



Proposed Budget
2025-2026



**Revenue and
Rating Plan**
2025-26 to 2028-29



Financial Plan
2025-26 to 2034-35



PROPOSED BUDGET 2025-26
PROPOSED FINANCIAL PLAN 2025-26 TO 2034-35
PROPOSED REVENUE AND RATING PLAN 2025-26

Engagement Summary
16 April – 7 May 2025

Introduction

The City of Whittlesea's Proposed Budget 2025-26 outlines Council's commitment to invest in essential services and infrastructure while ensuring the long-term financial sustainability. Council has also developed the Proposed Financial Plan 2025-26 to 2034-35 and Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-26 to 2028-29. Together with the Proposed Budget, these documents ensure Council remains financially responsible while meeting the needs of our community now and into the future.

The proposed key financial documents were developed considering feedback received during a comprehensive Community Priorities engagement program that included feedback from over 900 participants across 13 community-based pop-ups and five Focus Groups held between August 2024 and February 2025.

The proposed documents were presented to community for feedback between 16 April and 7 May 2025 with participants asked whether they supported the documents and if they didn't to explain why. This summary provides the detail of this final phase of the consultation. Participation was available online through the *Engage Whittlesea* platform or in-person at a series of eight community-based pop-up stalls scheduled across the municipality in high foot traffic locations.

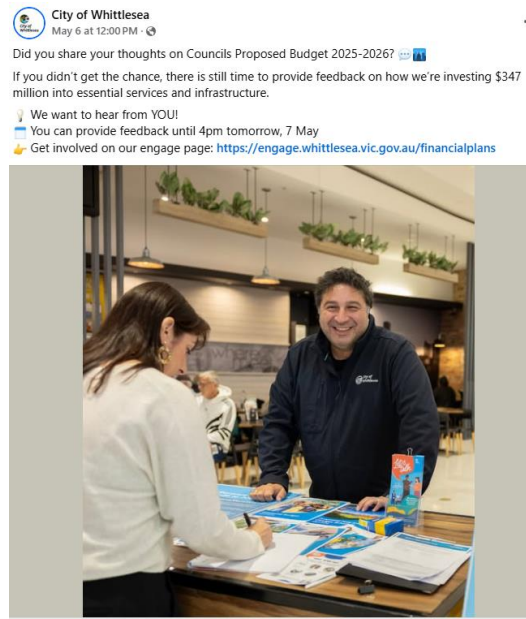
To avoid consultation fatigue, the project was co-located with the Proposed Asset Plan 2025-26 to 2034-35 and Community Vision Review projects that were also open for comment.

Seventy-eight people participated in the final phase of consultation and told us that majority (85%) supported the Proposed Budget 2025-26, the Proposed Financial Plan 2025-26 to 2034-35 (89%) and the Proposed Rates and Revenue Plan 2025-26 to 2028-29 (81%). Those that were not supportive of the proposed documents identified specific budget item requests local to their area or a proposed rate freeze to ease the cost-of-living pressure as their reason.

Project Promotion

The opportunity to participate in this phase of the community engagement was promoted through a range of channels to have a widespread reach across the municipality including:

- Council's digital engagement platform *Engage Whittlesea*
- Social media – organic posts accounted for 30% of traffic to the Engage page
- *Engage Whittlesea* email campaign to 1520 platform users - the campaign had a click-through rate of 5%
- Promotion on screens at Civic Centre, libraries and aquatic centres.
- An e-newsletter or personalised email with direct link to the project page, which accounted for 42% of traffic to the page, was sent to:
 - People who engage with Ageing Well services
 - Registered multicultural groups
 - Sports and Aquatic Clubs
 - Youth Services network
 - Library and Community Hubs users Whittlesea Disability Network (WDN) via the WDN Hub on the *Engage Whittlesea* platform
 - First Peoples network
 - Community Priorities Focus Group participants



Above: Images of social media posts/reels

How we engaged you

The Proposed Budget 2025-26 and Financial Plans project page on the Engage Whittlesea platform encouraged participants to share whether they supported the proposed documents. There was also free text space provided for participants to add further comments if they selected no as a response for any of the draft documents.

