



Kyogle Council

Community Engagement Strategy

Long Term Financial Plan and Community Strategic Plan Review

1. Introduction

The aim of this strategy is to outline the ways in which Council will engage the local community in the development of Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework (IPRF) plans including the review of the Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP) and Community Strategic Plan (CSP).

The IPRF prescribed in the Local Government Act and Division of Local Government Guidelines and Manual recognises that “communities do not exist in isolation. They are part of a larger natural, social, economic and political environment that influences and, to a large extent, shapes their future direction.”

“Neither do council plans exist in isolation. Land use and infrastructure planning produces social, environmental and economic outcomes, and vice-versa – they are connected.”

“It recognises that most communities share similar aspirations: A safe, healthy and pleasant place to live, a sustainable environment, opportunities for social interaction, opportunities for employment, reliable infrastructure, etc. The difference lies in how each community responds to these needs. That is what shapes the character of individual towns and cities.”

“The new framework opens the way for councils and their communities to have important discussions about funding priorities, service levels and preserving local identity and to plan in partnership for a more sustainable future.”

During 2011/12, Council developed a CSP that identified the community's main priorities and expectations for the future, and an associated LTFP. Through this process, Council had an opportunity to review and add value to current planning activities, to better integrate these activities across the organisation and to further develop processes for working with the community.

The communities have an important role in recommending the priority areas for Council to target their resources. As is the case with other councils and other levels of government there are a limited amount of resources available as well as certain legislative requirements which have to be met and Council will consider these along with what is important to the local community when allocating resources.

Council believes that meaningful participation by community and stakeholders in the review of the LTFP and CSP will lead to more informed and robust decisions for all. Council is committed to providing opportunities for community and stakeholders to be involved in the review of these key documents.

Council has based this Community Engagement Strategy on the engagement spectrum developed by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2): Inform; Consult; Involve; and Collaborate; as recommended by the Department of Local Government.

This Strategy relates to the development of a 20 year LTFP in association with the review of the CSP, and does not override or replace Council's existing Community Consultation Policy or related documents. Council is committed to establishing the best and most effective way to involve and engage our community in decision making.

2. Background Issues

Council is facing some hard budget choices as we seek to become financially sustainable. Council's income is limited - due largely to more than 30 years of rate pegging by the NSW Government - and is not keeping pace with increases in the costs of delivering services to the community.

In addition to these costs, there are also the extra responsibilities that have been shifted to Council that were previously overseen by the State Government.

The second factor in Council's unsustainable position is the cost of looking after the community's infrastructure assets - the roads, bridges, buildings, sports fields and playgrounds.

Council is the custodian of \$460 million worth of public assets. Over the years, funding to maintain and renew this infrastructure has been reduced relative to the costs associated with the upkeep of the assets. This has resulted in a backlog of infrastructure renewals and has led to deterioration of assets, increased costs of maintenance and reduced levels of service.

Based on the Asset Management Plans and Strategy adopted by Council in 2012, the current backlog is in the order of \$40 million. Council's current Long Term Financial Plan forecasts this amount will grow by \$4 million per year. These figures have been verified by independent reports from TCorp undertaken as part of the work of the NSW Independent Local Government Review Panel and also by private consultants, Review Today, recently engaged by Council.

There is no single solution. The annual funding gap of \$4 million will need to come from a range of options including:

- Productivity improvements (changing the way services are delivered)
- Reductions in current levels of service
- New revenue opportunities

- Additional borrowings
- Rate increases above pegging limits
- Asset disposals

Council will continue to have a wide ranging conversation with the community to explore these options further with community affordability being a significant consideration in the assessment of options.

In formulating the Delivery Program for 2014/15 to 2017/18, Council has utilised the additional cash held above the minimum levels required by Councils current policy on cash reserves. The ten year financial plan that has been developed as part of this process shows the cash reserves drawn down from \$12.69 million at the start of 2014/15 to \$9.75 million at the end of 2023/24. This ten year plan also assumes no above rate pegging increases. This provides on average an additional \$400,000 per year after interest losses are taken into account, and the majority of the additional funds are to be allocated to rural local roads and bridges.

