

# Annual Budget 2024/25

## Phase one: Engagement Summary Report



December 2023

### Background

Council has a responsibility to manage its finances to support delivery of essential services and facilities its community needs. As per Section 94 of the Local Government Act 2020, Council is required to prepare a four-year budget in line with the Council Plan. This Budget must detail the services and initiatives to be funded, and outline how they will contribute to the strategic objectives of the Council Plan.

Council also engages with its community to support the development of an annual budget that must be adopted by June 30 each year.

Council has adopted a two phase engagement approach. This provides opportunities for residents to inform the development of the Proposed Budget, with an early call for comments each November, followed by a chance to also comment on the Proposed Budget the following April.

### Methodology

Phase 1 ran over four weeks from Wednesday 1 November to Friday 1 December 2023.

Two online tools were available on the digital engagement platform, Your City Your Voice - a formal feedback form and 'fund it' tool. The latter allows respondents to allocate up to 100 points across five service areas that are most important to them

The formal feedback form could be completed online or downloaded as a fillable PDF, providing opportunity for respondents to expand on their reasons for choosing the five particular areas and share any specific feedback, including targeted requests.

Residents were also able to ask questions or share feedback directly by email directly to the Finance Team.

Posters were displayed at local libraries and community centres encouraging participation. The Project was also promoted through a media release, articles in City News and the Summer edition of Council's Maribyrnong Messenger quarterly newsletter (**38,000** recipients), an Electronic Direct Mail (eDM) to registered users of Your City Your Voice with matching interest areas (**356** recipients), an e-newsletter to the Maribyrnong Matters Panel (**270** recipients), and targeted ads and social media posts across Facebook, Instagram and X (formerly Twitter).

### Overall response

**183** responses were received, including:

- **166** contributions via the Your City Your Voice fund it tool
- **16** surveys completed via the online feedback form
- **one** email was received in the Budget Feedback mailbox.

## Your City Your Voice

The project was viewed **444** times by **270** visitors who made **182** contributions (**166** via the fund it tool and **16** via the form tool). **Three** people also followed the project page.

Almost **30%** of the total number of responses were received in the last seven days of the engagement period. This followed promotion in the Summer edition of Maribyrnong Messenger, a social media post and an update to the Maribyrnong Matters private members group on the Your City Your Voice engagement platform - all delivered on 27 November.

Peak visitation occurred on 3 November, corresponding with the project launch and early promotion.

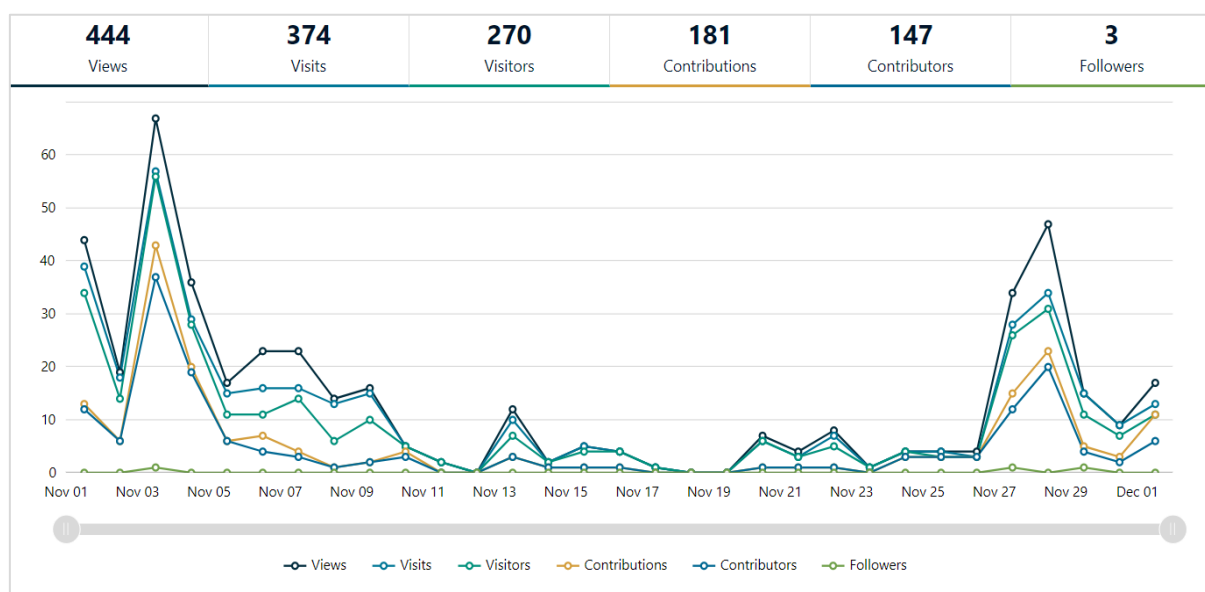


Figure 1. Your City Your Voice project page activity during the engagement period

Over half of the **270** individual visitors (**55.4%**) were active on the project page for at least one minute during the engagement period.

