government election; or
    b. the end of the employment of the Chief Executive Officer who agreed to it, unless lawfully amended or replaced earlier.

Statutory Responsibilities

12. The following statutory provisions establish the respective roles and responsibilities underpinning this policy.

SECTION 2.7
ROLE OF COUNCIL
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1995 (WA)

(1) The council governs the local government's affairs and, as the local government's governing body, is responsible for the performance of the local government's functions.
(2) The council's governing role includes the following —
(a) overseeing the allocation of the local government's finances and resources;
(b) determining the local government's policies;
(c) planning strategically for the future of the district;
(d) determining the services and facilities to be provided by the local government in the district;
(e) selecting the Chief Executive Officer and reviewing the Chief Executive Officer's performance;
(f) providing strategic direction to the Chief Executive Officer.
(3) For the purpose of ensuring proper governance of the local government's affairs, the council must have regard to the following principles —
(a) the council's governing role is separate from the Chief Executive Officer's executive role as described in section 5.41;
(b) it is important that the council respects that separation.
(4) The council must make its decisions —
(a) on the basis of evidence, on the merits and in accordance with the law;
(b) taking into account the local government's finances and resources.
(5) The council must have regard to the need to support an organisational culture for the local government that promotes the respectful and fair treatment of the local government's employees.
(6) The council has the other functions given to it under this Act or any other written law.
[Section 2.7 inserted: No. 47 of 2024 s. 5.]

SECTION 2.8
ROLE OF MAYOR OR PRESIDENT
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1995 (WA)

(1) The mayor or president —

(a) provides leadership and guidance to the council and council members, including guidance as to the roles of the council and council members;

(b) acts as the principal spokesperson for the local government, and carries out civic and ceremonial duties on behalf of the local government, at all times acting consistently with council decisions;

(c) presides at meetings of the council, ensuring that meetings are orderly and held in accordance with this Act;

(d) promotes, facilitates and supports positive and constructive working relationships among council members;

(e) liaises with the Chief Executive Officer on the local government's affairs and the performance of its functions.

Note for this subsection: The role of the mayor or president as described in this subsection can be affected by other provisions of this Act or by another written law. For example, section 5.67 prohibits the mayor or president from presiding at a meeting of the council in the circumstances described in that section.

(1A) The mayor or president has the other functions given to the mayor or president under this Act or any other written law.

(2) Section 2.10 applies to a councillor who is also the mayor or president and extends to a mayor or president who is not a councillor.

[Section 2.8 amended: No. 47 of 2024 s. 6.]

SECTION 2.10
ROLE OF COUNCILLORS
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1995 (WA)

(1) A councillor —

(a) represents the interests of the electors, ratepayers and residents of the district and takes account of the interests of other persons who work in, or visit, the district;

(b) participates in the deliberation and decision-making of the local government at council and committee meetings;

(c) facilitates communication with the community about council decisions;

(d) facilitates and maintains good working relationships with other councillors, the mayor or president and the Chief Executive Officer;

(e) acts consistently with section 2.7(3) to (5);

(f) maintains and develops the requisite skills to effectively perform their role.

Note for this subsection: The role of a councillor as described in this subsection can be affected by other provisions of this Act or by another written law. For example, section 5.67 prohibits a councillor from participating in a meeting of the council or a committee in the circumstances described in that section.

(2) A councillor has the other functions given to the councillor under this Act or any other written law.

[Section 2.10 inserted: No. 47 of 2024 s. 7.]

