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# Long-Term Financial Plan 2022 - 2032

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Presented to Council for endorsement for Public Exhibition

17 March 2022

SNOWY VALLEYS COUNCIL – LONG TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2022 – 2032  
– presented to Council 17 March 2022 for public exhibition

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## ***Introduction***

The Long-Term Financial Plan (LTFP) is a planning and decision-making tool that shows the long-term financial impacts of Council's decisions based on a set of assumptions. It is a requirement under the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) framework for NSW Local Government. Snowy Valleys Council's LTFP is an important and central part of Council's strategic planning process that spans a rolling 10-year period and is a document that is intended to remain flexible. The LTFP is reviewed and updated at least annually.

The three key elements of the LTFP correspond to Council's primary financial reporting documents, namely the income statement, the statement of financial position and the statement of cash flows. The income statement (or profit and loss statement) details Council's operating revenue and expenditure associated with ongoing activities with a focus on the operating result which shows whether Council is spending more or less than it earns. The statement of financial position (or balance sheet) details changes in Council's assets and liabilities. The statement of cash flows details where Council plans to generate and spend its cash in operating (ongoing) activities and capital programs (renewals, upgrades and new assets).

The key focus of this updated LTFP is Council's general fund which includes all activities except for water supply and wastewater businesses, which are accounted for separately under National Competition Policy requirements. Three scenarios are considered:

- A Special Rate Variation (SRV) Scenario as proposed during the community consultation in 2021 and in Council's application to IPART;
- A Service-Reduction Scenario (No-SRV) with a balanced operational result;
- A Reduced-SRV Scenario with a reduced SRV in year one only.

Financial modelling has also been completed for Council's Water Supply and Wastewater Funds. Only one scenario each for the Water Supply and Wastewater Funds is included in this updated LTFP. A complete revaluation of all assets for these two funds is currently being undertaken.

## ***1. Key Financial Sustainability Objectives***

Council recognises that the principles of sound financial management in the NSW Local Government Act (chapter 3, section 8B) emphasise two key elements:

- Responsible and sustainable spending (aligning general revenue and expenses and achieving a small operating surplus); and
- Responsible and sustainable infrastructure investment (adequate provision in maintenance and renewal).

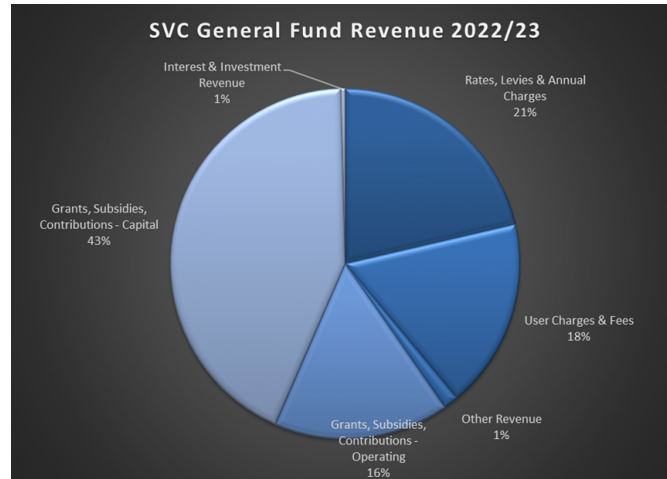
Assumptions informing the SRV scenario for the general fund have been developed with the primary aim of achieving an operating surplus in the long-term.

Council also ensures it provides sufficient funding for renewal of existing assets based on an analysis of renewal requirements as set out in its Service Management Plans. Because its assets are in good condition, Council proposes to keep its renewal program stable, but may revise this forecast following a needs analysis in consultation with users.