## Email

**One** email was sent to the Budget Feedback mailbox. This was a general enquiry relating to the engagement process as opposed to feedback on the Budget.

## Findings

Engagement was premised on understanding:

- Council service areas most important to our community
- any specific areas or initiatives the community wants Council to consider during this year's Budget process.

It is also an opportunity to remind residents of other avenues to secure funding support beyond a Budget submission.

Through the ‘fund it’ tool, respondents were able to identify five service areas most important to them from 14 defined categories, accompanied by information explaining each service area and what this included.

From the **182** contributions the five most highly ranked service categories were:

- Open space (**143**)
- Sustainability and the environment (**111**)
- Cycling and pedestrian infrastructure (**108**)
- City amenity and safety (**89**)
- Health, wellbeing and recreation (**67**).

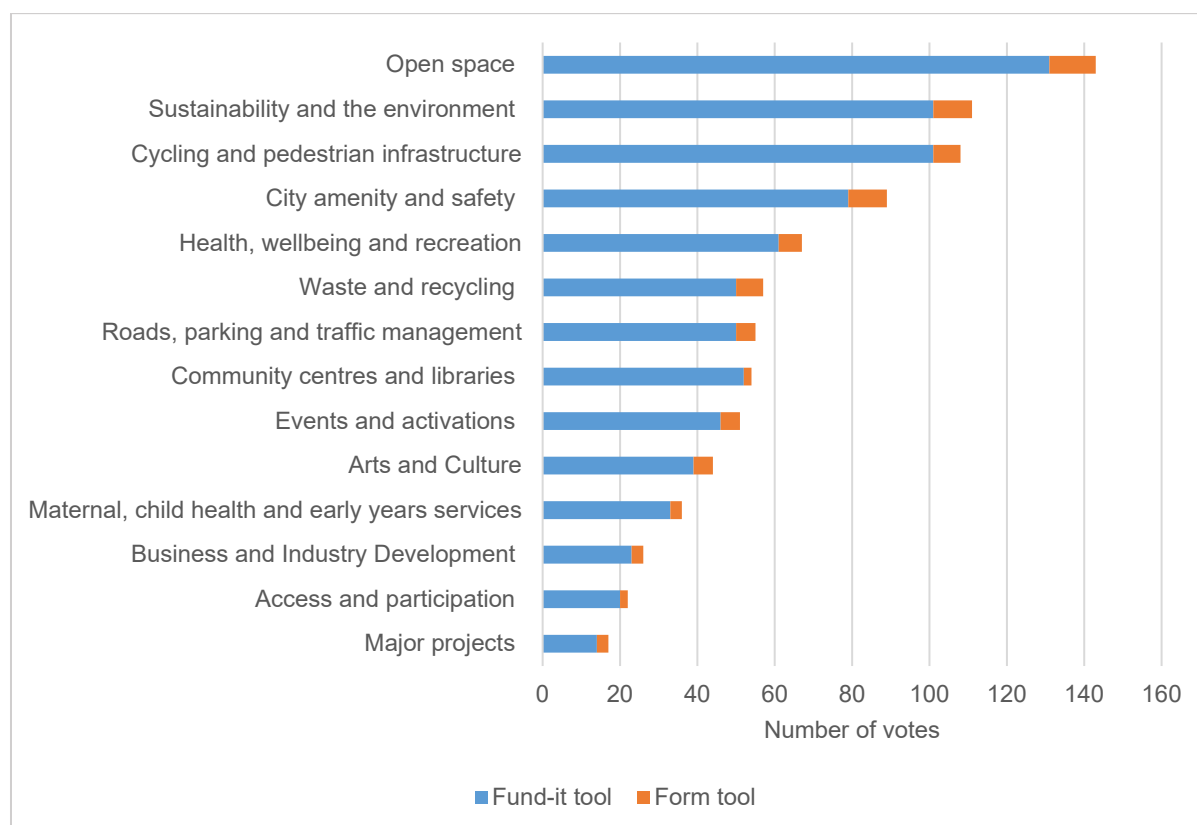


Figure 2. Service categories in order of importance as a total from the fund it and feedback form

This is closely aligned with what was heard last year during Phase 1 of the Annual Budget 2023/24 engagement where the top four community preferences were aligned with a similar number of votes each.

