

15.2. 2026 Commonwealth Games Legacy and Resourcing

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Purpose

This report provides an update for Council on the 2026 Commonwealth Games preparations, legacy priorities and initial resourcing options.

Recommended Motion

That Council:

1. Note the update on the preparations for the 2026 Commonwealth Games
2. Endorse the Legacy Plan document, including the six legacy outcome themes
3. Approve to create an additional Director-level position for a fixed term position to lead Council's Commonwealth Games coordination and preparations
4. Note that as more information is understood about Council's role, and following the recruitment of a Director, the required resources and structure may change.

Executive Summary

Being a Host City for the 2026 Commonwealth Games provides an excellent opportunity to showcase Greater Bendigo and the region to the world! We will welcome thousands of visitors to engage in the Sports, Entertainment and Cultural experiences on offer. We will also have images of our City and surrounding landscapes beamed across the world via TV and the internet. More than 1.5 billion people tuned into the Gold Coast Games and just over 1 billion people watched the opening ceremony of the Birmingham Games.

To ensure that Greater Bendigo and our region is able to achieve the best outcome we can for the community, it is important that Council develops a strategic approach to the legacy we seek and the resources that are allocated.

This report includes a Legacy Plan, based on the information that is known so far. It is likely that this plan will continue to evolve and be updated, particularly as the sports and venue programs are both finalised and the State Government's legacy framework is released.

The report also provides insight into early planning for the resources required by Council to support the planning and delivery of the Games in Bendigo. This will also evolve over the next four years as the Games moves through its various stages from planning to delivery.

Report

In April 2022, the Victorian State Government announced that the 2026 Commonwealth Games would be held in Regional Victoria with Bendigo nominated as one of four Host Cities.

These Games provide an opportunity to build on our reputation for delivering high-quality, world-class events, and attract people from around the world to experience Bendigo and regional Victoria.

It was historic and enduring event for Greater Bendigo to see the Dja Dja Wurrung, our Traditional Owners, represented at the Birmingham Commonwealth Games closing ceremony. As part of this ceremony, Rodney Carter, CEO of the Dja Dja Wurrung Group, extended an invitation for the Games to be held on the lands of the Djaara people.

This display of leadership and inclusion is a significant and critical reference point for the 2026 Games and serves as a reminder of the importance of honouring our First Nations People. As a co-host for the Games, we want to ensure the event delivers a lasting, positive outcome for healing Country and furthering reconciliation.

We are seeking an integrated approach that considers not only the development of necessary infrastructure, but also achieving legacy outcomes for First Nations People, our community, the environment, culture and creativity, and the economy.

There is an opportunity to bring forward and implement ideas and plans that have been worked on with our community for many years. In most instances, the high-level planning and consultation has already been completed. Careful engagement over many years has told us what our community needs and now is the time to act and accomplish our shared vision for the future of Greater Bendigo and the wider region.

We know that surrounding Councils and communities across the Loddon Mallee region will have a role to play in the Games delivery. These communities are very much a part of our Games story and we want to make sure there is a legacy for rural and regional communities across Victoria.

To ensure Greater Bendigo is well positioned to advocate and deliver these legacy outcomes, it is important that the City allocates an appropriate level of resourcing to this. A Director Commonwealth Games position was appointed on 1 July 2022 for a fixed term period of 6 months to assist with the coordination of the required responses and commence planning for Council's role.

Whilst the Director of Commonwealth Games role is the only additional resource that has been employed so far, a number of other Council Officer level, have been providing valuable expertise and links to existing Council strategies and plans.

It is important that these links are maintained to ensure we continue to advocate for legacy outcomes that align with our established direction.

It is recommended that a Director-level role be appointed to lead the function for a period of four years. Reasons to support this recommendation are:

- A single point of Coordination at a Senior level can respond to internal and external requests with the necessary authority and delegation to make decisions
- A Director will have the delegation to advocate and negotiate for outcomes that align with Council's established strategic directions
- A Director-level position is likely to have the seniority, key relationships and experience to work with key stakeholders, including local community groups and Government agencies to deliver positive outcomes and resolve issues
- Due to the current volume of work, multiple work streams and short response times, it would be a challenge for one of Council's existing Directors to take on the role as part of their substantive role without adversely impacting the delivery of their existing priorities.

The appointment of the Director-level position to coordinate the Commonwealth Games function would not diminish the important leadership role that all Directors have for Games advocacy and delivery, or the Governance oversight role that Council's Executive will continue to have.

Priority/Importance

There is a high level of priority to decide on the leadership resourcing required to ensure that Council is prepared respond to requests and actions during this important planning phase.

Options considered

Council could choose not to approve the CEO to appoint an additional Director and request that the Commonwealth Games planning and preparations be incorporated into and existing Directorate.

Timelines

The current interim resourcing arrangements conclude on 31 December 2022.

Communications/Engagement

To ensure an integrated approach to Greater Bendigo's Games involvement and legacy priorities, a number of Council's key strategic documents, that have been developed from consultation with the community, have been referenced in the Legacy Plan. These include:

- *Mir wimbul 2021-2025*
- *Barpgangu*
- Rosalind Park Master Plan
- Climate Change and Environment Strategy 2021-2026
- City of Greater Bendigo Economic Development Strategy 2020-2030

A number of community groups, sporting clubs and other organisations have requested to have projects included as legacy priorities. The current version of the Legacy Plan does not seek to include a level of every project or improvement that could be delivered.

It is deliberately intended for this document to focus on the outcomes that Council would like to see achieved and some higher profile flagship projects, such as the Bendigo Art Gallery expansion, the Bendigo Low-Line safe transport connection and further expansion of the 100Gb network.

Key stakeholders the City has been working with so far on the Games have been consulted on the current resourcing arrangements. Feedback has been received from Ministers, State Government Departmental Officers, Games Organisers, EMT, internal staff and local clubs. These stakeholders have all indicated their support for an arrangement that provides a single point of contact at a senior level in the organisation to coordinate Council's Games efforts.

Financial Sustainability

Work is still underway between Council Officers and the State Government to clarify the Council's role in Games delivery. The State Government will make a number of decisions prior to the conclusion of this financial year which will clarify and provide guidance on funding.

Council has not yet been requested to set a budget for any costs relating to the Commonwealth Games. The current costs being incurred are staff time which is being provided within the existing Council-approved 2022/23 budget.

It is likely that budget allocation to fund Council's role in Games delivery will be requested in future budgets.

Risk Assessment

Having an approved legacy plan enables a unified approach to identifying legacy priorities. This results in a greater likelihood of priority initiatives being funded and decreases the risk of initiatives that are not priorities being funded.

Policy Context

Primary Council Plan Reference

City of Greater Bendigo Council Plan *Mir wimbul* 2021-2025
Outcome 1 - Lead and govern for all

Secondary Council Plan Reference(s)

Goal 1 - Accountable, financially responsible, equitable, transparent decision making

Conflict of Interest

The current Director Commonwealth Games provided input into this report and recommendation and declared a conflict of interest when this report was presented to Council's Executive.

To mitigate any risks associated with this conflict, if Council approves the recommendation, recruitment will be conducted in accordance with Council's *Recruitment and Selection Policy*.

Attachments

1. COGB Let the Games Begin 2026 Commonwealth Games Legacy document [**15.2.1** - 7 pages]