SECTION 5.41
ROLE OF CEO
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1995 (WA)

(1) The Chief Executive Officer of the local government authority is responsible for managing the local government's administration and operations.
(2) The Chief Executive Officer's executive role includes the following —
(a) causing council decisions to be implemented;
(b) managing the provision of services and facilities that the council has determined the local government is to provide in the district;
(c) determining procedures and systems for —
(i) implementing the local government's policies as determined by the council; and
(ii) otherwise managing the local government's administration and operations;
(d) being responsible for the employment, management, supervision, direction and dismissal of other employees (subject to section 5.37(2) in relation to senior employees);
(e) ensuring that records and documents of the local government are properly kept for the purposes of this Act and any other written law.
(3) The Chief Executive Officer is the council's principal advisor and, as such, does the following —
(a) advises, and procures advice for, the council in relation to the local government's affairs and the performance of the local government's functions;
(b) ensures that the council has the information and advice it needs to make informed and timely decisions.
(4) The Chief Executive Officer —
(a) liaises with the mayor or president on the local government's affairs and the performance of the local government's functions; and
(b) speaks on behalf of the local government if the mayor or president agrees.
(5) The Chief Executive Officer performs any other function specified or delegated by the local government or imposed under this Act or another written law as a function to be performed by the CEO.
[Section 5.41 inserted: No. 47 of 2024 s. 50.]

Access to and use of information – Section 5.92 and 5.93 *Local Government Act 1995*

13. Council Members and Committee Members may access information held by the Shire that is relevant to the performance of their functions, subject to the exclusions and restrictions in section 5.92. Information obtained through the role must not be used improperly to gain an advantage for any person or to cause detriment to the Shire or another person.

Purpose

14. The purpose of this policy is to:
    a. provide consistent pathways for Council Members and Committee Members to request information and administrative assistance;

b. support Council Members to perform their statutory functions and remain appropriately informed;
c. clarify the respective roles and responsibilities of Council Members, the Shire President, the Chief Executive Officer and employees;
d. ensure requests and responses are timely, transparent, appropriately shared and properly recorded; and
e. prevent individual Council Members from directing employees or becoming involved in day-to-day administration.

Policy Scope

15. This policy applies to all Council Members and Committee Members of the Shire of Halls Creek, the Chief Executive Officer and Shire Officers when communicating about Shire information, administrative assistance, community concerns, service delivery or other local government business.
16. This policy does not replace:
    a. deliberations and procedures at Council or Committee meetings;
    b. the statutory process for recruitment, performance review or termination of the Chief Executive Officer;
    c. freedom of information, complaint, public question time or other statutory processes; or
    d. any legal restriction on the disclosure or use of information.

Policy Statement

17. The Shire is committed to providing Council Members and Committee Members with timely access to information and reasonable administrative assistance relevant to their statutory functions. Formal requests must use the approved communication pathway so they can be recorded, assessed, allocated and answered consistently.
18. Council Members and the Administration commit to working in partnership to deliver good government for the district. This requires mutual respect, professional communication, recognition of the value each contributes, and acceptance that accurate and complete advice may require reasonable time to prepare.
19. The Shire President is not the sole gateway between Council Members and the Chief Executive Officer. Council Members may communicate directly with the Chief Executive Officer and with employees nominated by the Chief Executive Officer for specified matters. The Chief Executive Officer determines which employee will respond to a request and remains responsible for managing the Administration and employees.
20. Council Members and Committee Members must not direct employees, allocate or reprioritise work, seek preferential operational action, promise an operational outcome, or become involved in day-to-day administration.

