

Introduction

The value of planning and good governance.

The 2020/21 Operational Plan comes at a time of significant upheaval, but also a time of great opportunity for the North Burnett region.

First and foremost, the events of 2019/20 have proven that, as a community, we are truly resilient and capable of standing up to exceptional challenges. There is no question that social, economic, health, justice, political and environmental factors across the globe have the power to impact local decisions and outcomes. And, more than ever, the critical need for sound planning, rational decision-making, good governance and responsible day-to-day operations, has become clearly apparent.

However, this new environment has also provided us with the powerful impetus to learn from such experiences, and use them to guide and inform us, as we look to a more empathetic, sustainable, and socially responsive future.

To achieve this, we must ask “What needs to be done, by whom, by when and at what cost?” while finding the balance between well-defined target-setting and the ability to be flexible.

Thorough planning and sound governance are required by legislation. But more importantly, they are fundamental to providing the best for our ratepayers, our residents, our employees and volunteers, and our visitors.

This Operational Plan seeks to achieve this, and is the result of comprehensive planning, consultation and brainstorming across all units of Council.

It addresses our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and identifies external factors that affect the region now and/or are expected to impact us in the future.

The plan defines the short, medium and long-term priorities of Council from July 2020 to June 2021 and seeks to guide the fulfilment of those priorities. Importantly, the plan also provides tools to monitor progress – allowing us to celebrate milestones as they are reached.

Our strengths and weaknesses

The North Burnett Regional Council has many challenges ahead. Our staff are excellent and not only have, but share their extensive knowledge of the organisation, the local region, and the communities. A deep commitment to the North Burnett permeates through the entire organisation, and there is good representation from across the region.

We accept that there is work to do in addressing our reliance on grant funding to pay for roads and infrastructure, and while our staff are exceptionally skilled at responding and adapting to diverse circumstances, we must be mindful to avoid ad hoc decision-making in place of long term planning and procedure. We must also find innovative ways to attract new staff, and support staff advancement, including through careful succession-planning.

Our threats and opportunities

Like all local governments, we must remain in-step with legislative changes at a state level. We acknowledge that ageing assets, financial sustainability, the threats of natural disasters, and the effects of climate change are frequent long term challenges. However, by identifying these issues, we are able to then plan for them.

Bold planning and foresight does not stop there. Within our organisation, we have plenty of scope to seize on valuable opportunities – particularly by increasing our engagement with the community and improving the efficiency and provision of Council services. Furthermore, we are well-positioned to help build the community's capacity and embrace advances in technology to further the region's progress as a whole.

The external impacts

As well as internal factors, this plan seeks to recognise the numerous external forces that may impact the Council. These include political factors such as legislation and the 2020 state government elections; economic issues including Covid-19 recovery and uncertainty surrounding the costs of services; social challenges such as our seasonal workforce, and ageing population, as well as limitations in technology infrastructure and utilisation; environmental challenges; and legal issues. Weather its drought or flood, the North Burnett has frequently experienced extreme weather events and we must continue to plan for these and support our community through these events.

By identifying these issues, we can prepare our responses to them more effectively and successfully.

Actions

The actions to achieve our objectives are wide-ranging in terms of timeframes, investment required and complexity. The plan recognises that some actions will be relatively easy to implement, while others will require significant time and resource commitment, including broad community consultation and communication.

The actions are spread across a wide spectrum – from effecting relatively simple changes to procedures, and equipment upgrades, to full-scale infrastructure projects, in-depth strategic planning, and longer-term professional and community development programs.

Together, the priorities of the plan, and the actions to achieve them represent a sound road map for the North Burnett Regional Council. While 2019/20 presented all of us with challenges, it also heralded a sense of renewal, as we collectively seek better ways to bring about positive change and achieve what is best for our community.

