

3.1.11 EMERGENCY SERVICES RESERVE FUND POLICY

1. Policy Objective

To establish a transparent and collaborative framework for the management and use of the Shire of Kent Emergency Services Reserve Fund.

This policy is intended to ensure that:

- funds are retained and used for emergency services purposes within the Shire of Kent;
- local emergency services groups are consulted regarding proposed contributions and expenditure;
- funding requests are assessed consistently and transparently;
- community-raised funds continue to provide a direct benefit to the local community; and
- the Reserve is administered in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1995* and applicable financial management requirements.

2. Background

The Emergency Services Reserve Fund was established following a request from local emergency services representatives to transfer community-raised emergency services funds to the Shire for ongoing management.

The funds were originally raised by members of the local community to support emergency services operating within the Shire of Kent. Upon establishment of the Reserve, the local emergency services group or groups made an initial contribution as recorded below:

Initial contribution: *\$[to be inserted by the Chief Executive Officer once received]*

Date received: *[to be inserted by the Chief Executive Officer once received]*

Council authorises the Chief Executive Officer to insert the confirmed amount and date above once the funds are received. This is an administrative update recording a historical fact and does not constitute an amendment to this policy.

Council acknowledges the considerable effort of local volunteers and community members in raising these funds and recognises that the funds were raised by the local community for the benefit of the local community.

Once transferred to the Shire, the funds become local government funds and must be administered by the Shire in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1995* and associated financial management requirements. Accordingly, while Council will consult with local emergency services groups, responsibility for approving expenditure from the Reserve remains with Council.

3. Reserve Name and Purpose

The Reserve will be known as the:

Emergency Services Reserve Fund

The purpose of the Reserve is:

“Provision, maintenance, improvement and support of emergency services within the Shire of Kent.”

The Reserve is established and maintained under section 6.11 of the *Local Government Act 1995*. Regulation 17 of the *Local Government (Financial Management) Regulations 1996* requires a reserve account to have a title that clearly identifies the purpose for which its money is set aside.

4. Application

This policy applies to:

- Council members and Shire employees involved in administering the Reserve;
- emergency services groups operating within the Shire of Kent;
- contributions made to the Reserve; and
- all requests and proposals for expenditure from the Reserve.

For the purpose of this policy, a local emergency services group means an emergency services organisation, brigade, unit or volunteer group that operates within and provides emergency services to the Shire of Kent community.

5. Guiding Principles

The Reserve will be managed in accordance with the following principles:

5.1 Local community benefit

Reserve funds must be used for projects, services, equipment or activities undertaken within the Shire of Kent and providing a direct benefit to emergency services within the district.

5.2 Collaborative decision-making

Council and local emergency services groups will consult with each other before any expenditure from the Reserve is approved or undertaken.

5.3 Council responsibility

All funds held in the Reserve are local government funds. Council retains final responsibility and decision-making authority regarding the allocation and expenditure of those funds.

Consultation under this policy does not constitute a delegation of Council's financial or decision-making responsibilities.

5.4 Transparency and accountability

All contributions, funding requests, decisions and expenditure must be properly documented and reported through the Shire's financial management and reporting processes.

5.5 Long-term sustainability

Funding decisions should consider the ongoing sustainability of the Reserve and maintain an appropriate balance for future emergency services requirements.

6. Contributions to the Reserve

The Reserve may receive:

- contributions from local emergency services groups;
- allocations from Council;
- donations or community-raised funds accepted by Council;
- grants or other funding where the relevant funding conditions permit the money to be placed in the Reserve;
- interest earnings allocated in accordance with Council's budget; and
- other amounts approved by Council.

6.1 Annual matching contribution

Where local emergency services groups collectively contribute a minimum cash amount of **\$3,000** to the Reserve during a financial year, Council will contribute **\$3,000** to the Reserve for that financial year.

For clarity:

- the \$3,000 threshold may be met through contributions from one or more eligible local emergency services groups;
- the groups' contribution must be received by the Shire during the relevant financial year;
- unless otherwise resolved by Council, volunteer labour, donated materials and other in-kind support will not count towards the \$3,000 threshold;
- Council's matching contribution is limited to \$3,000 per financial year, irrespective of whether the groups' combined contribution exceeds \$3,000; and
- Council's contribution will be included in the annual budget or budget review as appropriate.

Council may approve additional contributions to the Reserve at its discretion.

