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<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Strategic Capital Management
<b>Owner:</b>	Financial Strategy
<b>Responsible Director:</b>	Corporate Performance
<b>Relevant Legislation/Authority:</b>	Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)
<b>DOCSETID:</b>	5105214

## 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Community Asset Policy (Policy) is to guide sustainable planning and management of City of Greater Bendigo (City) assets via consistent application of the Asset Management framework (figure 1).

It provides principles and decision-making methodology to be applied to:

- Asset focused strategic documents.
- Community Asset Management activities including investment or rationalisation/disposal.

## 2. BACKGROUND

The Policy builds on Council's vision and outlines how it will contribute to achieving this.

*'Greater Bendigo celebrates our diverse community. We are welcoming, sustainable and prosperous. Walking hand-in-hand with the traditional custodians of this land. Building on our rich heritage for a bright and happy future'.*

Sound asset management is a key concept underpinning the Council Plan. The planning and provision of appropriate community assets enables the services required for the community to thrive, and contributes to community wellbeing, social and economic participation.

The provision of Community Assets fulfils obligations under the Local Government Act (Act) 2020 and the principles of:

- Community engagement
- Strategic planning
- Financial management
- Public transparency
- Service performance

The Policy takes guidance from the objectives of the Council Plan and the strategic intent outlined within the Asset Plan and Financial Plan. Together this guidance informs the Asset Management Plan/s which describe the current state of the City's assets.

Collectively these plans indicate that without appropriate intervention such as community asset management involving, prioritisation or rationalisation, the gap between what is required and what can be financially maintained will continue to grow. Inaction presents a financial risk to the City's operations and the ability to respond to community needs. The City has a large asset base with restricted funding opportunities (including rate capping), creating an identified gap between asset renewal need and the ability to fund this.

The Asset Management framework (including this Policy – refer to definitions) establishes guidelines to ensure that suitable infrastructure and physical assets are available to support the delivery of services for the community. It considers current and future community needs and seeks to balance levels of service with community expectations and the City's fiscal responsibilities.

The City owns and manages a large asset base valued at around \$1.99 billion (as at 2023) which serves a population of 120,000 people. Our community is changing and growing and is expected to increase by a further 87,000 by 2056, as noted in the draft Managed Growth Strategy.

Settlement patterns are not occurring evenly across all areas of Greater Bendigo: some areas are experiencing rapid population expansion and other are experiencing gradual population decline. These evolving community demographics have an impact on asset and service needs, and this Policy supplies the guidance needed to respond to this.

### **3. SCOPE**

The Policy applies to all City owned or managed assets and all City staff and Councillors involved in any decision-making relating to assets that:

- support the delivery of services for community benefit; or
- are held by the City for future use.

The Policy principles will apply to asset management activities including:

- asset acquisition
- asset renewal
- asset maintenance and operation
- asset rationalisation/disposal

The Policy will apply to all City staff and contractors, and community members responsible for community assets (and infrastructure) through formalised agreements with the City, who play a role in asset management decision making.

The Policy will be applied to asset management of non-City owned or managed Community Assets where an identified gap in service need can be demonstrated and addressed. Examples would include facilities located on Crown land with a Committee of Management that reports directly to the State Government. City owned or managed Community Assets will be prioritised unless a business case to the contrary can be demonstrated.

The Policy applies to all asset classes, their respective Asset Management Plans and any asset related strategic documents. Refer to the related documents section to view the list of strategic documents connected to this Policy.

### **4. DEFINITIONS**

**Acquisition** is the asset or item is acquired or constructed or upgraded to meet contemporary standards to meet service level requirements.

**Asset** is fixed infrastructure-based assets that are owned or controlled by the City to enable service delivery. For the purposes of this policy this incorporates roads, buildings, drainage assets, pathways, open space and recreational facilities, bridges, aquatic centres and plant & fleet vehicles and equipment.

**Asset focus strategic document** is an adopted strategy relating to specific service area, such as aquatics, open space, community buildings etc.

**Asset management** is the planning for, and making decisions about, assets throughout their life cycle.

**Asset management framework** is the collective term for the various documents and practices that make up the City's asset management activities, including this policy, the Council adopted Asset Plan, and individual Asset Management Plans relating to each asset group.

**Asset Management Plan** details the targets including what and how the City will deliver. These are technical documents for each of the asset classes. They detail the service levels, demand forecasts, risks, and life cycle activities for the asset groups.