Last year community centres and libraries was ranked fifth. This year it is health, wellbeing and recreation.

### **Fund It tool** (randomised to reduce bias)

Of the **166** respondents who engaged with this tool the areas of most importance were open space (**131**), sustainability and the environment (**101**), cycling and pedestrian infrastructure (**100**), city amenity and safety (**79**) and health, wellbeing and recreation (**61**).

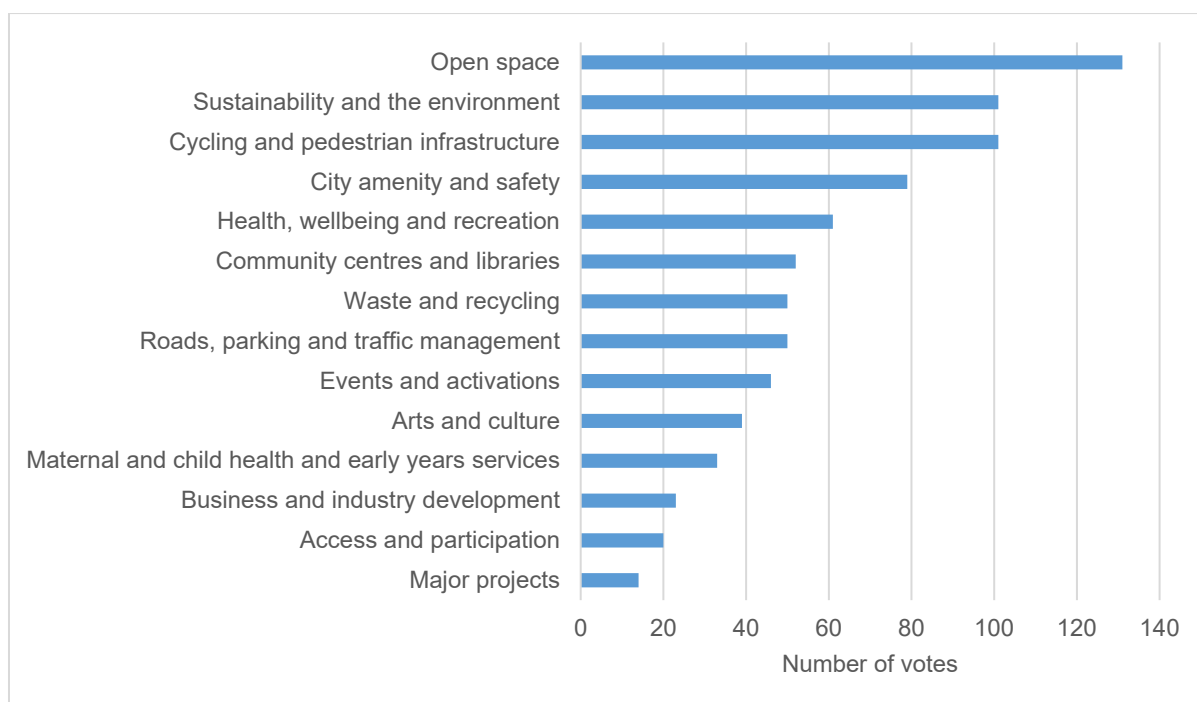


Figure 3. Service categories in order of importance – fund it tool

There were **16** formal feedback forms submitted. Four respondents expressed an interest in presenting their feedback in-person.

**Question: Council delivers a variety of services across a range of areas. Select your top five priority areas from the list below.**

Of the **16** responses there was little separating the three most important areas - open space (**12**), sustainability and the environment (**10**), and city amenity and safety (**10**), followed by waste and recycling and cycling and pedestrian infrastructure (both **7**).