The *Engage Whittlesea* platform utilises an accessibility add-on ensuring that it is as accessible as possible for all users. The platform also has an in-built translation tool to mitigate any language barriers to participation, allowing the page to be translated into the top fifteen languages spoken within the municipality.

As the proposed documents being presented are detailed financial documents, we made it easy for community to easily identify key inclusions and understand them. Activity boards (viewable in Appendix 1) were used at in-person engagement activities that presented key inclusions as an infographic and dot points to provide a snapshot of the purpose of the document. This information was mirrored on the project *Engage Whittlesea* page.

To inform community and to hear from a diverse range of community members and increase participation, the project team hosted eight in-person engagement activities across the municipality, details of these are in the table below. The engagement activity at the pop-up stalls mirrored those on the *Engage Whittlesea* platform.

Date	Time	Where	Address/location
16 April 2025	5pm-7pm	Kirrip Community Centre	135 De Rossi Blvd, Wollert
28 April 2025	9.30am -11.30am	Lalor Library	2a May Rd, Lalor
28 April 2025	2.30pm -4.30pm	Thomastown Library	52 Main St, Thomastown
29 April 2025	9.30am -11.30am	Westfield Plenty Valley	415 McDonalds Rd, South Morang
29 April 2025	2.30pm -4.30pm	Laurimar Shopping Centre	101 Hazel Glen Drive, Doreen

30 April 2025	9.30am -11.30am	Shared Cup Café	995 Donnybrook Rd, Donnybrook
30 April 2025	2.30pm- 4.30pm	Mernda Village Shopping Centre	59 Mernda Village Drive, Mernda
2/5/2025	9.30am -11.30am	Coles University Hill	2 Janefield Drive, Bundoora

Participation

Snapshot of Community Participation in the final phase of consultation

Key highlights from the community consultation included:

Downloads



308 Downloads of
the proposed
documents

Community-based Pop-Ups



Hosted 8 community-
based pop-ups
62 in-person
contributions

Digital Engagement



688 views
610 visits
16 contributions

Snapshot of demographics of the broader community consultation in this phase

Below is a snapshot of the diversity of participation in the community engagement, which is representative of our broader community:

Gender Identity



46% Female, 50% Male
1% non-Binary

Age



All age brackets participated
with the most represented
being 45-54 years (22%) and
35-44 years (21%)

Suburb



Participants came from 13
suburbs, with the highest
participation coming from
Mernda (19%) and Wollert
(15%)

LGBTIQA+ Community



4% of participants identified as members of the
LGBTIQA+ community

Multicultural community



50% of participants spoke English as a second
language

First Peoples

People with disability



6% of participants identified as First Peoples



8% of participants were people with a disability
or carers of a person with disability



Above: Images from the community-based pop-up stalls

What we heard from the community consultation

Do you support the Proposed Budget 2025-26?

Majority of participants were supportive of the Proposed Budget 2025-26. What we heard is as below:



85% Yes



15% No

Do you support the Proposed Financial Plan 2025-26 to 2034-35?

Majority of participants were supportive of the Proposed Financial Plan 2025-26 to 2034-35. What we heard is as below:



89% Yes



11% No

Do you support the Proposed Rates and Revenue Plan 2025-26 to 2028-29?

Majority of participants were supportive of the Proposed Rates and Revenue Plan 2025-26 to 2028-29. A breakdown of the level of support is as below:



81% Yes



19% No

Which aspects of the proposed documents do you support or oppose?

In total, fourteen participants identified the reason they opposed any of the proposed documents. The comments outlined specific budget requests or called for a reduction in spending to reduce or freeze rates.

"Why is Lowalde Recreation Reserve Master Plan not budget? Area doesn't get any love"

"Massive waste in all areas. Cut spending across the board...."

"Please invest more funding for young people in the City of Whittlesea."

"No rate rises!!!"

