



MINUTES

SPECIAL MEETING OF COUNCIL

held on

Tuesday, 24 February 2026 at 05:00pm

via

e-Meeting



WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S
WILDFLOWER COUNTRY

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DISCLAIMER

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DISCLOSURE OF FINANCIAL/ IMPARTIALITY/ PROXIMITY INTERESTS

Local Government Act 1995 – Section 5.65, 5.70 and 5.71 Local
Government (Administration) Regulation 34C

<i>This form is provided to enable members and officers to disclose an Interest in a matter in accordance with the regulations of Section 5.65, 5.70 and 5.71 of the Local Government Act and Local Government (Administration) Regulation 34C</i>			
Name of person declaring the interest	Marty Symmons		
Position	Chief Executive officer		
Date of Meeting	24.02.2026		
Type of Meeting (Please circle one)	Council Meeting/ Committee Meeting/ Special Council Meeting Workshop/ Public Agenda Briefing/ Confidential Briefing		
Interest Disclosed			
Item Number and Title	Item 8.5 - CEO – 06 Months' Probation Review		
Nature of Interest	CEO Discloses an interest in this item as the subject of the 06 Months' Probation Performance Review.		
Type of Interest (please circle one)	Financial Proximity Impartiality		
Interest Disclosed			
Item Number and Title			
Nature of Interest			
Type of Interest (please circle one)	Financial Proximity Impartiality		
Interest Disclosed			
Item Number and Title			
Nature of Interest			
Type of Interest (please circle one)	Financial Proximity Impartiality		

Signature: 

Date: 24/2/2026

Important Note:

Should you declare a **Financial** or **Proximity** Interest, in accordance with the Act and Regulations noted above, you are required to leave the room while the item is being considered.

For an **Impartiality** Interest, you must state the following prior to the consideration of the item:

"With regard to agenda item (read item number and title), I disclose that I have an impartiality interest because (read your reason for interest). As a consequence, there may be a perception that my impartiality on the matter may be affected. I declare that I will consider this matter on its merits and vote accordingly."

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Item 1 Opening of Meeting

The President declared the meeting open at 5:01pm.

Item 2 Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners and Dignitaries

The President acknowledges the traditional custodians, the Yamatji people, and recognises the contribution of Yamatji Elder's past, present and future, in working together for the future of Morawa.

Item 3 Recording of Attendance**3.1 Attendance****Council – Electronic Attendance**

President (Presiding Member) Councillor Karen Chappel

Deputy President Councillor Ken Stokes

Councillor Grant Chadwick

Councillor Dean Clemson

Councillor Mark Coaker

Staff – In Person Attendance

Chief Executive Officer

Executive Manager Corporate & Community Services

Marty Symmons

Brad Douglas

Members of the Public

Nil

3.2 Apologies

Cr. Diana North

3.3 Approved Leave of Absence

Nil

3.4 Disclosure of Interests

The Presiding Member read aloud the following listed disclosures of interest received before the meeting:

Agenda Item 8.5 CEO – 06 Month's Probation Review		
Disclosing Member	Nature of Interest	The Nature being
Marty Symmons	Financial/Impartiality	Ceo Performance Review.

Item 4 Applications for Leave of Absence

Nil

Item 5 Declaration by all Members to have given due consideration to All Matters Contained in the Business Paper before the Meeting

The Elected Members declared that they had given due consideration to all matters contained in the agenda.

- President (Presiding Member) Councillor Karen Chappel.
- Deputy President Councillor Ken Stokes.
- Councillor Grant Chadwick.
- Councillor Mark Coaker.
- Councillor Dean Clemson.

Item 6 Reports from Officers**6.1 Shire of Morawa Electoral Reform Feedback**

Author: Chief Executive Officer

Authorising Officer: Chief Executive Officer

Disclosure of Interest: The Author and Authorising Officer declare that they do not have any conflicts of interest in relation to this item.

OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION/RESOLUTION

260210

Moved: Cr. Stokes

Seconded: Cr. Coaker

That Council:

1. **ADOPTS** the formal positions provided in this report regarding the State Government's proposed Local Government electoral reforms.
2. **OPPOSES** the introduction of a four-year "full spill" election cycle and compulsory voting.
3. **REAFIRMS** its previous opposition to the introduction of preferential voting for Band 3 and 4 Local Governments.
4. **DIRECTS** the CEO to submit this feedback to WALGA by the 27 March 2026 deadline to inform the sector's advocacy.