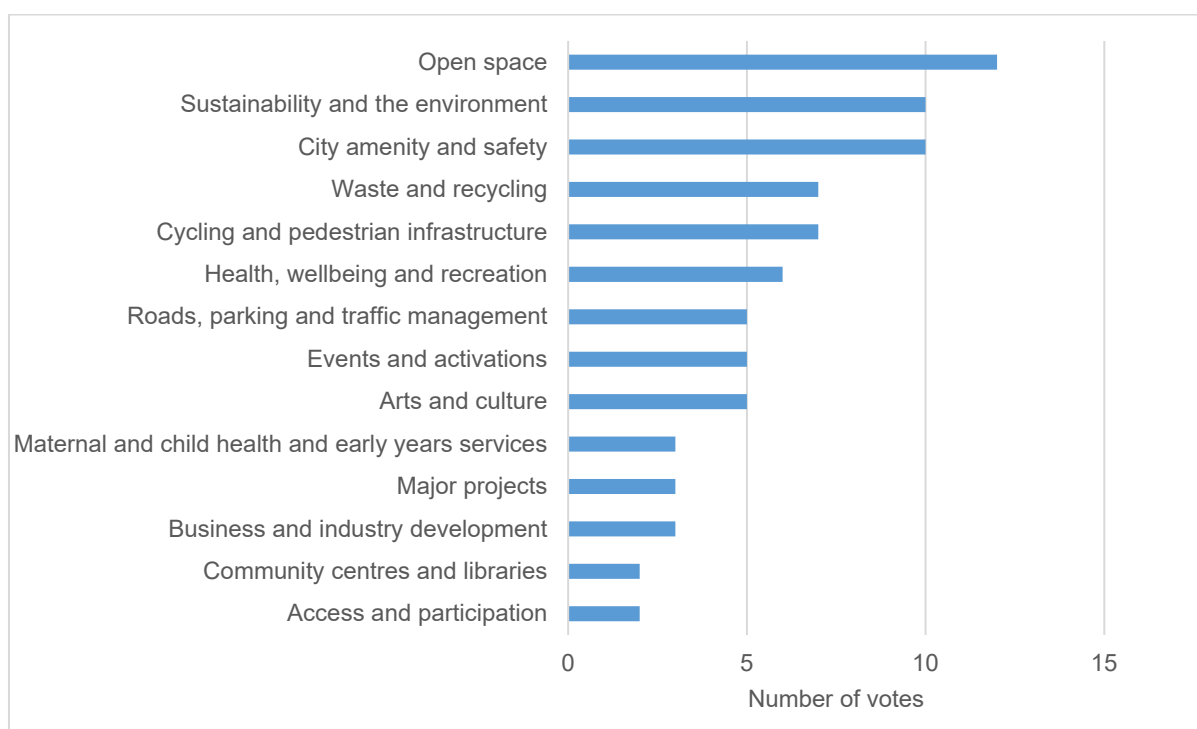


Figure 4. Service categories in order of importance - feedback form

***Question: Can you tell us why you have prioritised these areas?***

Of the **16** responses:

- **four** related to achieving Council's strategic directions outlined in various policies, strategies and plans
- **three** emphasised the importance of preserving biodiversity and taking urgent measures to protect it
- **three** related to improving access and ease of movement, especially for people with a disability
- **three** wanted to see more greenery and open space for community use.

***Question: Is there anything you would like to prioritise that you think is missing from the list? If so, please explain.***

**13** responses were received, which included:

- improving footpaths and lighting in residential areas
- activating laneways across the City
- integrating sustainability across all Council services
- repairing and restoring historical and heritage assets in Footscray Park
- activating underutilised and empty properties in Footscray
- designing cycling infrastructure for commuters, not exclusively for recreational use
- beautification of the City, such as tree planting
- climate change mitigation and transition to a zero-carbon economy
- development of affordable housing
- protecting and increasing green and open space
- supporting community-focused initiatives.

***Question: Please share any other feedback you would like to provide generally.***

**13** responses were received. These reaffirmed or expanded on comments from the previous question relating to:

- ensuring roads and footpaths are fixed and rubbish is collected
- considering artificial lighting in public spaces that are animal friendly and minimises contrast at night
- increasing safe and accessible bike infrastructure
- support for Council's sustainability newsletter, Possum Post
- enabling community-led solutions for sustainability initiatives specifically
- repairing and restoring heritage assets generally
- activating vacant and empty properties generally
- increased tree planting
- increasing space for recreation - not just open space.

Additional responses called on Council to:

- focus on core services  
achieve strategic outcomes outlined in policies, strategies and plans
- integrate Council services to achieve initiatives successfully

- champion safety and access, particularly relating to pedestrian infrastructure
- being proactive to ensure a safe and healthy environment
- with concern also expressed at the fast rate of development and congestion in the City.

## Demographics

Of **161** respondents:

- Just under one third, **29.8% (48)** reside in Footscray, **19.3% (31)** in Yarraville and **18% (29)** in West Footscray.

Of **159** respondents:

- The majority identified as residents (**93.7% or 149**), followed by workers (**8.2% or 13**), visitors (**3.1% or 5**) and business owners (**1.9% or 3**).