Separation of Council and Administrative Functions

21. Council's functions under section 2.7 of the *Local Government Act 1995* are exercised collectively through decisions made at properly constituted Council meetings, or through a Committee or other person where lawfully delegated or authorised. An individual Council Member does not independently exercise the powers or functions of Council.
22. Council's role is to govern the Shire, determine policies and service levels, oversee the allocation of finances and resources, plan strategically, provide strategic direction to the Chief Executive Officer, and select and review the performance of the Chief Executive Officer.
23. Subject to relevance to the member's statutory functions, a request may relate to:
    a. a Shire service, project or initiative;
    b. how the Shire ordinarily manages a matter, service or enquiry;
    c. budget, financial and service-cost information;
    d. an issue of broad public concern within the district;
    e. an administrative matter;
    f. preparation of a motion; or
    g. correspondence received by the member.
24. The Chief Executive Officer is responsible under section 5.41 for managing the Shire's Administration and operations. This includes:
    a. implementing Council decisions;
    b. managing the delivery of services and facilities determined by Council;
    c. determining administrative systems, procedures and operational priorities;
    d. allocating employees, contractors, plant and other resources;
    e. scheduling and prioritising maintenance, repairs and works; and
    f. employing, managing, supervising, directing and dismissing employees, subject to any specific statutory requirements.
25. Council and individual Council Members have no role in managing, supervising, directing or investigating individual employees or controlling day-to-day operational activities unless a specific function is expressly conferred by the Act or another written law.
26. Operational matters include, but are not limited to:
    a. maintenance and repair requests;
    b. roads, parks, buildings, housing and Shire facilities;
    c. waste, environmental health and ranger services;
    d. allocation of employees, contractors, plant and equipment;
    e. scheduling or prioritisation of works;
    f. procurement and contract administration;
    g. customer complaints and service requests;
    h. implementation of approved projects and Council decisions; and
    i. employment, disciplinary, grievance and workplace investigation matters.
27. Council Members must submit all formal requests through the Rapid Platform Online Form, except where this policy expressly provides otherwise.

28. Submission of an operational request by a Council Member does not authorise the Council Member to:
    a. direct an employee or contractor;
    b. require the matter to be given priority;
    c. determine how or when the work will be undertaken;
    d. commit Shire resources or expenditure;
    e. promise a particular outcome to a community member; or
    f. bypass the Shire's assessment, procurement, budgeting or works-scheduling processes.
29. Operational requests submitted by or through Council Members will be assessed and prioritised in the same manner as other requests, having regard to public safety, statutory obligations, risk, available resources, approved budgets and existing operational priorities.
30. A request for information must be relevant to the performance of a statutory function of the Council Member or Committee Member. Where that relevance is not apparent, the Chief Executive Officer or nominated employee may request that the member explain the statutory function for which the information is required. General interest, dissatisfaction with an administrative decision, a community allegation or a desire to personally investigate or oversee an operational matter does not, by itself, establish relevance under section 5.92.
31. Section 5.92 does not provide an unrestricted right of access to information. Access is limited to information relevant to the performance of the Council Member's statutory functions and remains subject to the exclusions in section 5.92(4).
32. Where no statutory Council function or decision is required, the matter remains within the CEO's administrative responsibility. Appropriate governance oversight may be provided through service-performance reports, project reporting, budget reports, risk reporting, de-identified status reports and assurance that the matter is being managed lawfully.
33. A Council Member must not:
    a. undertake an administrative, operational or investigative task unless lawfully authorised;
    b. direct or attempt to direct an employee or contractor;
    c. interfere with operational prioritisation, procurement, employment or investigation processes;
    d. seek information directly from employees outside an approved communication channel;
    e. use an information request to circumvent a statutory restriction, confidentiality obligation or the Chief Executive Officer's executive responsibility; or
    f. use information obtained through their office to secure an advantage for any person or cause detriment to the Shire or another person.
34. Conduct inconsistent with these requirements may constitute a conduct breach under clauses 19 or 20 of the Model Code of Conduct, improper use of information under section 5.93, unauthorised disclosure of confidential information, or another breach of the Act or the Shire's adopted Code of Conduct. Suspected breaches may be referred through the applicable statutory process.
35. The Chief Executive Officer will maintain and provide to Council Members and Committee Members an up-to-date register identifying:

a. employees nominated to receive requests;
b. the categories of matters for which each employee may be contacted; and
c. any limitations or conditions applying to that contact.

36. Nomination of an employee does not authorise a Council Member to direct the employee, bypass the approved request process or interfere with the Chief Executive Officer's management of the Administration.