CARRIED BY SIMPLE MAJORITY 5/0

PURPOSE

To provide Council-endorsed feedback to the Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) regarding potential State Government reforms, specifically the transition to 4-yearly full spill elections and the introduction of compulsory voting.

BACKGROUND

In June 2025, the Minister for Local Government, Hon Hannah Beazley MLA, expressed support for a four-year election cycle and the possibility of compulsory voting. WALGA is now seeking sector feedback through a Discussion Paper to ensure its advocacy positions reflect current views before formal legislative proposals are introduced.

The Shire of Morawa has previously provided detailed commentary on Local Government reforms in December 2021, expressing specific concerns regarding the complexity and costs of electoral changes for small Shires.

DISCUSSION

Election Frequency: Full Spill every 4 Years vs. Biennial Half Spills

The State Government has suggested moving from biennial elections (where half the council is elected every two years) to a full spill model every four years.

Morawa Councils position is in opposition for the following reasons:

Loss of Corporate Knowledge: A full spill every four years leaves Council vulnerable to significant instability and a total loss of corporate knowledge if a majority of members are not re-elected. Current biennial cycles ensure continuity and mentorship for new members.

Administrative Burden: A 4-yearly cycle would place an increased workload on administration, particularly in rural/remote Councils with limited resources.

Disinterest in Democracy: There is a risk that 4-yearly elections may feed into further disinterest in local democracy rather than increasing engagement as suggested.

Financial Impact: While it may reduce the number of elections, the cost of each individual election would likely increase due to a higher number of vacancies and staffing requirements.

Compulsory vs. Voluntary Voting

The State is considering making voting compulsory, similar to State and Federal systems.

Morawa Councils position is in opposition for the following reasons:

Community Frustration: In rural WA, many residents already express frustration with compulsory State and Federal voting; mandating local voting may result in "donkey voting" or increased resentment toward Local Government following infringement notices.

System Integrity: Current voluntary systems ensure that votes are placed by residents who respect and are actively interested in their community's local governance.

Infrastructure Requirements: Compulsory voting should only be considered if supported by electronic voting systems to reduce the burden on rural electors.

Cost: Evidence from Tasmania suggests compulsory voting led to a 35% increase in per-electoral costs.

Introduction of Preferential Voting

Morawa Councils position is in opposition for the following reason:

Cost and Complexity: Consistent with Council's 2021 position, the Shire does not see the benefit of aligning with State/Federal preferential systems for Band 3 and

4 Shires. The complexity of the count increases significantly, reducing the Shire's ability to run in-house elections and driving up costs from the WAEC

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

Medium to High significance:

The proposed electoral reforms carry a level of significance as they threaten the fundamental stability of Shire's governance. Moving to a full spill four-year cycle risks a total loss of corporate knowledge in a single election, removing the staggered continuity that currently allows experienced members to mentor new arrivals. These changes represent a departure from a system that currently ensures engaged, voluntary participation, moving instead toward a model that may disenfranchise rural voters, increase administrative costs, and destabilize local leadership.

CONSULTATION

Shire President & CEO
Elected Members
WALGA

LEGISLATION AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Local Government Act 1995 Local Government (Elections) Regulations 1997.

FINANCIAL AND RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

While election costs are a worthwhile cost of business, the proposed reforms (compulsory voting and preferential voting) are expected to significantly increase election expenses.

RISK MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Failing to provide feedback may result in legislative changes that do not account for the resource constraints of small rural Shires, potentially leading to governance instability and unbudgeted cost increases.

CONCLUSION

The Shire of Morawa maintains that the current biennial, voluntary, and first-past-the-post electoral system remains the most effective and cost-efficient model for small regional local governments. It is recommended that Council formally opposes the proposed shifts to 4-yearly full spills and compulsory voting.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1- 6.1a WALGA Draft - Discussion paper - Electoral Reform.

Attachment 2- 6.1b WALGA InfoPage - Sector Consultation Electoral Reform Discussion Paper.

