Shire of
Bridgetown-Greenbushes
The heart and soul of the South West

MINUTES

Special Council Meeting

Thursday, 5 November 2026

Date: **Thursday, 5 November 2026**

Time: **5:00 PM**

Location: **Council Chambers**

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SHIRE OF BRIDGETOWN GREENBUSHES

The Special Council Meeting Minutes of Meeting held on 5th November 2026 commencing at 5:00 PM.

ITEM 1 OPENING OF MEETING

The Presiding Member opened the meeting at 5.01 pm.

ITEM 2 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the cultural custodians of the land on which we gather, the Pibulmun-Wadandi people. We acknowledge and support their continuing connection to the land, waterways and community. We pay our respects to members of the Aboriginal communities and their culture; and to Elders past and present, their descendants still with us today, and those who will follow in their footsteps.

ITEM 3 ATTENDANCE, APOLOGIES AND LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Councillors

Councillor S Carstairs	President
Councillor R Redman	Deputy President
Councillor J Boyle	
Councillor M Fletcher	
Councillor L Pearce	
Councillor A McRae	

Council Officers

Chief Executive Officer, G Adams
Manager, Executive Services Unit, M Morrell

Observers/Visitor

Apologies

Councillor T Pratico
Councillor K Gillies

Leave of Absence Previously Granted

Nil

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ITEM 4 ATTENDANCE OF GALLERY

SUSPEND STANDING ORDER 9.1

RESOLUTION: SCM 180-26/27

Moved: Councillor S Carstairs
Seconded: Councillor J Boyle

That Council moves to suspend Standing Order 9.1 regarding the requirement to stand when addressing the Council.

FOR: Crs S Carstairs, R Redman, J Boyle, M Fletcher, L Pearce and A McRae

AGAINST: Nil

CARRIED 6/0

SUSPEND STANDING ORDER 3.9

RESOLUTION: SCM 181-26/27

Moved: Councillor S Carstairs
Seconded: Councillor J Boyle

MOTION:
That Council moves to suspend Standing Order 3.9 to allow for full debate and consideration of all agenda items

FOR: Crs S Carstairs, R Redman, J Boyle, M Fletcher, L Pearce and A McRae

AGAINST: Nil

CARRIED 6/0

ITEM 5 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

ITEM 6 PETITIONS/DEPUTATIONS/PRESENTATIONS

ITEM 7 COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS BY PARTIES WITH AN INTEREST

ITEM 8 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE PRESIDING MEMBER WITHOUT DISCUSSION

ITEM 9 NOTIFICATION OF DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

Part 5, Division 6 of the Local Government Act 1995 requires a member who has an interest in any matter to be discussed at the meeting to disclose the interest and the nature of the interest in writing before the meeting, or immediately before the matter is discussed.

ITEM 10 QUESTIONS ON AGENDA ITEMS BY ELECTED MEMBERS

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Reports of Officers have been divided into Departments as follows:

- CEO's Office
- Executive Services Unit
- Corporate, Economic and Community Development
- Project Management and Environment

TEM 11 EXECUTIVE SERVICES UNIT

11.1 Extraordinary Election

File Ref

Responsible Officer	Garry Adams, Chief Executive Officer
Reporting Officer	Merridith Morrell, Manager of Executive Services Unit
Attachments	Nil
Voting Requirements	Absolute Majority
Disclosure of Interest	Reporting Officer: Nil Responsible Officer: Nil

RESOLUTION: SCM 182-26/27

Moved: Councillor R Redman
Seconded: Councillor J Boyle

Option 1 – WAEC-conducted postal election

That Council:

1. **Declares, in accordance with section 4.20(4) of the *Local Government Act 1995*, the Electoral Commissioner to be responsible for the conduct of the 2027 extraordinary election, together with any other elections or polls which may be required.**
2. **Decides, in accordance with section 4.61(2) of the *Local Government Act 1995*, that the method of conducting the election will be as a postal election.**
3. **Notes that the Electoral Commissioner has set the date for the election as Thursday 18 March 2027.**

FOR: Crs S Carstairs, R Redman, J Boyle, M Fletcher, L Pearce and A McRae

AGAINST: Nil

CARRIED BY ABSOLUTE MAJORITY 6/0

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IN BRIEF

- Former Cr Simon Robinson resigned from Council on 6 October 2026, creating an extraordinary vacancy.
- Section 4.9(1) of the *Local Government Act 1995* requires the election day to be fixed within one month of the vacancy occurring, being by 6 November 2026.
- At its Ordinary Council Meeting on 29 October 2026, Council did not adopt the officer recommendation (a postal election conducted by the WAEC), and the foreshadowed alternative (a Shire-conducted in-person election) was also lost.
- This Special Council Meeting is called so that Council can fix an election day and determine how the election will be conducted before the statutory deadline.

MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION

Council is requested to determine how the extraordinary election will be conducted by adopting one of the following options:

1. Option 1 - declare the Electoral Commissioner responsible for conducting the election as a postal election (Officer Recommendation);
2. Option 2 - declare the Electoral Commissioner responsible for conducting the election as an in-person election; or
3. Option 3 - have the Shire conduct an in-person election, with the CEO as Returning Officer.

Under each option, Council is also requested to fix Thursday 18 March 2027 as the election day, which the Electoral Commissioner has approved.

BACKGROUND

On 6 October 2026, Cr Simon Robinson resigned from Council with immediate effect, citing his relocation out of the district. Cr Robinson had joined Council in February 2026 through the backfill process following an earlier vacancy. As the vacancy occurred well before the October 2027 ordinary elections, an extraordinary election is required under section 4.8 of the Act.

The Shire wrote to the Western Australian Electoral Commission (WAEC) advising of the vacancy and, at Council's request, raising whether the vacancy could remain unfilled until the October 2027 ordinary elections. The WAEC subsequently provided its written agreement to conduct the extraordinary election, together with a cost estimate.

At the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 29 October 2026, Council considered a report recommending that the Electoral Commissioner conduct the extraordinary election as a postal election. That recommendation was not adopted. A foreshadowed alternative motion for the Shire to conduct an in-person election using its own resources was also lost. As a result, no election day has been fixed and no decision has been made on the conduct of the election.

The Shire has advised the Electoral Commissioner of that outcome. The WAEC has since provided the following advice: the Electoral Commissioner would not hold the election on 6 February 2027 (the four-month limit), as the Christmas and New Year period would interfere with the timing of the statutory compliance obligations for the election; and the Shire of Waroona, a local government of similar size to the Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes, held an in-person extraordinary election in 2023 at which voter participation fell from 33.43% to 17.23%.

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On 3 November 2026, the Deputy Electoral Commissioner wrote to the CEO advising that:

- the earliest date the WAEC can conduct an in-person extraordinary election is Thursday 18 March 2027, which is also its preferred date;
- as that date is more than four months after the vacancy, the Electoral Commissioner approves it under section 4.9(2);
- the estimated cost of an in-person election is approximately $25,000 (ex GST); and
- once the Shire confirms in writing that it will take the estimate to Council, the Electoral Commissioner will provide written agreement to conduct the election in a separate letter, and both letters must be put to Council for a decision.

In a covering email on 4 November 2026, the WAEC advised that it had minimised costs by using Shire staff to support the Returning Officer, using a single ballot paper and keeping WAEC resources to the minimum required. It also confirmed that the Electoral Commissioner still prefers a March election date.

This Special Council Meeting has been called so that Council can make the required decisions within the one-month period set by section 4.9(1).

STATUTORY ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Act 1995 Local Government (Elections) Regulations 1997 Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996 Local Government (Functions and General) Regulations 1996

The proposed day of 18 March 2027 is later than four months after the vacancy and therefore requires the Electoral Commissioner's approval under section 4.9(2). The Deputy Electoral Commissioner gave that approval by letter dated 3 November 2026.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Nil

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The extraordinary election is not provided for in the 2026/27 Annual Budget and will need to be funded through the mid-year budget review.

OPTION	ESTIMATED COST (EX GST)
1 - WAEC-conducted postal election	Approximately $32,000
2 - WAEC-conducted in-person election	Approximately $25,000 (WAEC letter, 3 November 2026)
3 - Shire-conducted in-person election	$8,000 to $10,000 – roll preparation, advertising, printing, staffing two polling places, election staff.

The WAEC's in-person estimate assumes one vacancy, 4,250 electors, a response rate of approximately 15%, a locally appointed Returning Officer, the Shire providing all other electoral officers, and the count being conducted at the Shire office using CountWA. The WAEC recovers its full accrual costs under the *Local Government (Elections) Regulations 1997*, so the final cost may differ. It has noted the cost may rise if casual staff are needed to issue votes or to assist on election day or with the count, if supplier costs increase, or because of the ongoing situation in the Middle

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East. An in-person election is generally more expensive than a postal election because polling places must be staffed on election day.