Whilst this is an improvement in the level of expenditure on roads and bridges, which is in keeping with the wishes of the community, this falls well short of addressing the financial sustainability issues facing Council. Over the coming months Council will be undertaking a formal review of the Community Strategic Plan and the Long Term Financial Plan, with the aim of addressing long term sustainability issues.

Various options will be presented to the community to help find a balance between any level of service change and increases in rates and charges. We will also be working to identify new income sources and savings generated through productivity improvements.

Throughout that time, we want you to be a part of the discussion and will be publicising how you can get involved.

3. Guiding Principles

“Community Engagement is any process that involves the community in problem-solving or decision making and uses community input to assist in making decisions” (International Association for Public Participation, 2006).

Council needs to be responsive to the needs of the community that it serves. Through community engagement the community can:

- learn about what the Council does or plans to do;
- express views on decisions that affect them; and

- suggest how the Council may improve the way it plans for and provides services and facilities

The process of engaging with the Community will at all times reflect the social justice principles of equity, access, participation and rights, principles which also underpin the Community Strategic Plan itself.

The NSW Government's social justice strategy is based on the following interrelated principles:

Equity – there should be fairness in decision making, prioritising and allocation of resources, particularly for those in need. Everyone should have a fair opportunity to participate in the future of the community. The planning process should take particular care to involve and protect the interests of people in vulnerable circumstances

Access – all people should have fair access to services, resources and opportunities to improve their quality of life

Participation – everyone should have the maximum opportunity to genuinely participate in decisions which affect their lives

Rights – equal rights should be established and promoted, with opportunities provided for people from diverse linguistic, cultural and religious backgrounds to participate in community life.

(Taken from the Planning & Reporting Manual for local government in NSW, 2010)

Engagement activities have been planned to encourage involvement from all sections of the population, including minority or hard to reach groups. Key stakeholder groups include young people, older people, people in the workforce, parents, people with a disability and their carers, women, children, Aboriginal people and people from different cultural and language backgrounds.

4. Our Demographics

The following table highlights key demographic features of our community and the strategies Council will carry out to ensure wide engagement of our diverse community.

Demographic Feature	Key Statistics 2011 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data	Strategies for Engagement
Total Population	9,288 people	Carry out targeted engagement methods to enable the best opportunity for community involvement.
Age Structure	0 to 14 years – 19.1% 14 to 40 years – 23.1% 41-64 years – 40.5% 65 years and over – 17.3%	To reach people from across all age groups, a variety of strategies will be used during each stage of the community engagement process, Council will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use of both electronic and non-electronic media. Use social media. • provide access for people experiencing disadvantage to attend workshops and activities. • schedule engagement activities at various times
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse	3.5% of the population speaks a language other than English at home. The most common other languages spoken at home were German, Italian and Bundjalung	Key information will be translated as required.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders	5.3% of the population is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.	All engagement will be promoted through existing local Aboriginal groups and networks. The Community Development Officer will provide advice and information to ensure strategies are culturally appropriate and that all key groups have the opportunity to participate.
People with a Disability	.	Face to Face engagement activities will be held in accessible venues. Additional devices such as Audio Loops will be used wherever possible, and scribes provided as required. Accessible print will be used as appropriate. Engagement activities will be taken to existing groups and networks to maximise involvement.

5. Who Are Our Stakeholders?

Stakeholders include all individuals and groups based in and outside the Local Government Area who have an interest in the future of the Council.

It is intended that all stakeholders will be provided with the opportunity to be involved in all stages of the development of the CSP. A range of methods will be employed to maximise involvement. Consideration will also be given the diversity of the community and those whose voices may not normally be heard in community discussions.