CONFIDENTIAL ATTACHMENTS

(It is a confidential Attachment)

Item 7 New Business of an Urgent Nature

This item is brought forward as Urgent Business because the first Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee (ARIC) meeting of the year requires rescheduling. As there are no further Ordinary Council Meetings scheduled before the proposed new date, Council must resolve the change of date, time, and format now to ensure the required Local Public Notice is issued and Committee members are formally notified.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION**260211****Moved: Cr. Stokes****Secondment: Cr. Coaker****That Council:**

- 1. Accepts an item of Urgent Business regarding the 2026 ARIC meeting schedule and format.**

CARRIED BY ABSOLUTE MAJORITY VOTE 5/0

7.1 Amendment of Schedule - Audit, Risk & Improvement Committee

Author: Chief Executive Officer

Authorising Officer: Presiding Member

Disclosure of Interest: The Author and Authorising Officer declare that they do not have any conflicts of interest in relation to this item.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION**260212****Moved: Cr. Stokes****Secondment: Cr. Chadwick****That Council:**

1. Amends Resolution 251103 to reschedule the first 2026 Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee meeting from 11 March 2026 to Thursday, 19 March 2026, commencing at 5:00pm;
2. Determines that the 19 March 2026 ARIC meeting be held as an 'e-Meeting' (virtually) in accordance with the Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996;
3. Authorises that future 2026 ARIC meetings may be held as 'e-Meetings' at the discretion of the Presiding Member and the CEO to provide necessary flexibility for the Committee; and
4. Directs the CEO to provide Local Public Notice of these changes as soon as practicable.

CARRIED BY SIMPLE MAJORITY VOTE 5/0

Item 8 Matters for Which the Meeting May Be Closed (Confidential Items)**8.1 Matters for Which the Meeting May Be Closed (Confidential Items)**

Author: Executive Assistant

Authorising Officer: Executive Assistant

Disclosure of Interest: The Author and Authorising Officer declare that they do not have any conflicts of interest in relation to this item.

OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION/RESOLUTION

260213

Moved: Cr. Coaker

Seconded: Cr. Clemson

That Council:

That Council closes the meeting to the public under section 5.23 (2)(c) of the *Local Government Act 1995* and the *Shire of Morawa Meeting Procedures Local Law 2012* s 6.2 so that it can consider the following Items:

1. 8.2 Confidential Report – Interim Early Childhood and Education Centre Lease Approval.
2. 8.3 Confidential Report – Medical Service Contract Renewal.
3. 8.4 Confidential Report – Request for Tender RFT-04-2025-2026 - Morawa Early Childhood Education & Family Centre
4. 8.5 Confidential Report - CEO - 06 Months' Probation Review (Late Item)

CARRIED BY SIMPLE MAJORITY VOTE 5/0

PURPOSE

This item seeks Council's approval under s5.23 (2) of the Local Government Act 1995 to move into camera or closed session to consider confidential matters.

DETAIL

Under s5.23 (2) of the *Local Government Act 1995*, Council must resolve to move into camera or closed session. The following Items are 'confidential matters' as addressed below:

1. 8.2 Confidential Report – Interim Early Childhood and Education Centre Lease Approval.

2. 8.3 Confidential Report – Medical Service Contract Renewal.
3. 8.4 Confidential Report – Request for Tender RFT-04-2025-2026 - Morawa Early Childhood Education & Family Centre
4. 8.5 Confidential Report – CEO-06 months' Probation Review.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

High – Confidential Items

CONSULTATION

Nil

LEGISLATION AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Local Government Act 1995

Under section 5.23 (2) of the *Local Government Act 1995*, part of a council meeting may be closed, if the meeting deals with any of the following:

- (a) *a matter affecting an employee or employees;*
- (b) *the personal affairs of any person;*
- (c) *a contract entered into, or which may be entered into, by the local government and which relates to a matter to be discussed at the meeting;*
- (d) *legal advice obtained, or which may be obtained, by the local government and which relates to a matter to be discussed at the meeting;*
- (e) *a matter that if disclosed, would reveal —*
 - (i) *a trade secret;*
 - (ii) *information that has a commercial value to a person;*
 - (iii) *information about the business, professional, commercial or financial affairs of a person, where the trade secret or information is held by, or is about, a person other than the local government;*
- (f) *a matter that if disclosed, could be reasonably expected to —*
 - (i) *impair the effectiveness of any lawful method or procedure for preventing, detecting, investigating or dealing with any contravention or possible contravention of the law;*
 - (ii) *endanger the security of the local government's property;*
 - (iii) *prejudice the maintenance or enforcement of a lawful measure for protecting public safety;*
- (g) *information which is the subject of a direction given under section 23(1a) of the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1971; and*
- (h) *such other matters as may be prescribed.*