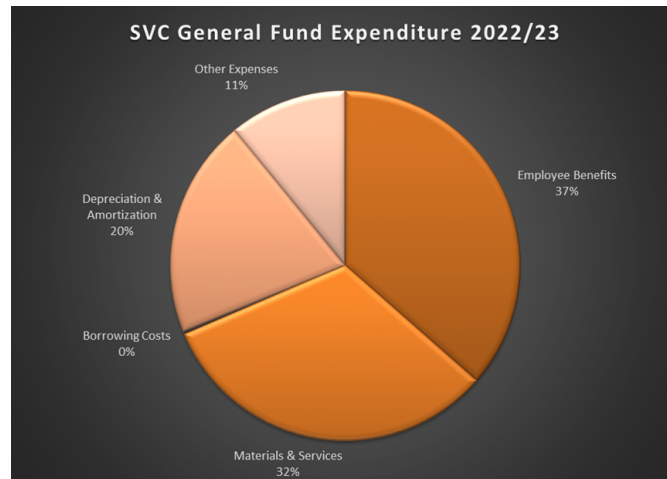
In addition to the above, Council aims to maintain sufficient cash, manage its debtors, maintain its debt within acceptable limits and to keep the typical residential bill for water and wastewater services as low as possible and stable over the long term. Initial modelling has been undertaken to assess the need for changes.

## 2. Key Items of Operating Revenue and Expenditure

The following charts summarise the key areas of revenue and expenditure associated with operational programs under the SRV scenario in Council's 2022/23 budget for the **General Fund**:



Council expects to receive 39% of its revenue from rates, levies, annual charges and user charges and fees. 59% of revenue is expected to result from operational and capital grants, which for 2022/23 includes \$28.7 million for capital funding. The remaining 2% of revenue are from investment returns and other income streams.



Council expenditure on employee benefits is expected to comprise 37% of total expenditure. Materials, contracts, and other expenses that are used in direct inputs to operations will make up 43% and depreciation 20%. Interest payments on outstanding loans are below 1% of total expenditure.

### ***3. Special Rate Variation***

It has been evident for a number of years that Council is unable to continue to provide services at current levels, maintain and renew its infrastructure and continue to replace ageing community assets within the currently available revenues without posting ongoing operational deficits.

Between July and December 2021 Council undertook extensive community engagement around a potential SRV to establish community understanding and willingness to accept an SRV to allow Council to return to a sustainable operating model. A report outlining this engagement and the feedback received was presented to Council at its ordinary meeting on 20 January 2022. On that date Council approved the submission of an SRV application to the Independent Pricing & Regulatory Tribunal (IPART).

The SRV scenario represents Council's preferred long-term path to financial sustainability and includes a proposed new and permanent SRV introduced over two years in 2022/23 and 2023/24 to allow Council to:

- maintain current service levels,
- fund ongoing maintenance,
- fund renewal of infrastructure assets,
- increase capacity to renew deteriorating assets,
- ensure and improve financial sustainability,
- deliver key priorities in the Community Strategic Plan and Delivery Program, and
- reduce reliance on external grant funding for asset renewals.

The SRV scenario includes a compounded SRV of 35.95% including the IPART rate peg introduced in two steps over two years. Each step is made up of the IPART prescribed rate peg plus 15% additional increase in the financial years 2022/23 and 2023/24.

Two other scenarios have been modelled, a Service-Reduction (No-SRV) scenario which has been forecast without an SRV, but with large service level reductions to achieve a balanced budget and a Reduced-SRV scenario with a much lower SRV introduced in 2022/23. Council believes that the full SRV of 35.95% as applied to IPART is unavoidable unless services and service levels are considerably reduced across the Council area.

## 4. SRV Scenario

The SRV scenario represents Council's preferred long-term path to financial sustainability.

The SRV scenario shows a path that allows Council to increase its revenues via increased rates and reduce its expenditure through efficiency gains and cost savings with moderate adjustments to service levels. It assumes that these shifts can be sustained in the long-term. Council's Road to Sustainability Plan outlines several actions Council is taking to achieve its objective of delivering sustainable best value to the community.

The assumptions that inform the SRV scenario are detailed below. The SRV scenario extrapolates from the 2022/23 operational budget. The primary financial reports for the scenario follow the discussion of assumptions. It is important to remember that the LTFP is subject to uncertainties and change, including changes due to uncontrollable events such as legislative changes, natural disasters, and economic shocks.

### Rates

Ordinary rates increase in line with the announced and assumed rate pegs. In addition, the rates increase by a 15% special rate variation each in the years 2022/23 and 2023/24.

### Annual Charges

Annual charges increase as per the fees schedule for 2022/23 for the Waste, Water, Wastewater Funds and other charges, and then in line with CPI. However, in the future Council utilities charges may change at a different rate depending on service level plans and infrastructure needs.