A further two participants took the opportunity to outline the reason they supported the proposed documents.

"This seems fair and reasonable given growth in population and community needs".

"[group name]...commends the City of Whittlesea for their commitment to delivering quality community sport and recreation infrastructure".

Other community comments captured at the community-based pop-up stalls

There were 14 additional comments captured at in-person engagement activities that focused on themes such as community safety, cleaner more appealing neighbourhoods, key services for the community and cost of living.

"Increase in crime - need to increase safety in the community and neighbourhoods"

"Shared pathways on Plenty Road not used properly by e-scooters. they need to have a horn to warn others when travelling fast past pedestrians. Plus, they should have speed limits to abide by"

"Need cleaner, neater neighbourhoods"

"Beautifying the environment decreases Domestic Violence"

"More health services for first peoples, with a focus on domestic violence and safety"

"Affordable housing needed in area"

"Homelessness – there are squatters in vacant houses".

Next Steps

Thank you to everyone that shared feedback in this final phase of an extensive engagement program that informed the Proposed Financial Plans either in-person at a community-based pop-up or online through the *Engage Whittlesea* platform. Your feedback will be considered as we prepare the final documents that will be presented to Council for endorsement at the Council Meeting scheduled 17 June 2025. We will share the final documents and encourage you to follow the project Engage page (engage.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/financialplans) to be kept up to date as these are finalised.

Appendix 1: activity boards used at in-person engagement activities




Proposed Budget 2025–26

Key projects proposed to be delivered:

- Construction of the next stage of the regional sports precinct in Mernda
- Completion of the Murnong Community Centre in Donnybrook
- Complete the upgrade of Peter Hopper Lake in Mill Park
- Complete the construction of the Hill Top splash park and playground in Doreen
- Begin the upgrade of the Huskisson Reserve Multipurpose facility
- Begin the development of the Johnsons Road housing precinct in Mernda
- Continue the delivery of local road restoration and resurfacing program
- Continue the ongoing program of local playground upgrades.

Highlights of the proposed Budget:



\$347m

To deliver essential services to our growing population



\$116.6m

To build, upgrade or expand facilities and infrastructure across the municipality



\$31.2m

For our parks and open spaces



\$35.4m

For waste collection services



\$27m

To support families, children, youth and aged services



\$2m

To support our local businesses

Do you support the proposed Budget 2025–26?

Yes	No

*Let's
talk*

Proposed Financial Plan 2025–26 to 2034–35

Some of the short to medium term objectives of the Proposed Plan include:

- Ensure an appropriate balance between investment in new infrastructure to support our growing community and the renewal of our existing assets in established areas
- Generate sufficient operating surpluses to continue to provide the existing level of services and meet community demands and expectations
- Maintain a strong cash position to ensure we remain financially sustainable for future generations
- Ensure our rates, fees and charges are manageable and support the delivery of key services and infrastructure investment
- Determine the appropriate funding sources to support investment decisions.

Highlights of the proposed Financial Plan:



Operating income/
revenue



Capital works
program



Parks and open
spaces



Waste collection
services



Family, children, youth
and aged services



Support for our local
businesses

Do you support the proposed Financial Plan 2025–26 to 2034–35?

Yes

No

*Let's
talk*



Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025–26 to 2028–29

The Plan will incorporate consideration of:

- **Rates Revenue:** How revenue will be generated through rates on properties across different property classes.
- **Service Charges:** Application of fixed service charges for services such as waste or recycling.
- **Fees and Charges:** Policies governing fees and charges for programs and services, including pricing strategies.
- **Developer Contributions:** Contributions from developers and other sources of revenue.
- **Asset Revenue:** Income generated from the use or allocation of Council assets, including the application of discounts and waivers.
- **Grants:** Recurrent and nonrecurrent operational and capital grants from other levels of government.
- **Entrepreneurial Activities:** Business, collaborative, or entrepreneurial initiatives designed to deliver programs or services, generate income, or reduce costs.

Do you support the proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025–26 to 2028–29?

Yes	No

Do you have any other comments?