Shire of Morawa Meeting Procedures Local Law 2012

The key parts include:

6.2 Meetings not open to the public;

- (1) The CEO may, at any time, recommend that a meeting or part of a meeting be closed to members of the public.
- (2) The Council or a committee, in one or more of the circumstances dealt with in the Act, may at any time, by resolution, decide to close a meeting or part of a meeting.
- (3) If a resolution under subclause (2) is carried— (a) the presiding member is to direct everyone to leave the meeting except— (i) the members; (ii) the CEO; and (iii) any officer specified by the presiding member; and (b) the meeting is to be closed to the public until, at the conclusion of the matter justifying the closure of the meeting to the public, the Council or the committee, by resolution, decides otherwise.
- (4) A person who fails to comply with a direction under subclause (3)(a) may, by order of the presiding member, be removed from the meeting.
- (5) While the resolution under subclause (2) remains in force, the operation of clause 8.9 is to be suspended until the Council or the committee, by resolution, decides otherwise.
- (6) A resolution under this clause may be made without notice.
- (7) Unless the Council resolves otherwise, once the meeting is reopened to members of the public, the presiding member is to ensure that any resolution of the Council made while the meeting was closed is to be read out including a vote of a member to be included in the minutes.

Strategic Community Plan 2022 to 2032

Be future focused in all we do:

Ensure the Shire and its assets are well resourced and sustainable.

FINANCIAL AND RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

Any known financial implications are addressed in the respective reports.

RISK MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

There are no known risk management implications in relation to this item.

CONCLUSION

That Council closes the meeting to the public under section 5.23 (2) of the *Local Government Act 1995* and the *Shire of Morawa Meeting Procedures Local Law 2012* s 6.2 so that it can consider the reports as addressed.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil

8.2 Interim ECEC Lease Approval

This is a Confidential Report.

8.3 Medical Services Contract Renewal

This is a Confidential Report.

8.4 Request for Tender RFT-04-2025-2026 - Morawa ECEC

This is a Confidential Report.

8.5 CEO – 06 Month Probation Review

This is a Confidential Report.

8.6 Reopening of the Meeting to the Public**OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION/RESOLUTION**

260218

Moved: Cr. Chadwick

Seconded: Cr Clemson

That Council reopens the meeting to the public.

CARRIED BY SIMPLE MAJORITY VOTE 5/0

8.7 Presiding Member Publicly Confirms Confidential Item Resolutions

The Presiding Member publicly confirms the Confidential Item Resolutions for:

- **8.2 Interim ECEC Lease Approval. (by Absolute Majority)**

That Council:

1. APPROVES entering into a lease agreement with Regional Early Education and Development Inc. (REED) for the operation of an interim Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) service.
2. AUTHORISES the CEO to finalise the commencement date as "On successful grant of Service Approval" by the Education and Care Regulatory Unit (ECRU).
3. AUTHORISES the CEO and Shire President to execute the lease and apply the Common Seal of the Shire of Morawa for 25-27 Dreghorn Street, Morawa.

- **8.3 Medical Service Contract Renewal. (by Absolute Majority)**

That Council:

1. APPROVES the renewal of the Contract for the Provision of Medical Services with Dr. Bovell for a further term of three (3) years.
2. ENDORSES the contract amendments regarding leave provisions, vehicle specifications, and financial incentives as detailed in this report.
3. AUTHORISES the CEO to finalise and execute the contract.

- 8.4 Request for Tender RFT-04-2025-2026-Morawa ECEC. (by Simple Majority)

That Council:

1. DECLINE the submission received for RFT-04-2025-2026 pursuant to Local Government (Functions and General) Regulations 1996 18(4), as the tender price exceeds the available budget.
2. AUTHORISE the Chief Executive Officer to readvertise the project via a Statewide Public Tender for a new term.
3. NOTE that the delay allows for the potential confirmation of additional grant funding and takes advantage of the extended delivery timelines provided by existing funding bodies

- 8.5 CEO -06 Months' Probation Review. (by Absolute Majority)

1. (*Confidential – Employee Matter*)

Item 9 Closure

There being no further business, the Presiding Member declared the meeting closed at 5.16pm.

Presiding Member.....