



BUSINESS PAPER

LATE REPORT

Thursday 15 May 2025
1.30PM
Council Chambers

COUNCIL'S VISION

To build and maintain sustainable communities while retaining the region's natural beauty.

COUNCIL'S MISSION

To provide services and facilities to enhance the quality of life and economic viability within the Council area.

COUNCIL'S AIMS

To perform services in a cost efficient, effective and friendly manner in order to achieve Council's Mission in meeting the annual objectives and performance targets of the principal activities Council undertakes on behalf of the community.

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of this Land. I would also like to pay respect to the Elders past and present, of the Wiradjuri Nation, and extend that respect to other Aboriginals present.

15	LATE REPORTS	3
	15.1 Council Meetings - Times and Frequency	4

15 LATE REPORTS

The following item is submitted for consideration -

15.1	Council Meetings - Times and Frequency	4
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Chief Executive Officer - 15 May 2025

ITEM 15.1 **Council Meetings - Times and Frequency**

FILE REFERENCE **I25/100**

AUTHOR **Chief Executive Officer**

ISSUE

Providing details regarding proposed dates, times and frequency of scheduled Ordinary Council Meetings in 2025/2026.

RECOMMENDATION That –

1. Ordinary Council Meetings are to be held on the third Thursday of the month (with the exception of January 2026) at the administration centre, Crookwell Council Chambers and webcast as per the following schedule of meeting times and dates:-
 - Ordinary Council Meeting to be held at Crookwell on Thursday, 19 June 2025 commencing at 1:30pm.
 - Ordinary Council Meeting to be held at Crookwell on Thursday, 17 July 2025 commencing at 1:30pm.
 - Ordinary Council Meeting to be held at Crookwell on Thursday, 21 August 2025 commencing at 1:30pm.
 - Ordinary Council Meeting to be held at Crookwell on Thursday, 18 September 2025 commencing at 1:30pm.
 - Ordinary Council Meeting to be held at Crookwell on Thursday, 16 October 2025 commencing at 1:30pm.
 - Ordinary Council Meeting to be held at Crookwell on Thursday, 20 November 2025 commencing at 1:30pm.
 - Ordinary Council Meeting to be held at Crookwell on Thursday, 18 December 2025 commencing at 1:30pm.
 - Ordinary Council Meeting to be held at Crookwell on Thursday, 20 February 2026 commencing at 1:30pm.
 - Ordinary Council Meeting to be held at Crookwell on Thursday, 20 March 2026 commencing at 1:30pm.
 - Ordinary Council Meeting to be held at Crookwell on Thursday, 16 April 2026 commencing at 1:30pm.
 - Ordinary Council Meeting to be held at Crookwell on Thursday, 21 May 2026 commencing at 1:30pm.
 - Ordinary Council Meeting to be held at Crookwell on Thursday, 18 June 2026 commencing at 1:30pm.

BACKGROUND

Providing particulars with respect to Ordinary Council Meeting times and information regarding the frequency of Council Meetings, in accordance with Section 365, of the *Local Government Act 1993*.

REPORT

In accordance with Section 365, of the *Local Government Act 1993*, a Council is required to meet at least 10 times each year, each time in a different month.

Section 366 provides details with respect to the calling of an Extraordinary Council Meeting on request by Councillors and Section 367 provides details with respect to the requirements to provide notice of meetings.

The *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021* – Part 10 - Meetings, provides details with respect to the convening and conduct of Council Meetings and prescribing of a Code of Meeting Practice.

Any variation to the time and date for the Ordinary Meeting will require the Chief Executive Officer to send to each Councillor, at least 3 days before the Meeting, a Notice specifying the time and place at which, and the date on which, the meeting is to be held and the business proposed to be transacted (Section 367 (1) of the *Local Government Act 1993*).

Further to the above, Council also has an adopted Code of Meeting Practice, which complements the *Local Government Act 1993* and the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021*.

Council's existing arrangements concerning meeting times and dates and other procedural matters relating to Council Meetings are contained in the Code of Meeting Practice.

Information of particular importance is as follows:-

- Council Ordinary Meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month at Crookwell Council Chambers (Note: eleven meetings held each calendar year, January has no Council Ordinary Meeting scheduled).
- Tenders and other matters that meet Section 10A (2) of the *Local Government Act 1993* are dealt with in the Closed Section of the Ordinary Council Meeting.

At its Ordinary Meeting held on 21 November 2024 Council resolved that:-

1. *Ordinary Council Meetings are to be held on the third Thursday of the month (with the exception of January 2025) at Crookwell Council Chambers and webcast as per the following schedule of meeting times and dates*
 - *Ordinary Council Meeting to be held at Crookwell on Thursday, 20 February 2025 commencing at 1:30pm.*
 - *Ordinary Council Meeting to be held at Crookwell on Thursday, 20 March 2025 commencing at 1:30pm.*
 - *Ordinary Council Meeting to be held at Crookwell on Thursday, 17 April 2025 commencing at 1:30pm.*
 - *Ordinary Council Meeting to be held at Crookwell on Thursday, 15 May 2025 commencing at 1:30pm.*
2. *Council prepare a revised costing report including technology and staff costs associated with change in venue to be tabled to a future Council meeting.*

In accordance with the resolution above, this report tables a number of different options and costings for Council consideration.

Should Councillors wish to consider Council meetings at alternative locations, particularly meetings held outside of normal business hours, added staff costs would need to be considered. For information, these have been calculated at minimum 6 hours per meeting held to cover travel time and set up of meetings.