**Asset Plan** provides a high-level overview of Council's approach to managing assets. It outlines the City's asset management processes, challenges, and opportunities. It also commits the City to continuous improvement in asset management and highlights some of the key actions that will improve cost-effectiveness.

**Asset Management Steering Committee (AMSC)** is a collective of City staff who provide an integrated approach to continuous improvement in asset management awareness, practice and capability.

**Capital Investment Group (CIG)** provides strategic leadership and guidance to the organisation on sustainable capital investment and contributes to positive outcomes for projects by providing transparent evidence based decisions and recommendations to the Executive Leadership Team (ELT).

**City** means the Greater Bendigo City Council, being a body corporate constituted as a municipal Council under the Local Government Act 2020 (Vic).

**Community Asset** includes both public and private facilities and services, including Council and non-Council facilities, required to accommodate and support community services, programs, activities, and a person's access to them.

**Community Asset Policy** (this document) provides direction for managing assets and decision making. It states the core principles, requirements, and responsibilities for asset management, and how these link to Council's strategic objectives.

**Council** means all the Councillors collectively.

**Community Engagement** means the process in which the City and the community connect with each other to exchange views, ideas, and information to (i) inform decisions (ii) build capacity and (iii) strengthen relationships. Engagement approaches can include inform, consult, involve, collaborate to empower.

**Equity Impact Assessments (EIA)** consider how policies, programs and services affect different genders and diverse groups in different ways and recommend changes that will help create a more fair and inclusive community. EIAs consider the needs and experiences of identity factors prioritised in the *Gender Equality Act 2020* including Aboriginality, gender, age, disability, ethnicity, race, religion and sexual orientation.

**Greater Bendigo** means the municipal district governed by the Greater Bendigo City Council.

**Investment** is when an asset or item is acquired, constructed, upgraded or maintained to meet contemporary standards to meet service level requirements.

**Life cycle planning** considers the whole-of-life implications of design, planning, acquiring, constructing, operating, maintaining, renewing, and disposing of assets. It considers the financial, social, and environmental impacts associated with all stages of the asset's life.

**Maintenance** is an activity or activities that are completed to keep an asset in good condition, maximise its useful life and avoid premature replacement or renewal.

**Rationalisation or disposal** is the process of decommissioning assets that are no longer able to meet service delivery objectives and cannot feasibly be modified to do so.

**Renewal** is expenditure on an existing asset which returns the service function or the life of the asset back to its original condition.

**Renewal gap** is the difference between the organisation's current renewal funding, its resources and the required renewal demand.

**Service** means the action of doing something or supplying something to meet a specific need. In the context of this policy, assets enable the delivery of City services.

**Service Level** (or Level of Service) is the standard set by the City to which an activity or asset is provided to meet current service needs. The service level supports communication, monitoring and reporting over time.

**Upgrade** is the expenditure on an existing asset which enhances and/or improves its function and as a result provides a higher level of service.

## 5. PRINCIPLES

The principles described in this Policy seek to ensure decision making is consistent, fair and equitable, transparent and accountable – creating a balance between the operational and financial challenges faced by the City, and community benefits and outcomes.

The following guiding principles will be considered and applied where appropriate in the City's asset management activities, strategy development and decision making.

Principle	What this looks like in practice:
Accessible and inclusive	Promotes access and inclusion for all abilities and diverse needs, aims to be affordable and easy for people to get to. Fair access to facilities and services that are needed across the municipality including healthy, safe and inclusive places, spaces and services.

	Socially and culturally considerate, including promoting respect and acknowledgement for Traditional Owner's culture, history, heritage and connection to land, and furthers healing of Country.
Adaptable and aligned	<p>Flexible and responsive to the changing needs of the community and can be used for more than one purpose.</p> <p>Supports the delivery of the Council Plan and aims to make decisions that are focused on delivering strategic objectives and priorities, while ensuring there are appropriate mechanisms to consider valuable community led ideas and initiatives.</p>
Consult and engage	Meaningfully consult and engage with community and stakeholders as appropriate. The level of engagement and community participation will be guided by the City's Community Engagement Policy.
Equitable, fair and transparent	<p>Equitable access and supply of community assets and services that are defined by services levels.</p> <p>The City will provide the community with a clear understanding of Council's role and how decisions are made, so that the community understands what is planned or proposed for the communities in which they live.</p> <p>The City will apply an equity lens across decisions where appropriate, guided by the City's EIA process.</p>
Financially sustainable	Considers the City's current and future financial situation, affordability, asset life cycle planning, value for money and efficiency.
Partnering and collaboration	<p>Integrated with both internal and external community focused services where possible and a place for people to come together.</p> <p>The City cannot respond to complex issues and opportunities alone and through partnership-based approaches, the City will work with others to achieve shared outcomes for maximum community benefit.</p>
Promotes wellbeing	Positively impacts health and wellbeing outcomes for the community.
Safe and Compliant	The City will aim to invest to support assets being compliant with all relevant laws and regulations and manage risk responsibly to prioritise community safety.
Service and evidence driven	<p>Guided by defined current and target future service levels, that seek to align community need.</p> <p>Informed by reliable and evidence-based data, including demographic trends, usage and condition report.</p> <p>The City will use consistent and quality asset management principles to effectively manage assets throughout their lifecycle (i.e. operations, maintenance, renewal, upgrade, expansion and disposal) to support delivery of the City's services.</p>
Sustainable	<p>Environmentally responsible, well designed, climate resilient, effectively managed and usage is optimised, now and into the future.</p> <p>Promotes positive environmental outcomes or minimises negative impacts, including planning for climate resilience.</p>