Our stakeholders include (but are not limited to) the following key groups:

Residents	People who live or own property in the Local Government Area.
Visitors/ Residents From Neighbouring LGA'S	People who travel to/through the LGA or use assets and infrastructure provided here.
Landowners/Developers	Landowners (that are not residents, business operators, government departments or infrastructure providers) in the LGA.
Education and Training	Local primary and high schools (public and private), TAFE and other training providers.
Government Departments and Agencies	State and Federal Government Departments and agencies responsible for areas such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning; • Housing; • Transport • Health & Community Services • Sport and Recreation • Lands • Aged & Disabled • Aboriginal Affairs • Industry & Investment • Environment, Climate Change & Water • Emergency Services • Safety/Policing
Adjoining Local Government Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lismore City Council • Richmond Valley Council; • Tweed Shire Council; • Clarence Valley Council; • Tenterfield Shire Council • Scenic Rim Council • Southern Downs Regional Council

Infrastructure & Service Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roads and Maritime Authorities; • Railway organisations • Bus operators; • Telecommunications suppliers • Energy suppliers
Arts & Cultural Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts Councils • Historical Societies • Theatre Groups • Musical Groups
Clubs and Shared Interest Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chamber of Commerce; • RSL Clubs • Church Groups • Scouts • Guides • Lions and Rotary Clubs • Senior Citizens Groups • Kyogle Youth Action • Youth Ventures • Kyogle Together • Growing Kyogle • Village Progress Associations • Country Women's Association • Local Aboriginal Land Councils; • Local Sporting Groups
Local Councillors and Members Of Parliament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Kyogle Council Councillors; • State Member for Lismore; • Federal Member for Page
Council Staff	All staff, including those in office and field-based positions.

General advertising and promotion will also be used to invite all members of the community to participate.

6. What Groups Will Be Hard To Reach?

There will be some parts of our community that will be harder to reach than others. These groups are outlined below. Whilst people who identify with these groups may choose not to participate in any activities, it is Council's role to ensure that the methods used do not exclude people from the process either directly or indirectly. Any form of communication used during the engagement process will be flexible enough to consider the needs of the following groups.

- People with disabilities
- Homeless people
- Commuters
- Children and Young people
- Carers / parents
- Transport disadvantaged
- Socially or physically isolated
- Uninterested / Apathetic
- Aboriginal community
- Multicultural community
- People with literacy issues
- Older people
- Tourists
- Property owners who do not reside in the area

7. Risks to Public Participation

The following risks to public participation were identified:

- Diversity is not represented
- Being exclusive
- Low participation levels

Mitigation and management of these risks will need to be considered in the implementation of this strategy.

8. Engagement Plan

Over the course of the project, active conversations will be maintained with both Council staff and Councillors to ensure collective understanding of both our stewardship role, and operational implications for Council.

Effective engagement requires a range of methods to be employed to keep participants willing to be involved throughout the process, or alternatively participate in a time and manner of their choosing.

It is important that we build on past experience and avoid the notion of ‘over consultation’, where stakeholders feel they have provided the same opinions and advice to Council on the same or similar issues. It is also important that contributors’ are acknowledged.

Our engagement will aim to:

- Acknowledge people for their contribution
- Keep people engaged during the process via regular updates.
- Provide feedback mechanisms and ongoing opportunities for people to be involved in the review process.

A range of qualitative and quantitative measures will be used to assess the success of the community engagement process.

This will include:

- Requests to Council to present at community/stakeholder forums
- Number of people attending face-to-face sessions
- Number of visits to relevant area of website
- Contributions people make at workshops, meetings and on-line forums.
- Formal submissions received
- Media coverage
- Survey results
- Adoption of the plan by Council.
- Engagement methods and techniques have reached all relevant stakeholders.
- Data and information gathered through engagement activities is of high quality and integrity and informs the development of the LTFP and CSP.
- The views, visions, aspirations and priorities of the community are heard and accurately recorded.
- Council's Legislative requirements are met.
- Diversity of representation
- Quantity and quality of input received

9. Engagement Activities and Timelines

The review process will follow three main stages as outlined below.