Principles Underpinning the Policy

Principle Name	Principle Definition
Lawful Access	Council Members and Committee Members will receive information relevant to their statutory functions, subject to lawful confidentiality, privacy, privilege, employment and secrecy restrictions.
Separation of Governance and Administration	Council governs collectively. The Chief Executive Officer manages Shire operations and employees. Individual members do not direct employees or make operational decisions.
Equal and Transparent Information	Responses will generally be shared with all Council Members, or relevant Committee Members, unless a legitimate exception applies.
Respect and Proportionality	Requests will be clear, courteous, appropriately scoped and proportionate to the member's functions and the Shire's available resources.
Accountability and Records	Substantive requests and responses will be registered, monitored and captured in the Shire's recordkeeping system.

Definitions

Term	Meaning
Administrative Request	Means an administrative request for information or a request for administrative assistance.
Administrative Matter	Means a matter relating to meeting arrangements; statutory compliance obligations, including interests, gifts and returns; ICT support; training and conferences; event invitations; fees, allowances, reimbursements and superannuation contributions; and any other matter of an administrative nature connected with the member's role.
Committee Member	A person appointed to a Committee of the Shire under the *Local Government Act 1995*.
Council Member	An elected member of the Shire of Halls Creek, including the Shire President and Deputy Shire President.

Formal Request	A request for information or administrative assistance submitted through an approved communication channel.
Nominated Employee	An employee authorised by the Chief Executive Officer to communicate with members about specified subjects.
Operational Matter	A day-to-day service, works, facility, employee, complaint or implementation matter falling within the Chief Executive Officer's administrative responsibility.
Request for Information	A request for information held by, or reasonably obtainable by, the Shire that is relevant to the member's statutory functions.
Shire	The Shire of Halls Creek.

Policy Details

37. **Community Concerns and Service Requests**

37.1 Councillors are to submit works requests through the Rapid Platform Online Form for Councillors, as an electronic communication channel approved by the Chief Executive Officer. The form should identify the location, nature of the issue, relevant details and, where available, photographs. Requests are referred to the appropriate officer for assessment and prioritisation through the Shire's service-request process.

37.2 Council Members may as an alternative direct community members with operational concerns or service requests to the Shire Administration Reception or ask them to email hcshire@hcshire.wa.gov.au. This allows Shire employees to communicate directly with the person, obtain the necessary details, register the matter and respond appropriately.

37.3 A Council Member may forward a community concern with the person's consent. The Council Member should not promise a particular outcome or direct how the Administration must resolve the matter.

37.4 A suggested response is: *'Thank you for raising this matter. Please contact the Shire Administration Reception or email hcshire@hcshire.wa.gov.au so the matter can be registered and the appropriate officer can speak directly with you. If you do not receive a response or remain dissatisfied after using the Shire's process, please let me know.'*

37.5 Requests submitted by or through Council Members will be assessed and prioritised in the same manner as other service requests. A Council Member's involvement must not result in preferential treatment or an operational matter being reprioritised without proper administrative authority.

38. **Request for Information**

38.1 A request for information must be submitted through the Rapid Platform electronic workflow approved by the Chief Executive Officer. The request must identify:

a. the subject and information requested;
b. how the information relates to the member's statutory functions;
c. any relevant deadline or Council or Committee agenda item; and

d. supporting correspondence or documents required to understand the request.

38.2 The Chief Executive Officer may discuss the request with the member to clarify or narrow its scope. The CEO determines the employee responsible for preparing the response.

39. Requests for Administrative Assistance

39.1 Requests for administrative assistance must be submitted through the Rapid Platform Online Form. Where urgent assistance is initially requested verbally, the request must be entered into Rapid as soon as practicable if it requires follow-up, expenditure, approval or recordkeeping.

39.2 The Chief Executive Officer may arrange for requested information to be provided through a briefing, meeting or other discussion. Council Members and relevant Committee Members may seek reasonable clarification following that briefing or discussion.

39.3 The Chief Executive Officer will maintain an up-to-date register of nominated employees. The register will identify each employee, the categories of information requests, media enquiries or administrative assistance they may receive, and any conditions applying to that contact. The number of nominated employees must meet any minimum prescribed for the Shire's class of local government.