COUNCIL PLAN

11 A well-informed and engaged community.

10 Proactive, visionary leadership and effective governance.

Filling the vacancy ensures Council operates at its full complement of elected members and gives electors the opportunity to choose their representative.

LONG TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

Nil

ASSET MANAGEMENT PLANS

Nil

WORKFORCE PLAN

Under Option 1, the Shire's workload is limited to supporting tasks such as providing owners and occupiers roll information, public notices and venue arrangements. Under Option 2, the WAEC's estimate assumes the Shire provides all electoral officers other than the Returning Officer, including staff to issue early polling ballot papers and to assist on election day and with the count at the Shire office. A Shire-conducted election would require the CEO as Returning Officer and Executive Services staff to manage all statutory processes, alongside existing workloads including the 2026–27 fire season.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk	Likelihood	Consequence	Rating	Mitigation
No election day fixed by 6 November 2026, so the Electoral Commissioner fixes the day and Council loses control of timing	Possible	Moderate	Moderate	Council resolves Part 1 at this meeting
Actual cost exceeds the WAEC estimate, for example if casual staff are needed or supplier costs rise	Possible	Minor	Low	WAEC to advise of cost increases as they arise; any variance addressed through the budget review
Procedural error in a Shire-run election leading to a Court of Disputed Returns challenge	Unlikely	Major	Moderate	WAEC conduct (Officer Recommendation), or engage WAEC guidance if Shire-run
Reputational risk from further delay in filling the vacancy	Possible	Minor	Low	Clear community communication once the day is fixed

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COMMENT

The most pressing matter is timing. If Council does not fix an election day at this meeting, the one-month period in section 4.9(1) will expire on 6 November 2026. The CEO would then be required to notify the Electoral Commissioner, who would fix the day without further input from Council.

Election day. Thursday 18 March 2027 sits outside the four-month limit of 6 February 2027 and therefore needed the Electoral Commissioner's approval, which was given on 3 November 2026. The WAEC has confirmed it is both the earliest date it can conduct an in-person election and its preferred date. The WAEC has advised that the Electoral Commissioner would not hold the election on 6 February 2027, because the Christmas and New Year period would interfere with the timing of the statutory compliance obligations, such as public notices, close of the roll and nominations. A March date avoids this and leaves approximately seven months before the October 2027 ordinary election.

Method and participation. Under section 4.61, an election is held in person unless Council decides by absolute majority to hold a postal election. The WAEC has advised that the Shire of Waroona, a local government of similar size to the Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes, held an in-person extraordinary election in 2025 at which voter participation fell from 33.43% to 17.23%. Postal elections deliver ballot papers to every elector and generally achieve higher participation, which strengthens the mandate of the elected member. An in-person election would also fall on a Thursday, a working day for many electors.

Conduct of the election. The three options compare as follows:

	Option 1 -WAEC postal	Option 2-WAEC in-person	Option 3-Shire in-person
Returning Officer	Electoral Commissioner's appointee	Locally appointed by the WAEC	CEO
Expected participation	Highest	Approximately 15% (WAEC estimate); Waroona fell from 30% to 17%	Similar to Option 2
Expertise	Specialist electoral staff and systems	WAEC oversight, Shire staff as electoral officers	Limited recent in-house experience
Shire staff workload	Low	Moderate – Shire provides electoral officers and hosts the count	High, during the fire season
Risk of procedural challenge	Low	Low	Higher
Cost (ex GST)	Approximately $32,000	Approximately $25,000	$10,000
Voting requirement	Absolute majority	Absolute majority	Simple majority

Officers recommend Option 1. A WAEC-conducted postal election offers the best prospect of strong elector participation, provides independence, reduces the risk of procedural error and avoids diverting a small Executive Services team from other statutory work.

Options 2 and 3 are provided should Council prefer an in-person election. Under Option 3, the CEO would act as Returning Officer and the Shire would carry out all statutory steps, including preparing the electoral roll, giving public notices, receiving nominations and staffing the polling place.

Once Council has made its decision, officers will advise the Electoral Commissioner, seek approval of the election day and publish the required notices.

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ITEM 12 ELECTED MEMBERS QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE

ITEM 13 CLOSURE

The Presiding Member closed the meeting at 5.19pm.

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