## 6. POLICY

The intent of this Policy is to support community assets to deliver benefits to the community and the City by applying consistent principles to decisions within the context of population growth,

decline and change. This policy aims to balance the operational, environmental and financial demands of the City whilst providing positive outcomes to the community.

It is policy to:

- Use the principles of this Policy when making decisions on community assets, producing strategic documents and;
- Have regard to any associated community asset procedures when making decisions on community assets.

The City recognises that not all principles can be applied in the same way to every asset related decision. The method and extent of policy application will vary according to the scale of the decision, the asset class, level of community impact, the City's strategic direction or budget.

## **7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The City's role in asset management is at multiple levels including as a:

- Owner
- Provider of services and infrastructure
- Strategic planner and;
- Advocate.

The City's Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and Council share primary responsibility for this Policy's implementation. This means the City's ELT and Council should reference and consider this Policy as part of any decision relating to community asset investment or rationalisation/disposal. This responsibility extends to internal City groups such as Capital Investment Group and Asset Management Steering Committee, who should be guided by this Policy when making community asset related decisions or recommendations.

Policy implementation at an operational level, is the responsibility of City staff managing assets, developing and delivering on the plans and strategies this policy is developed to inform. Not all asset classes will apply the policy in the same way. Further guidance and prioritisation are supplied via the City's internal asset related procedures.

## **8. MONITORING AND REVIEW**

This Policy shall be formally reviewed on a 4-year cycle, with an informal review 2 years after adoption or after developing the City's Council Plan and Asset Plan, usually following Council elections.

This Policy will be monitored regularly to ensure its relevance in terms of community needs, expectations and strategic alignment to our Council Plan and legislative requirements. The Chief Executive Officer and ELT shall review compliance with this Policy on a regular basis and report to Council as needed.

Readers are encouraged to access relevant documents and/or resources which are available as per the below. This Policy is largely informed by the Asset Plan and will be applied to multiple asset classes (and their respective management plans), strategic documents and plans. See figure 1 for alignment within the City's key strategic documents.

Legislation

- The Local Government Act 2020

Alignment to Council Plan's, plans and relevant strategic documents are critical to the implementation of this policy. These include:

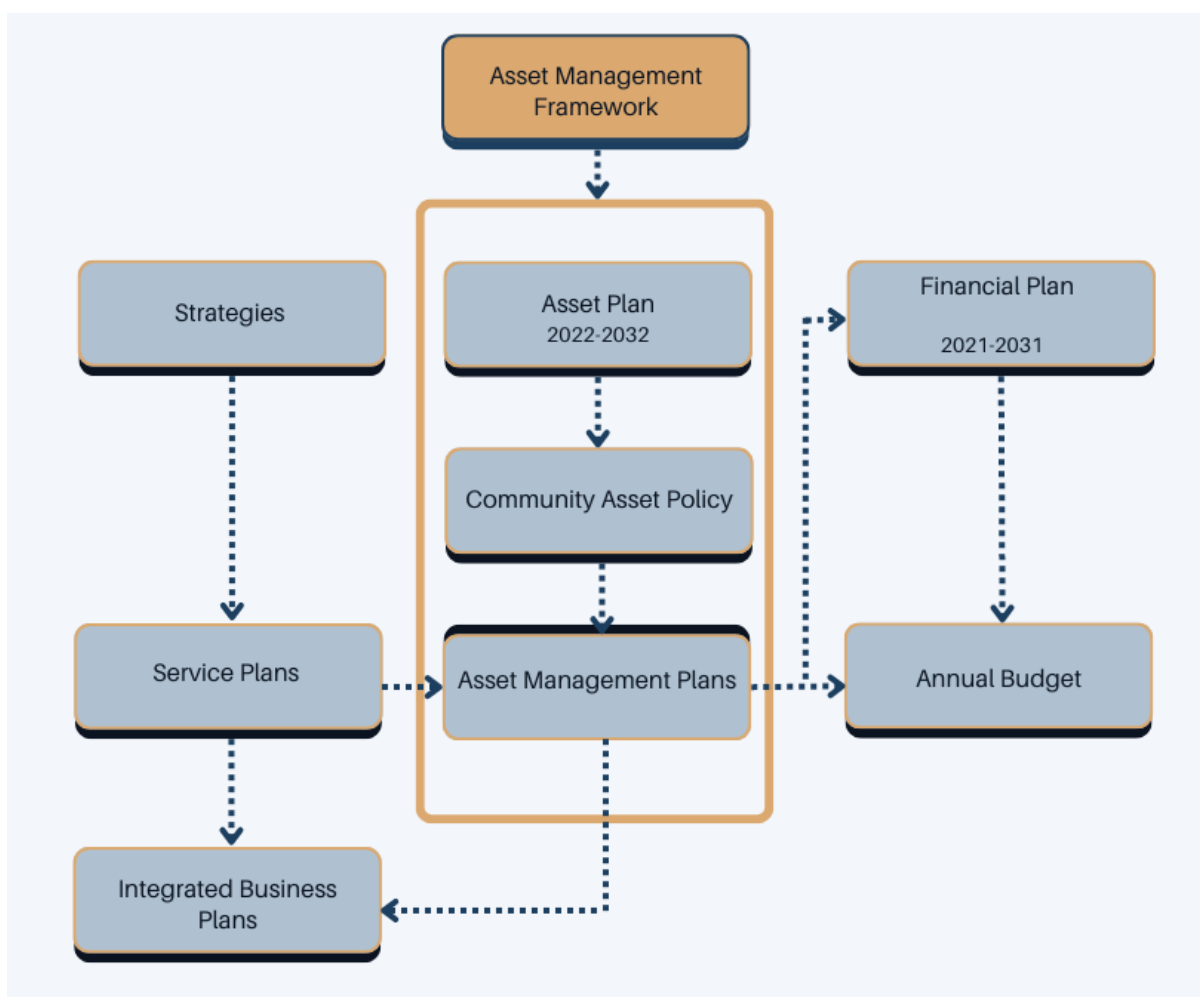
- Greater Bendigo Long Term Financial Plan;



- Community Engagement Policy;
- Healthy Facilities Policy;
- Leases and Licences Policy;
- Place Interpretation and Naming Policy; and
- Sustainable Buildings Policy.

This Policy is intended to complement and contribute to the following:

- Council Plan;
- Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan;
- Greater Bendigo Long Term Financial Plan;
- Asset Plan;
  - Asset Management Plans (respective);
- Surplus Land and Asset Disposal Policy;
- Integrated Transport and Land Use Strategy;
- Greater Bendigo Public Space Plan;
- Reconciliation Plan (Barpangu);
- Social Justice Framework;
- Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme;
- Gender Equity Strategy;
- Greater Bendigo Climate Change and Environment Strategy;
- Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan;
- Road Management Plan;
- Walk, Cycle Greater Bendigo Strategy;
- Community Aquatic Facilities Strategy;
- Greater Bendigo Public Toilet Strategy;
- Early Years Infrastructure Framework;
- Economic Development Strategy;
- Greater CREATIVE Bendigo Strategy;
- Greater Bendigo Food System Strategy;
- Public Art Plan;
- Service plans.



Further information or advice on this policy should be directed to Financial Strategy

## 9. HUMAN RIGHTS COMPATIBILITY

The implications of this policy have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

## 10. ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

It is recognised that, from time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this document. Where an update does not materially alter this, such a change may be made administratively. Examples include a change to the name of a City unit, a change to the name of a Federal or State Government department, and a minor update to legislation which does not have a material impact. However, any change or update which materially alters this document must be made through consultation with the staff Consultative Committee and with the approval of EMT or where required, resolution of Council.

## 11. DOCUMENT HISTORY

Date Approved	Responsible Officer	Unit	Change Type	Version	Next Review Date
16/9/2024	Community Strengthening Officer	Community Partnerships Unit	Develop	1	16/9/2028