



Date: 20 March 2020	Embargo: None
Pages: 1	Publication: All local media

Council's 2020/21 Draft Annual Budget - An Investment in Future Growth

Council's 2020/21 Draft Annual Budget is predicting an operating deficit of \$448,000. This planned deficit has been part of Council's Long Term Financial Plan for a number of years and results from Council's commitment to investing in the growth and success of our community.

"Council has delivered operational surpluses for the past 6 years however our investment in growth requires Council to consider operating deficits for the next two years, after which it is forecast to return to a balanced budget/surplus position," said Mayor Karen Redman. "Council's investment in growth delivers key infrastructure and services that sets Gawler up for a sustainable and liveable future."

Key projects that Council is considering for delivery in 2020/21 include:

Murray Street Stage 7 – The final stage of the Murray Street Upgrade project is the Adelaide Road section between the Gawler Mill Inn Bridge and the south end of Seventh Street/Tenth Street intersection. The \$1.78m project that has received \$854,000 funding support from the Australian Government will deliver an upgrade to the road pavements, footpaths, kerbing and street lighting, as well as provide improved pedestrian crossings and an overall safer roadway for pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular movements to access the Town Centre.

Cycling Connections -The Town of Gawler, in partnership with the Barossa Council, has been successful in obtaining \$678,269 in funding from the South Australian Government's Regional Growth Fund towards the design and construction of cycling connections that will link two existing regional cycle paths, the Stuart O'Grady Bikeway (Gawler to Adelaide through the Adelaide Plains) and the Barossa Trail (Gawler to Tanunda). The \$1.8m project will provide a significant boost to the local and regional economy through cycle tourism. In 2020/21 the Town of Gawler will complete the design work required for construction to occur in 2021/22.

Upgrade of the Gawler Aquatic Centre change rooms – Council received \$409,445 from the Australian Government as a contribution towards refurbishing change room facilities at the Gawler Aquatic Centre. The \$539,445 project will deliver modern, flexible change rooms boasting private cubicles, lockers, family spaces and baby change facilities.

New Footpaths – Council is committed to its annual concrete footpath construction program and will continue to roll out this program in 2020/21. \$330,000 funding is proposed to be allocated to this project.

Compliant Bus Stops – The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requires Council to achieve 100% compliance with the Standards for Bus Stops by 2022. Council has been working towards this requirement by undertaking an annual bus stop improvement program. This program used to be co-funded by the State Government however it is now the sole responsibility of Council. \$187,200 funding is proposed to be allocated to this project.

'Whilst disappointing that we are forecasting an operating deficit it's important to reflect on the investment in our growth and the delivery of key infrastructure projects as well as other essential services that benefit the community. The role of local government through investment in local projects cannot be underestimated with such uncertainty in the economy due to the Coronavirus public health emergency,' said Mayor Redman.

Schomburgk Drive completion

The 2020/21 financial year will see Council assuming responsibility for Schomburgk Drive, or more colloquially known as the Gawler East Link Road (GELR). The \$68M asset that is planned to be completed in

September 2020 adds approximately \$500,000 per annum to Council's operating expenses via depreciation. Schomburgk Drive is essential for the orderly development of the Gawler East Growth Precinct.

"Under normal circumstances roads are constructed as development occurs enabling Council to fund the ongoing costs of these roads via new rates revenue it receives from the development," said Mayor Redman. "The Gawler East Growth Precinct is a different proposition where the investment in road infrastructure is occurring to stimulate housing development in the area. I would think every Gawler local will be thrilled when these roadworks are finally completed," commented Mayor Redman.

Other elements of the draft budget 2020/21 include:

Open Space - New housing developments that have occurred within Gawler have added 2 hectares of public open space which bring with it added cost in 2020/21. This open space is essential for community liveability and is an important attractor for families considering Gawler as their new home. The cost to appropriately manage and maintain the new open space is estimated at \$125,000 per annum.

State Government Planning Reforms - Development Application lodgement fees once collected by Council will be collected by the State Government from September 2020. This results in a revenue loss to Council of approximately \$60,000 in 2020/21.

"Whilst the operational deficit in 2020/21 is planned, Council is committed to reviewing internal systems and processes to improve its business practices and drive efficiency," said Council's Chief Executive Officer, Mr Henry Inat. "Continuous improvement is extremely important as Council strives to deliver more with less."

Council is holding a Special Council Meeting on Wednesday 25 March 2020 to debate the 2020/21 Annual Budget. Input received from Council at this meeting will be incorporated by Council Staff into an updated 2020/21 draft Annual Budget that will be presented for Council's consideration prior to seeking public feedback at a subsequent Special Council Meeting on Tuesday 7 April 2020. It is proposed that the 2020/21 draft Annual Budget will then be released for public consultation.



Connect with Gawler:

Facebook: www.facebook.com/townofgawler

Twitter: www.twitter.com/townofgawler

Instagram: [@townofgawler](https://www.instagram.com/townofgawler)

You Tube: www.youtube.com/townofgawler

ENDS

The media may wish to make contact with: Mayor Karen Redman on 0421 839 359