40. Acknowledgement and Response Timeframes

a. The Chief Executive Officer must ensure that written requests, including works requests submitted through the Rapid Platform Online Form for Councillors, are acknowledged in writing within two working days after the day on which the request is made. An automated acknowledgement may be used.
b. Requests will be dealt with as soon as practicable.
c. Best endeavours will be used to respond to a request relating to an upcoming agenda item before the relevant meeting.
d. Within ten working days after the day on which a request is made, the member will receive either a final written response or written notice that a final response cannot be provided within that period, explaining why more time is required and giving an estimated date for the final response.
e. Employees are not required to respond outside ordinary working hours unless an emergency or prior arrangement applies.

40.1 For works requests, the response will advise the outcome of the assessment, any proposed action and, where known, the indicative timing. These timeframes apply to acknowledgement and response; they do not require physical works to be completed within ten working days. Works remain subject to assessment, risk, available resources, approved budgets and operational priorities. Working days exclude Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays in Western Australia.

41. Distribution of Responses

41.1 Responses will generally be provided to all Council Members, or relevant Committee Members, to support equal access to information. A response may be provided only to the requesting member where it concerns personal correspondence received by that member, a function specific to the Shire President, legally privileged or restricted information, or where the CEO and member agree that confidentiality is appropriate and lawful.

42. Refusal or Limitations of a Request

42.1 The Chief Executive Officer may limit, defer or refuse a request where:

a. the information is not relevant to the member's statutory functions;
b. the information is not held by the Shire and cannot reasonably be obtained;
c. disclosure is prohibited or restricted by law, legal professional privilege, confidentiality, privacy or employment obligations;
d. the approved request process has not been followed; or
e. the Chief Executive Officer determines that preparing or providing the information would divert a substantial and unreasonable portion of the Shire's resources away from its other functions.

42.2 The member will be given written reasons and, where practicable, an alternative method or appropriately narrowed scope for obtaining relevant information.

43. Communication Boundaries

43.1 Requests for information or assistance must not be made during social or incidental dealings with employees or contractors.

43.2 Social or incidental communication between members and employees is not otherwise prohibited.

43.3 Council Members and Committee Members must not direct employees, require work to be prioritised, or interfere in operational decision-making.

43.4 Sensitive information must only be used for the purpose for which it was provided and must not be disclosed contrary to law or a lawful confidentiality requirement.

43.5 Formal correspondence sent by the Shire President on behalf of the Shire will generally be provided to all Council Members unless a documented lawful or exceptional reason applies.

44. Dispute Resolution

44.1 If a final response includes a refusal to provide some or all of the requested information, the requesting member may notify the Chief Executive Officer in writing that there is a dispute regarding the final response.

44.2 The dispute must be discussed at a meeting between the requesting member, the Shire President and the Chief Executive Officer.

44.3 If the dispute is not resolved at that meeting, the requesting member may refer the dispute to Council and Council may determine the dispute.

44.4 Council's determination may override a decision by the Chief Executive Officer that providing the information would divert a substantial and unreasonable portion of the Shire's resources from its other functions. Council's determination is final but cannot override a statutory prohibition or restriction on disclosure.

45. **Register and Record Keeping**

45.1 Governance will maintain a register of formal requests recording the member, date received, subject, responsible officer, acknowledgement date, due date, status, response date, distribution and outcome. Substantive requests and responses must be captured in the Shire's recordkeeping system and must not be retained solely in personal email, text message or social media accounts.

45.2 Requests submitted through the Rapid Platform must be integrated with, or recorded in, the Council Member Request Register and the Shire's corporate recordkeeping system. Requests submitted through another approved channel must also be captured in the corporate recordkeeping system.