### User Charges & Fees

Rates, fees and charges increase in line with assumed CPI. Commercial works revenue is included in fees & charges revenue.

### Grants and other External Funding

Operational grant funding is assumed to remain at current levels, but no extraordinary revenue has been forecast. Council will pursue funding with a preference for operational funding. Any new and upgrade proposals to service levels and asset infrastructure are reviewed prior to funding submission and recommendations are based on whole-of-life costing, community benefit and affordability in the long-term. Financially unsustainable projects will not be pursued.

Council's sustainability cannot be maintained should grant funding reduce. Over the longer term, as assets which are currently in good condition deteriorate, Council will need to increase its investment in replacements and to do so, it will need to draw on its operating income and its reserves unless additional grant funding can be sourced.

### Employee Costs and Organisational Structure

Council's organisational structure budget reflects all current positions. It is based on the re-structured administration that was put in place in November 2019 and includes the efficiency savings per Council's sustainability plan. Further organisational structure reviews are expected and will have an impact on future planning.

Employee costs make up 35% of consolidated Council ongoing expenses. The overall salaries and wages budget is \$17.2 million for the financial year 2022/23 excluding capitalised wages. Cost decreases resulted from the removal of positions from the structure between October 2021 and June 2022 and some further savings are expected into the future. Cost increases result from mandated wage increases under the Local Government Award, superannuation guarantee increases and staff moving through the award structure. Historically, award increases have been higher than the allowable rate peg; for the financial year 2022/23 the difference is 2.3%.

### Materials & Contracts and Other Inputs

Materials and contracts make up 30% and other operational inputs 12% of Council ongoing expenses. These costs are assumed to increase in line with, or slightly below CPI with further savings made through efficiencies and minor service level adjustments.

### Population Growth Projections

The LTFP has been prepared based on a no-net population change basis.

### Indexation

Base indexation of assumed CPI of 2.5% has been used except where a slightly lower index is more appropriate (eg. other expenses).

### Asset Ownership, Management and Renewal

Council is seeking to maximise the useful life of all assets and aims to achieve this by adequately funding maintenance and renewals. Council continues to manage assets in accordance with its adopted Strategic Asset Management Plan within budget constraints. Council owned/controlled assets receive priority spending and Council will continue to review circumstances that have an impact on strategy, including condition assessment protocols, determining remaining asset lives and service levels.

The forecast expenditure is sufficient to meet the cost of predicted asset renewals, and thus avoids declining levels of asset conditions leading to more costly replacements, reductions in service levels and a backlog of renewals. Council is fully utilising the revenue from Roads to Recovery and other State and Commonwealth grants to fund renewals and maintenance activities.

A key assumption in the LTFP is that capital works are at least partially linked to external funding. Council may need to identify additional income sources and/or reduce the service levels provided should the level of grant funding decrease in future years.

### Depreciation

Depreciation makes up 22% of consolidated Council operating expenses and is expected to remain proportionally at the same levels over the 10-year forecast period compared to overall expenditure. The forecast assumes only moderate valuation movements. Some reduction to depreciation and maintenance costs by disposing of underutilised assets is included in the scenario, but any such move will be considered in consultation with users.

Council's water and wastewater assets are being revalued in the financial year 2021/22. At report writing date information on the effect of the valuation on depreciation expenditure was not available.

### Service Levels

Council undertook a service level review and prepared new and updated Service Management Plans (SMPs). Corporate overhead costs and, where applicable, identified direct costs are being recovered from all services, capital projects and commercial works to avoid cross-subsidisation of services.

All services are being evaluated for community benefit, delivery costs, full-cost recovery, community service obligations and alternative delivery options. In the Delivery Program, Council has identified services that will be reviewed over the coming years. This may result in Council identifying services the private sector may be better placed to efficiently deliver and a reduction, divesting or rationalisation of other services. Maintenance management systems and plans are aligned with preferred service levels and funding opportunities.



### Natural Disasters

The LTFP assumes that natural disaster impacts on public infrastructure will be funded from State / Commonwealth natural disaster arrangements. However, recent fire and weather events have shown that in the case of a major disaster, these funding arrangements are inadequate to cover all costs to Council and may also result in cash flow management issues. No allowance has been made for future disaster events, however, if Council achieves its financial sustainability goals, it will be much better placed to respond should a major disaster affect the area. The No-SRV and Reduced-SRV scenarios leave no room for this. Disaster funding is not received for Water and Wastewater Infrastructure, Public Open Space and Recreational Facilities, damage to which must be funded from available reserves or be covered under insurance arrangements.