A potential need for a manager to attend to answer questions will also need to be considered which would be a further cost or require questions to be simply taken on notice.

To ensure the smooth running of the meetings, a technical member of staff from the IT department and administration support has also been factored in as detailed in the table below:-

Staff Costs per meeting (based on above)	
IT	\$543.00
Media	\$372.00
Meeting Administration	\$381.00
Manager	\$678.00
Administration Support	\$313.00
TOTAL	\$2,287.00

It takes a great deal of people all with individual roles to ensure the smooth running of a Council meeting, much of which goes unnoticed as it happens behind the scenes.

Should Council wish to consider evening meetings at alternate locations, the staff costs would increase to potentially twice the amount quoted above as overtime rates would be applicable as per the Local Government (State) Award 2023 ('the Award').

As per the Award requirements, further allowances for travel, meals, fatigue management requires a minimum of 10 hours rest between 'shifts', potential accommodation depending upon the location and time, and work-place health and safety requirements.

Irrespective of time, alternate locations pose a logistical issue with regard to webcasting (live stream). Upper Lachlan Shire Council has webcast its Council meetings in accordance with Code of Meeting Practice for several years to allow the community to watch live from the comfort of their own home. This has proven to be a highly successful way of engaging the community by removing barriers to attending Council meetings. Upper Lachlan Shire is a large geographical area so regardless of the location or time, there will always be a large section of the community that are unable to attend in person, also the gallery cannot participate in the Council Meeting in any way, so many community members prefer to watch from home in any case.

Data shows that this financial year 2024/2025, on average 50 people join the live webcast each Council meeting and around the same number watch the recording sometime after the meeting date. These statistics have remained steady with similar average numbers of live webcast viewers each month in the 2023/2024 financial year.

Council uses a secure webcasting system/platform (Interstream) whereby the Council meeting is visually and audio live streamed, this is then securely stored and added to Council website to allow the community to view after the meeting if they missed the live stream. This is all undertaken by Interstream who guarantee secure storage and their service reduces further resource requirements for Council. Please note that webcast recordings are kept and made publicly available for the entire term of Council.

The only location currently set up for live webcasting is the Upper Lachlan Shire Council Chambers located in Crookwell. Council uses the secure interstream webcasting system to ensure that the webcast itself is stable and unable to be tampered with.

Gunning Council Chambers, currently does not have webcasting capability; however it does have connectivity all be it with a very limited set up. To purchase the required equipment to enable a Council meeting with webcasting, Council would need to allocate a further \$25,000 for the purchase of the following equipment:-

- Secure webcasting camera/equipment
- Microphones
- Speaker/audio equipment
- Dedicated cabling, power for Councillor / staff Laptops.
- Connectivity for councilors to access sharepoint
- 2 x TV/Projection for Powerpoint and minutes visibility
- Audio back up capability

It should also be noted that due to the limited capability, it is unlikely that the set up as detailed above would be enough to allow a Councillor to attend remotely.

There are also concerns that instability in connectivity to Council's network could cause connection failure for minute taking (Infocouncil), recording as well as public viewing being delayed.

Following the closure of the Post Office, Taralga no longer has Council network capability, therefore live webcast would not be possible. This could potentially alienate the 50 community members who would usually watch from home.

Costs to set up the room for Council meetings even without live webcasting would be significant. Other locations will need further consideration, however it is likely to be the same issues arising as Taralga.

Council currently receives criticism from community for audio quality so using less stable connections and portable equipment is not advisable as it will further diminish the user experience.

Alternative options for recording Council meetings without live streaming have been considered such as posting on youtube type of platforms, however they would alienate the 50 plus viewers who currently enjoy live viewing each meeting, would increase resource requirements/staff costs and potentially pose data security risks.

POLICY IMPACT

Nil

OPTIONS

Option 1

As per the CEO's recommendation.

Option 2

Time change - Council may consider holding Council meetings on the third Thursday of each month at Upper Lachlan administration centre (Crookwell) at an alternative time.

Council will need to consider staff costings and allowances in excess of \$4,500 per meeting should this be outside of normal business hours. This has not been included in the 2025/2026 operational plan/budget.

There are also safety risks associated with night meetings in the Upper Lachlan Shire due to wildlife on the roads and poor visibility/conditions, especially in winter months. This risk would be the same for staff and councillors alike.

Option 3

Council may consider an alternative location during core business hours being Gunning Chambers, for an estimated \$25,000 investment to install Information Technology infrastructure, a secure network, furniture and associated set up costs.

Council may need to consider additional staff, travel and allowances which is likely to be in excess of \$2,250 per meeting. The above costs have not been included in the 2025/2026 operational plan/budget.

Further Councillor travel allowances may also be applicable.

Option 4

Council may consider evening meetings at alternative locations but will need to consider staff costs and allowances as this would be outside of core business hours. These costs may be in excess of \$4,500 depending upon the location, start and finish times of the meetings. The cost of the webcast equipment of a minimum of \$25,000 per location and extra staff costs have not been included in the 2025/2026 operational plan/budget.

There are also safety risks associated with night meetings in the Upper Lachlan Shire due to wildlife on the roads and poor visibility/conditions, especially in winter months. This risk would be the same for staff and councillors alike.

Further Councillor travel allowances may also be applicable.

FINANCIAL IMPACT OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Nil

RECOMMENDATION That –

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ATTACHMENTS

Nil