46. **Approved Communication Channels**

Category	Examples	Primary Channel	Expected Response
Council Member support	Training, fees, allowances, travel, ICT and declarations	Rapid Platform Online Form	Acknowledgement within two working days; final response or estimated response date within ten working days.
Agenda Briefing or workshop matter	Request to discuss an emerging strategic issue, proposed policy, service level, future Council report or matter requiring collective Council guidance that cannot be adequately addressed through an immediate clarification	Rapid Platform Online Form—select **Briefing or Workshop Matter** and identify the proposed session	Acknowledgement within two working days. The CEO will advise whether the matter will be scheduled for an informal session, answered administratively, referred for further information or require a formal Council report.
Agenda information	Questions about officer reports, supporting attachments or matters requiring a Council decision	Rapid Platform Online Form	Best endeavours will be used to respond before the relevant meeting, subject to the timing and complexity of the request. Where a formal response through a meeting is required, the matter must be submitted as a Question on Notice.

Question on Notice	A formal question to be answered through a Council or Committee meeting	Rapid Platform Online Form—select **Question on Notice** and identify the relevant meeting	Must be submitted at least four clear working days before the meeting. If the question is in order, the answer will, so far as practicable, be included in the agenda or tabled at the meeting in accordance with clause 3.10 of the *Shire of Halls Creek Standing Orders Local Law 2015*.
Operational information	Information about the progress of adopted works, services, projects or facilities relevant to the Council Member's statutory functions	Rapid Platform Online Form	Acknowledgement within two working days; final written response or estimated response date within ten working days.
Community service request	Roads, waste, facilities, parks, animals, environmental health, maintenance or other operational concerns raised by community members	Rapid Platform Online Form	Acknowledgement within two working days; final response or estimated response date within ten working days. Works are assessed and prioritised through the Shire's operational service-request process.
Integrity, conduct or confidential matter	Conduct concern, suspected breach, legal or sensitive employee matter	Rapid Platform Online Form—select **Confidential or Restricted Matter**.	The request will be securely directed to the CEO or, where the matter concerns the CEO, to the Shire President. It will be managed in accordance with the applicable statutory or confidential process.

46.1 **Use of communication channels:** Council Members must select the Rapid category that best describes the nature of the request. Submitting an operational or community service request as an agenda question, question on notice or briefing matter does not convert it into a Council governance matter. The CEO may redirect a request to the appropriate category and administrative process.

47. Media and Public Statements

47.1 The Shire President is the principal spokesperson for the Shire and must speak consistently with Council decisions. The Chief Executive Officer may speak on behalf of the Shire with the Shire President's agreement. Media enquiries seeking an official Shire response should be referred to the Chief Executive Officer.

47.2 A Council Member may express a personal view, but must clearly distinguish that view from an official position of the Shire, accurately acknowledge Council decisions, comply with the Code of Conduct, and not disclose confidential, privileged, personal or embargoed information.

47.3 The Shire President may discuss a media enquiry with the Chief Executive Officer or an appropriate nominated employee, verbally or in writing, without submitting a formal request for information.

48. Agenda Reports, Questions and Alternative Motions

48.1 Council Members are individually responsible for reading meeting papers and seeking clarification early enough to support informed decision-making. Questions concerning agenda reports should be submitted through the Rapid Platform Online Form. Written responses of general relevance will be circulated to all Council Members.

48.2 A Council Member considering an alternative motion or amendment is encouraged to consult the Chief Executive Officer before the meeting so that legal, financial, operational and strategic consequences can be identified. This consultation does not restrict the member's right to move a lawful motion. Notices of motion, revocation motions and amendments must comply with the Act, Regulations and the Shire's meeting procedures.

49. Routine Updates and Council Calendars

49.1 The Chief Executive Officer may provide regular written updates to Council Members about significant operational activities, emerging issues and implementation of Council decisions via email. These updates support awareness but do not replace formal Council reporting or decision-making.

49.2 The Shire's approved electronic calendar is the official calendar for Council and Committee meetings, briefings, training, civic functions and other duties undertaken in an official capacity. Council Members must respond promptly to invitations. Calendar entries relating to Shire business are official records and must be managed accordingly.