### External Factors

In the past few years financial assistance grants have been partially prepaid. While this has a negative effect (reduction in income) on the operating budget of the following year, the fact that it has occurred on a regular basis has resulted in minimal impact against forecast income. All scenarios assume that all grant funding will be received during the financial year it has been allocated to.

### Interest Rates

Due to the ongoing economic uncertainty a conservative approach has been taken and interest rates have been phased to increase over the 10-year forecast period, but not in the early years.

### External Borrowings

Council currently holds several external loans against water, wastewater, caravan park and building assets. At this stage additional external borrowing is forecast for the Water and Wastewater Funds. Other borrowing can be considered where required and beneficial to Council's cash flow management.

### Implications

The SRV scenario shows a return to operating profits for the general fund from year 2023/24 and an overall balanced budget over the 10-year period with a total forecast surplus of \$3.5 million, with a break-even 10-year result for the General Fund when excluding the Waste Fund. The SRV scenario results in a cash surplus that allows Council to increase its asset replacement reserves to make sure services can be delivered into the future. The SRV scenario meets the key principles of sound financial management. It returns operations to a surplus in the long-term, invests responsibly in infrastructure and avoids burdening future generations with excessive costs or extensive reductions to services.

However, while this scenario shows reduced reliance on external grant funding, Council continues to rely on external funding for infrastructure renewals. Council considers the ongoing level of additional funding achievable.









## 5. Service-Reduction Scenario (No-SRV)

Based on feedback received from the community as part of the Service Level Review and Rates Harmonisation and further feedback during the engagement around a potential SRV, Council does not believe that the community is willing to accept vastly reduced service levels or declining infrastructure.

However, the following scenario has been developed to show the effect of not introducing an SRV as proposed in the preferred scenario above and through the community engagement and IPART application process while still aiming for a balanced, sustainable financial position. Assumptions are largely the same as in the SRV scenario with the exception that a large portion of non-statutory services have been removed or reduced from the forecast.

The Service-Reduction scenario has been established on a balanced budget basis achieved from year 1. It shows a path that drastically reduces Council's services and service levels offered to the community beginning 2022/23 with only a minor possibility of re-introducing or increasing these services in future years. It also introduces high increases to non-statutory fees and charges transferring a larger portion of the cost of services and facilities to the direct users and beneficiaries. Additionally underutilised assets will be sold, disposed of, or repurposed. These options were communicated to the community during the SRV engagement in 2021.

The severity of the service reductions cannot be overstated. Most services will be affected by removal or reduction, with internal services and staffing levels reduced in step with diminishing service requirements as external services are removed. The effect on the total Council workforce is expected to be a reduction of approximately 45 to 48 full-time equivalent positions.

Service Transfer or Removal	Service Reduction or Transfer	Asset Rationalisation
Program & Grants	Organisational Leadership	Investment Properties
Community & Development	Financial Services	Batlow Memorial Park
Economic Development	Libraries	Amenities
Tourism & Visitor Services	Communication,	Khancoban Store
Children Services	Engagement & Corporate	Khancoban Shopping Centre
Multi-Service-Outlet	Planning	Roths Corner Medical Centre
Community Transport	Governance & Risk	Tumbarumba Council
Road Safety Programs	Information Management	Chambers
	Customer Services	Tumbarumba Retirement Village
	Emergency Management	Tumbarumba Rotary Park
	Regulatory Services	Tumbarumba
	Growth & Development	Showground/Stadium
	People & Culture	Tumut Museum
	Caravan Parks	Tumut Neighbourhood Centre
	Technical Services	Tumut Railway Precinct
	Roads & Bridges	Tumut Boys Club
	Footpaths, Carparks & Kerb/Gutter	Tumut Community Centre Complex
	Fleets & Depot	Tumut Community Centre Complex - Radio Office
	Cemeteries	Tumut Saleyards
	Public Toilets	Old Tumut Bridge (walk bridge)
	Sporting Grounds	
	Parks	
	Swimming Pools	
	Aerodromes	







## ***6. Reduced-SRV Scenario***

This third scenario presented is based on the SRV scenario and includes the efficiency gains from Council's sustainability plan, but no further service reductions. It results in large and ongoing operating deficits.

