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Strathbogie
Shire Council
Rates Budgeting and
Notice Issuing
Policy and Procedures

September 2023



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Rates Budgeting and Notice Issuing Policy and Procedure

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Next Scheduled Review Date:	September 2025
Responsible Officer:	Chief Financial Officer

PART 1 POLICY

1. PURPOSE

This Policy responds to a recent internal audit by providing policy and process in relation to:

- The annual rate setting process
- The subsequent issuing of notices
- Internal controls in relation to that process.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

The process will ensure that the rate levy process maximises the revenue that Council is entitled to, while complying with relevant legislation.

This policy addresses the Council Plan Strategy: *“Be financially responsible, achieving the greatest possible community benefit from the programs, initiatives and services we fund.”*

3. APPLICATION OF THIS POLICY

This policy applies to the processes undertaken in setting of rates, leading up to and including the Budget process, through to the issuing of rate notices.

4. ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Role	Responsibilities
Rates and Revenue Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance of rating and valuation records used as the basis for revenue generation • Oversee the valuation process • Provision of data from the system to assist budgeting.
Chief Financial Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of the Council budget • Monitoring compliance with rate capping requirements • Authorisation of steps in the rating/valuation process.
Director People and Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversee the budget process • Signoff at certain stages of the process.

5. DEFINITIONS

Term	Meaning
CFO	Chief Financial Officer
ELT	Executive Leadership Team

RRC	Rates and Revenue Coordinator
VG	The Valuer General
FC	Finance Coordinator
RAO	Revenue Administration Officer
Council	Strathbogie Shire Council
MCS	Manager Community Safety

6. RELATED POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

- *Local Government Act 1989*
- *Local Government Act 2020*
- *Local Government Legislative Amendment (Rating and Other Matters) Act 2022*
- *Penalty Interest Rate Act 1983*
- *Fire Services Property Levy Act 2012*
- *Valuation of Land Act 1960*
- *Civil Procedures Act 2010*
- *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)*
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*
- Council's Authorisations and Financial Delegations

7. POLICY REVIEW

Council may review this policy annually.

Minor amendments to the policy may be authorised by the CEO at any time where such changes do not alter the substance of the policy (eg: a change to the name of a related document, or a change in legislation).

PART 2 PROCEDURE

Key Stages in the revaluation process, undertaken by the Valuer General are outlined below. Council has its own processes which run parallel and they are outlined on the following pages.

Date	Activity	Responsibility	Check Off Point
Revaluation Process			
July	Stage 1 - Revaluation	VG	
	• Project Plan		
	• Data validation		
	• Sub Market Groups		
	• High risk property review		
By 31 December	Stage 2 - Analysis	VG	
	• Inspections		
	• Data Accumulation		
	• Analysis		
	• Modelling		
By 28 February	Stage 3 - Application	VG	
	• Apply and confirm valuations		
By 30 April	Stage 4 - Review	VG	
	• Quality Assurance		
	• Return of General Valuation		
	• Review of valuation outcomes and identify areas of improvement		
Council Process			
2023			
July/September	Between July and September– Supplementary Valuations, Rate Notices issued, Council objections commence	RRC	
October/ December	Between October and December previous year – Supplementary Valuations and Council objections ongoing	RRC	
December	Confirm up to date agreement with mailing house including ensure sufficient provision for protection of ratepayer personal information , performance standards	RRC	

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January/March	Between January and March previous year Preliminary Valuations available (March) Final Supplementary batch submitted	RRC	
March/April	Email to ELT seeking notations required in mailout, or text on Notices re upcoming activity	RRC	
	Review and approval of non- ratable properties through a checklist or similar prior to proceeding with the annual rating process Document any changes	RRC	CFO
December/June	Council Budgeting processes	CFO	
	Update valuations for Draft Budget	FC	CFO
	Ensure part year Supp budget estimate included in Budget	CFO	
April/May	Budget advertised after preparation including Schedule for rate cap	CFO	
	Freeze Supp processing	VG	
	Run Report Stage 4 Revaluations from VM Portal	RAO	
	Confirm number of properties is the same in VM and Property.Gov and obtain sign off	RAO	CFO
	Run Report based on existing valuations to set base for rate cap	FC	CFO
	Use Stage 4 Valuations in Modelling Spreadsheet to calculate rate in the \$	FC	CFO
	Review ESC Rate Cap template to ensure compliance and obtain sign off	FC	CFO
	Run Report Stage 4 Revaluations from VM Portal to ensure rate cap compliance	FC	CFO
June	Budget adopted	Council	
June - prior to Rate generation	Share Rate Notice template with Comms team, CFO and RC to check wording and have design work done Check artwork is satisfactory prior to approval being given	RC/Comms/CFO	DPG
	Once changes made internally share with Approved third party contractor for work on artwork	RRC	CFO
	CFO, ELT member to sign off proof to go ahead	CFO	DPG
	Provide rate in dollars and Service charges to Rates and Revenue Coordinator	CFO	CFO
	Review reports to make sure rate cap compliance	FC	CFO