50. Confidential and Embargoed Information

50.1 Information identified as confidential or embargoed must not be released before authorised publication. The absence of a confidentiality marking does not authorise disclosure where the information is restricted by law, legal professional privilege, privacy, employment obligations, a Council decision or the nature of the information. Where uncertain, a member must seek advice from the Chief Executive Officer before using or disclosing the information.

51. Weekends and After-hours Communication

51.1 Council Members and employees are entitled to reasonable boundaries between work and non-work time. Unless there is an emergency, statutory deadline or prior arrangement, requests and responses will be managed during ordinary working hours.

The use of email or an electronic workflow outside ordinary hours does not create an expectation of an immediate response.

Accountability

52. Council is responsible for approving this policy and ensuring it supports the Shire's governance and strategic objectives. Council Members and Committee Members must comply with this policy and the applicable Code of Conduct. The Shire President supports constructive working relationships and participates in dispute resolution but is not the sole gateway between Council Members and the Chief Executive Officer.
53. The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for implementing and enforcing this policy, nominating appropriate employees and determining who responds to requests. The Director Corporate and Governance is responsible for overseeing the request register, monitoring compliance and timeframes, supporting dispute resolution and coordinating review.
54. The Senior Records Officer is responsible for ensuring appropriate capture and retention of records.
55. The Principal Governance Officer Council is responsible for registering, acknowledging, tracking and closing formal requests.
56. Employees must refer requests to the approved pathway unless authorised by the Chief Executive Officer to respond directly.

Related Documentation / Legislation

Legislation	Shire of Halls Creek Documentation
a. *Local Government Act 1995 (WA), particularly sections 2.7, 2.8, 2.10, 5.41, 5.92 and 5.93.* b. *Local Government Amendment Act 2023 (WA), including sections 5.92A–5.92C when commenced.* c. *Local Government (Model Code of Conduct) Regulations 2021 (WA).* d. *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996 (WA).* e. *State Records Act 2000 (WA).*	a. EMP-GOV-001- Code of Conduct for Council Members, Committee Members and Candidates. b. Council Member Request Register and approved electronic workflow. c. Recordkeeping Plan and Records Management Policy. d. ICT Acceptable Use Policy. e. Risk Management Policy.

Policy Review

57. This policy will be reviewed two years from Council adoption, or earlier upon:
    a. commencement of sections 5.92A–5.92C of the *Local Government Act 1995* and the associated regulations and Ministerial order;
    b. commencement of employment of a new substantive Chief Executive Officer; or
    c. any material legislative or regulatory change affecting the policy.

Council Policy Adoption	Chief Executive Officer Acknowledgement
Certified by Shire President Brenda Garstone	Susan Leonard, Chief Executive Officer
Date:	Date:
Resolution #	
Statutory agreement status	Not applicable until commencement Interim protocol—not a communications agreement under section 5.92A until the relevant provisions commence and the document has been reviewed and agreed in accordance with the final legislative requirements.
Council agreement	Absolute-majority resolution
Agreement date	26 November 2026
Commencement date	27 November 2026
Expiry trigger	End of caretaker period or end of agreeing CEO's employment

Document Control

Relevant delegations	Nil		
Risk Evaluation	HIGH		
Council adoption	TBA	Resolution	TBA
Next review due			

12. Motions of Which Previous Notice has been given

Nil

13. Matters for Which Meeting May be Closed (Confidential Matter) [Nil]

14. Closure

14.1 Date of Next Meeting

The next **Audit Risk and Improvement Committee** will be held on 04 March 2027 commencing at 5.00 pm.

14.2 Closure

Presiding Member declared the meeting closed at 6.31pm.

In accordance with clause 3.1 of the Shire of Halls Creek Standing Orders Local Law 2015, only business specified in the published agenda may be considered, unless otherwise approved by the Presiding Member a decision of the Council. Members wishing to raise another matter should submit it by email to the Chief Executive Officer and Shire President for consideration and appropriate action.