	Outcome	Action	Dept	Due
1	Improve online user experience for community wanting to interact with Council	Review and redesign the framework of Council's website and ensure up to date content.	Comms	Q4
	Increase ease for community to make payments. .	Update software to provide additional electronic payment options for customers	Finance	Q4
2	Increase staff capabilities in: 1) Competency 2) Multiskilling 3) Leadership	Create training plan	People & Performance	Q2
		Deliver training		Q4
3.	Understand opportunities to increase Council's financial sustainability	Undertake Service Deliver Review	CEO	Q3
4	Increase quality of engagement with community	Develop a Community Engagement Strategy and training of staff in its use by 30 June 2021.	Comm Dev	Q2
5	Single point of service in Mundubbera	Investigate the feasibility of merging the Mundubbera Customer Service function into the Mundubbera Library building.	Customer Service	Q3
6	Standardise levels of service across Council	Develop customer service charter and service levels	Customer Service	Q3
7	Address Council compliance with the Public Records Act 2002 and reduce storage of 'at risk' records	Implementation of best practice digitisation processes and improving physical storage of records.	Records	Q2
		Commence digitisation of Council minutes and agendas		Q4
8	Improve financial sustainability and workforce efficiency through strategic procurement.	Introduction of strategic organisation wide procurement policy and procedure by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council endorse policy • Update procedure 	Finance	Q1 Q2
9	Enable Council to utilise contemporary hardware and software services	Transitioning to appropriate cloud technology.	ICT	

	Outcome	Action	Dept	Due
		Develop project plan Migration to Office 365 complete		Q1 Q4
10	Increase communities water security and accuracy of data collection	Upgrade the SCADA and telemetry network in Mt Perry and Eidsvold.	Water	Q4
11	Increase water security for the Biggenden community	Design of a fit for purpose water treatment plant for the Biggenden water scheme.	Water	Q4
12	Attain sewerage treatment plant compliance	Review the compliance of all STP's and plan a detailed upgrade for full compliance.	Water	Q4
13	Reduce waste to landfill	Develop a draft waste reduction and recycling plan in accordance with the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act.	Environment	Q3
14	Continue protecting the Gurgeena vegetation	Plan and prepare Gurgeena Offset site for planting including firebreak.	Environment	Q3
15	Continue to deliver kerbside rubbish collection	Establish combined or separate contracts for kerbside and residual bulk waste. Prepare draft contract.	Environment	Q2 Q4
16	Enable sustainable workforce planning that is fit for purpose.	Develop strategic workplace planning framework as a tool for managers and supervisors to use as part of yearly planning.	People & Performance	Q2
17	Support economic development opportunities through Council's Planning Scheme	Develop project plan and preliminary investigations	Development	Q3
18	Ensure staff safety and compliance with the WHS Act 2011	Set up WHS system Provide staff training	People & Performance	Q2 Q4
19	Increase community knowledge of Council services	Develop Customer Experience Charter Develop communications plan	Customer Service Comms	Q3 Q2

	Outcome	Action	Dept	Due
20	Ensure Councillors and community are informed of Councils assets and their conditions.	Adopt asset management plan for Buildings and Other Structures	Assets	Q4
21	Improve accuracy of data during rain events.	Install rain gauges and upgrade river gauges to ALERT	Disaster Management	Q2
22	Improve the quality of community road infrastructure	Delivery of work as outlined in the asset management plan on time and within budget	Works	Q4
23	Continue to ensure safety of NRBC bridges.	Replacement of bridge crossing on Staatz Road and Pump House bridge in line with the multi-year project plan.	Works	Q4
24	Improve visitor experience at the RM Williams Visitor Centre and ensure water security.	Build a new walking trail Upgrade the waste water system	Parks Water	Q4 Q4
25	Develop best practice in fleet management	Continue replacement of ageing fleet of vehicles and plant with more reliable and fuel efficient equipment.	Fleet	Q4
26	Improve the quality of pavements	Rehabilitation of 8km of Council pavements	Woks	Q4
27	Continue to improve community facilities	Deliver \$1M of Drought Funding projects across the North Burnett	Works	Q4