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After 1 July and prior to Live Rate Run	Run reports from 1 July - with Stage 4 Valuations (Revaluation Supp) and Rates in \$ - confirm – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of properties • Valuations • Revenue figure equates to Budget in both VM and Property.gov and obtain sign off Reconcile data provided by external valuer and data uploaded to Property.gov (including Supplementary Valuations), Independent review and approval of reconciliations by a senior officer, completion, review and approval of the reconciliations prior to Final Rate and Valuation Notice calculation and production contain evidence of discrepancies being investigated and resolved Decision documented and approved, audit trail	RAO	CFO
	Investigate any discrepancies	RRC	CFO
	Obtain sign off to proceed with Rate Run	CFO	DPG
	Run Rate Notices in LIVE and confirm Revenue figure with Budget	RRC	CFO
Ongoing all year	Import VG supplementary runs and send letter re any adjustments to be made to the property rates as a result of the supplementary	RAO	CFO
2 nd -3 rd week July	General Valuation Supp approved by Valuer General – provided to Revenue Department who upload into Training system prior to doing so in Live system – needs signoff	RAO	CFO
	Log Job in approved third party contractor portal and set up with due dates with exception list – notices not to be sent out but returned to Rates and Revenue Coordinator – these include Council notices and properties such as kindergartens that share costs with Council – such notices need to be edited to reflect their part only (usually bins only with SSC paying FSPL for instance	RRC	
	Send data file to approved third party contractor	RRC	
August	Confirm number of notices with mailing house equates to Property.gov Rate Notice report	RRC	

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	Approved third party contractor send two lots of “draft/proof” for checking prior to distribution – Australia Post and the eNotice	RRC	
	Check actual “template” to ensure no spelling errors in covering emails etc.	RRC	
	Rates and Revenue Coordinator checks total dollars and number of assessments against Rate Notice Production Run Header thus reconciling approved third party contractor production to the Rate Notice info from Prop.gov	RRC	
	Rates and Revenue Coordinator checks randomly generated PROOF copies of rate notices to ensure data has picked up correct assessment number for the correct property at the correct dollars as per the assessment in Property.gov	RRC	
	Once Rates and Revenue Coordinator happy with proof copies, share approved third party contractor email of proof and examples to be tested with CFO for final proof testing and approval. Reconciliation of dollar value, number of assessments and notices against Councils property system. Once CFO approves, approved third party contractor given go ahead to produce and distribute Notices.	RRC	CFO
Mid-August – after Rate Notice Production	Ensure Council owned properties to be sent back to SSC for processing including tasked for approval to CFO	RRC	CFO
	Verify and approve rates and charges calculations for all properties owned by Finance staff at conclusion of rates production, firstly by CFO then by Director People and Governance and retain Audit trail	FC	CFO /DPG
	Note: Approved third party contractor distribute Notices within seven (7) days	Approved Third party Contractor	
September	Review ESC template to ensure rate cap compliance and obtain sign off	FC	CFO
Pet Registrations			
2024			
February	Data supplied by IT after preparation/checking by Community Safety officers		
March	Data sent to approved third party contractor by Rates and Revenue Coordinator	RRC	

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	Proofs returned for checking	RRC	MCS
	Proofs passed on to Customer Service and Community Safety for testing their proofs - then approval by CFO	RRC	
March	Community Safety and Customer Service officers undertake checks, and when approved, sends to CFO for approved third party contractor to proceed with production and distribution. Approval given to approved third party contractor to produce/distribute		CFO