The key assumptions are:

- Introduction of a permanent SRV of 15.7% in 2022/23 with no further rates increases other than the rate peg over the 10 years, in other words only the first part of the planned SRV will be implemented
- No service level reductions
- No transfer/removal of services
- No rationalisation of assets
- No additional fees and charges increases

It is important to note the implications of an ongoing operating deficit forecast in this scenario. Over the next 10 years the general fund cumulative deficit \$37 million. General fund cash holdings reduce by \$10 million, to well below the level of cash required for ongoing operations, depleting all internal General Fund cash reserves. It also results in deteriorating infrastructure assets due to the inability to fund required renewals. This scenario fails to meet any of the key principles of financial sustainability.

This scenario clearly shows that without taking measures to increase revenue beyond year one and decrease expenditure, Council will not be able to afford the provision of the level of services and infrastructure it currently provides to the community. Such a course of action will also fail to meet the principle of financial sustainability regarding intergenerational equity where Council is unable to maintain its infrastructure assets as required.



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SCENARIO WITH SRV 15.7%

Reduced-SRV Scenario

Consolidated Income Statement table with columns for Account Description and years 2022/23 to 2031/32. Rows include Income (Rates, Levis & Annual Charges, etc.), Expenses (Employee Benefits, Borrowing Costs, etc.), and Surplus/Deficit before Capital Grants. Total Income for 2022/23 is 76,532.

Consolidated Balance Sheet table with columns for Account Description and years 2022/23 to 2031/32. Rows include Current Assets (Cash & Cash Equivalents, Current Investments, etc.), Non Current Assets (Investments, Receivables, etc.), Current Liabilities (Payables, Borrowings, etc.), Non Current Liabilities (Borrowings, Provisions, etc.), and Total Assets (738,647 for 2022/23).

Consolidated Cash Flow table with columns for Account Description and years 2022/23 to 2031/32. Rows include Cash Flows from Operating Activities (Receipts: Rates, Levis & Annual Charges, etc.; Payments: Employee Benefits, etc.), Cash Flows from Investing Activities (Purchase of Infrastructure, etc.), and Cash Flows from Financing Activities (Proceeds from Borrowings, etc.). Net cash provided for 2022/23 is 37,597.

## 7. Sensitivity Analysis

The scenarios have been evaluated in relation to their sensitivity to changes in the assumptions.

### Employee Costs

Council's ability to contain rises in employee costs has a major impact on future performance. A key issue is the level of capitalisation (allocating employees to capital works programs rather than operational) and the level of resourcing required for civil contracting activities.

Future increases of employee costs due to award increases and progression of staff through the salary system are critical components of the modelling. Employee costs increasing by an average of 1% higher than the assumed rate results in an additional \$9 million and \$7.5 million respectively to employee costs by the end of the 10-year period for the SRV and No-SRV scenario respectively.

### Interest Rates

Council has very low levels of borrowings and the existing loans are at fixed rates with interest payments decreasing over time. However, the interest received on investments has an impact on operating results. Further, utilising reserves for major capital investments decreases the available investment assets from which interest is received.

### Capital Works Programs

A significant increase in Council's capital works programs over what is proposed in the capital works forecast will reduce reserves and cash holdings. If Council embarked on adding new capital projects resulting in additional assets, not only will the reserves decrease, but operational costs will increase both for maintenance and depreciation.

### Grant Programs

Council relies heavily on external funding for its operations and capital works renewal program. If such grants are reduced or discontinued, Council will have to generate considerably more revenues from other sources. It has been assumed that Government funding remains stable, however, should such funding decrease because of current economic stimulus spending, Council's operating result would significantly worsen.

### Rates Income

Apart from the introduction of an SRV, rates income is restricted to rate pegging as set each financial year by the Independent Pricing & Regulatory Tribunal (IPART). If rate pegging was abolished, Council would have greater flexibility to achieve financial sustainability.

### Cost Shifting

Over the years other levels of government have shifted costs associated, among other, with emergency services, weed management, food safety regulation, road safety programs and fire and emergency services to local government without funding. It is likely that this trend will continue and negatively affect Council's operating results.