7. Eligible Uses

Subject to Council approval, Reserve funds may be used for:

- the acquisition, replacement or significant upgrade of emergency services vehicles, plant and equipment;
- emergency communications and information technology equipment;
- personal protective equipment and operational safety equipment;
- construction, renewal, improvement or major maintenance of emergency services buildings and facilities;
- equipment storage, secure compounds and associated infrastructure;
- training equipment, exercises and specialist training that provide a direct operational benefit;
- emergency preparedness, prevention, response and recovery initiatives;
- contributions towards eligible grant-funded emergency services projects;
- other emergency services purposes consistent with the stated purpose of the Reserve.

8. Ineligible Uses

Reserve funds will not ordinarily be used for:

- projects, equipment or services located outside the Shire of Kent;
- activities that do not provide a clear benefit to emergency services within the Shire;
- routine social activities, gifts or entertainment;
- expenditure primarily benefiting an individual;
- reimbursement of expenditure incurred without prior Shire authorisation;
- recurring operating expenses that should reasonably be met through an emergency services group's normal operating allocation;
- expenditure that is inconsistent with legislation, Council policy or applicable funding conditions;
- expenditure for which sufficient alternative funding is readily available, unless there is a demonstrated need for a Reserve contribution; or
- expenditure that would create an unreasonable or unfunded ongoing liability for the Shire.

The purchase of equipment or services from a supplier located outside the Shire may be permitted where necessary, provided the funded equipment, service or project is delivered, installed, retained or used within the Shire of Kent for local emergency services purposes.

9. Consultation Before Expenditure

Consultation between the Shire and relevant local emergency services groups is mandatory before expenditure from the Reserve occurs.

9.1 Proposal initiated by an emergency services group

Where an emergency services group proposes expenditure from the Reserve, the group must consult with the Shire and submit a funding request in accordance with this policy.

9.2 Proposal initiated by the Shire or Council

Where the Shire or Council proposes expenditure from the Reserve, the Shire must consult with the local emergency services group or groups reasonably likely to be affected by, benefit from or have an interest in the proposal before the proposal is presented to Council for approval.

9.3 Consultation record

The relevant Council report must summarise:

- the consultation undertaken;
- the views expressed by the emergency services group or groups;
- any areas of agreement or disagreement; and
- how those views have been considered in the recommendation.

Consultation does not require unanimous agreement. Where agreement cannot be reached, the differing views must be presented to Council before it makes its decision.

10. Funding Request Process

Funding requests should be submitted to the Chief Executive Officer in writing and include, where applicable:

- the name of the requesting emergency services group;
- a description of the proposed project, purchase or activity;
- the amount requested from the Reserve;
- an explanation of how the proposal supports emergency services within the Shire;
- evidence of consultation with other affected emergency services groups;
- quotations or a reasonable cost estimate;
- details of other funding or contributions available;
- the proposed timeframe;
- ownership and responsibility for the completed asset or purchased equipment;
- ongoing operating, maintenance, insurance and replacement implications;
- any procurement, approval or legislative requirements; and

- details of any urgency or operational risk.

The Shire may request further information before progressing an application.

11. Approval of Expenditure

All expenditure from the Reserve must:

- be consistent with the Reserve's adopted purpose;
- occur within the Shire of Kent, subject to the purchasing clarification in clause 8;
- be preceded by consultation in accordance with clause 9; and
- be included in the Shire's adopted annual budget or authorised through an applicable budget amendment process;

No emergency services group or individual member may commit, order or incur expenditure on behalf of the Shire without prior written authorisation.

Where funds are proposed to be used for a purpose different from the adopted Reserve purpose, the requirements of section 6.11 of the *Local Government Act 1995* must be satisfied. This may include local public notice and an absolute-majority decision unless the proposed change or use has been disclosed in the annual budget.

12. Policy Review and Amendment

This policy will be reviewed at least once every four years, or earlier if:

- there is a material change to legislation;
- the purpose or operation of the Reserve is proposed to change;
- requested by Council; or
- significant implementation issues are identified.

Any proposed amendment, replacement or revocation of this policy must be developed in consultation with local emergency services groups before being presented to Council.

The Council report considering any change must document the consultation undertaken and the views received. Council retains the authority to adopt, amend or revoke the policy in accordance with its statutory responsibilities.

Document Control

Policy Number	3.1.11
Policy Version	1
Creation Date	15 September 2026
Last Review Date	N/A
Next Review Due	This policy will be reviewed at least once every four years, or earlier where circumstances require.
Legislation:	<i>Local Government Act 1995, particularly sections 6.2, 6.8 and 6.11.</i> <i>Local Government (Financial Management) Regulations 1996.</i>
Related Documents:	Shire of Kent Annual Budget. Shire of Kent Purchasing Policy. Shire of Kent Delegations Register. Shire of Kent Strategic Community Plan and Corporate Business Plan. Applicable emergency management legislation, plans and arrangements.