### Energy Costs

Increased energy costs are occurring with Council continually looking at ways to minimise future costs. Solar panels and geothermal heating/cooling for Council buildings have resulted in savings with further projects being investigated.

### Insurance and Workers Compensation

Forecasting insurance premiums is difficult. Considerable increases in insurance premiums are possible, influenced by several issues, particularly the occurrence of natural disasters, economic uncertainty, and climate change.

Workers' compensation premiums can increase at any time following a rise in claims or with major open cases. Council's safety, risk & quality committee is committed to reducing premiums and claims through increased risk mitigation, awareness, and workplace safety programs.

#### Superannuation

Council is responsible to fund investment shortfalls in the defined benefits member scheme until all staff in the scheme have retired.

#### Sustainability Plan

Council is committed to the actions in its Sustainability Plan to achieve its objective of delivering sustainable best value to the community. It is likely that some additional measures will need to be taken when and where additional cost pressures eventuate, such as rate pegging not meeting wages price or input cost indexation.

## 8. Indicators

Council's key objectives include the achievement of an operating surplus over the planning cycle and adequate funding of asset renewals. This is achieved under the SRV scenario. Other considerations include the achievement of industry benchmarks that Council must report on as part of its annual report.

The following ratios are anticipated to occur under the three scenarios:

### Operating Performance Ratio – Benchmark > 0%

This ratio measures financial sustainability and indicates Council's capacity to meet its ongoing expenditure by comparing revenues with operating expenses (excluding capital grants and contributions).

SRV Scenario	Reaches benchmark in year 2023/24
Service-Reduction Scenario	Reaches benchmark in year 2022/23
Reduced-SRV Scenario	Unable to reach this benchmark

### Own Source Revenue – Benchmark > 60%

This ratio indicates Council's ability to control its own operating performance and financial sustainability. It compares operating revenues gained from sources other than grants and contributions to its total operating revenues.

SRV Scenario	Meets benchmark in 9 out of 10 years
Service-Reduction Scenario	Meets benchmark in 9 out of 10 years
Reduced-SRV Scenario	Meets benchmark in 9 out of 10 years

### Unrestricted Current Ratio – Benchmark >1.5

This ratio indicates Council's ability to meet short term obligations as they fall due. Council meets this ratio throughout the period of the LTFP. However, in the baseline scenario, Council assets quickly deplete, and Council is unable to meet this ratio from about 2025/26.

SRV Scenario	Meets benchmark throughout the 10 years
Service-Reduction Scenario	Meets benchmark throughout the 10 years
Reduced-SRV Scenario	Meets benchmark in 7 of 10 years

### Debt Service Cover Ratio – Benchmark >2

This ratio indicates the proportion of operating revenues being utilised for interest and principal repayments on loans.

SRV Scenario	Meets benchmark throughout the 10 years
Service-Reduction Scenario	Meets benchmark throughout the 10 years
Reduced-SRV Scenario	Meets benchmark throughout the 10 years

### Rates and Annual Charges Outstanding – Benchmark <10%

This ratio assesses the impact of uncollected rates and charges on liquidity and the adequacy of recovery efforts. It is expected to be achieved over the entire period of the LTFP. However, economic factors may influence rates and charges collection in the earlier years of the forecast.

SRV Scenario	Expected to be achieved throughout the 10 years
Service-Reduction Scenario	Expected to be achieved throughout the 10 years

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Reduced-SRV Scenario                      Expected to be achieved throughout the 10 years

**Cash Expenses Cover Ratio – Benchmark >3 months**

This ratio indicates Council's liquidity. It determines the number of months a Council can continue paying for its immediate expenses without additional cash flow.

SRV Scenario                                      Meets benchmark throughout the 10 years

Service-Reduction Scenario              Meets benchmark throughout the 10 years

Reduced-SRV Scenario                      Meets benchmark throughout the 10 years

### 9. Capital Works Program

The capital works program for 2022/23 to 2025/26 is included in Council’s Delivery Program and Operational Plan. The chart below shows the planned capital expenditure over the next ten years; however, this forecast requires regular updating due to changes to the works program and available funding opportunities. It will be updated in line with the Community Strategic Plan and Delivery Program. Council’s Strategic Asset Management Plan contains further information on Council’s asset portfolio.