Stage One – Preparation of, and access to, background information

- The existing LTFP, CSP are available on Councils web site.
- As part of the Resident and Ratepayers Survey undertaken in 2013, a series of fact sheets were prepared and distributed with the survey. This background information will again be made available for the community, along with a report prepared summarising the results of the survey.
- Other information to be made available to the community will include the independent reports from the NSW TCorp and Review Today on the financial outlook and long term financial sustainability of Council.

- A special page will be established on Councils web site to inform the community of the process, provide access to documentation and allow for lodging of submissions and comments.
- The process will be promoted in Councils newsletter

Stage Two - Developing the Service Level Measures and LTFP Scenarios

- This process will commence with a workshop with Councillors in June 2014 to establish broad direction
- A series of engagement activities based on the information identified in Stage One.
- This will be the most resource intensive stage, involving a range of activities for different groups, at different times.
- Discussions on levels of service and possible resourcing levels will be held at this stage.
- Use of targeted discussions and focus groups will also form part of this process

Stage Three – Preparation of Draft LTFP and CSP Documents

- This is the stage where the community will be presented with draft documents for further review and consultation prior to Council considering them for adoption.
- Council will need to plan for a range of communication methods to ensure as many community members as possible are aware of the draft documents and their importance. This may include a combination of attending meetings of organisations within target groups, social media, and formal and informal information sessions.

The proposed process and timetable and detailed in the following table.

**KYOGLE COUNCIL – PROPOSED PROCESS AND TIMETABLE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A
20 YEAR LONG TERM FINANCIAL PLAN AND COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN REVIEW**

Item No.	Activity	Why	How	When	Outcome
1	Establish Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and target values for financial sustainability	Provides units to measure financial sustainability and establishes targets for each KPI. These will then form the basic parameters for the preparation of the Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP) scenarios	Assessment of KPIs used in reports completed to date from TCorp and Review Today. Recommendation prepared for discussion at workshop with Councillors.	Council Workshop 30 June 2014 Draft Financial Management Policy presented to July Ordinary Meeting for public display. Updated Financial Management Policy adopted at August Ordinary Meeting.	Council consensus reached for the KPIs and target values to be applied to measure financial sustainability. The KPIs and targets are incorporated into Council's Financial Management Policy.
2	Review of Financial Management Policy	Establish a prudent level of reserves as a critical input to the preparation of the LTFP scenarios.	Review of the Internal Reserves limits and target balances contained in the existing policy, and assessment of the risks associated with any changes. Recommendation prepared for discussion at workshop with Councillors.	Council Workshop 30 June 2014 Draft Financial Management Policy presented to July Ordinary Meeting for public display. Updated Financial Management Policy adopted at August Ordinary Meeting.	Council decision reached for the revised Internal Reserves limits. The revised Internal reserves limits are incorporated into Council's Financial Management Policy.
3	Identify options for increased own-source revenue	To provide input and guidance for the preparation of the LTFP scenarios.	Broad identification of the options available for the generation of own-source revenue, and indicative amounts that could be raised by each option. Background information prepared for discussion at workshop with Councillors.	Council Workshop 30 June 2014	Council provides direction on own-source revenue options to be developed for the LTFP scenarios.

Item No.	Activity	Why	How	When	Outcome
4	Identify options for service level reductions	To provide input and guidance for the preparation of the LTFP scenarios.	Review survey results and expenditure levels to identify functions where the community would support a reduction in service levels, and the possible savings, taking into consideration statutory obligations. Background information prepared for discussion at workshop with Councillors.	Council Workshop 30 June 2014	Council provides direction on service level reductions to be considered in the development of the LTFP scenarios.
5	Identify options for reductions in operating costs	To provide input and guidance for the preparation of the LTFP scenarios.	Identify the options for possible reductions in operating costs, and the potential implications of each option. Background information prepared for discussion at workshop with Councillors.	Council Workshop 30 June 2014	Council provides direction on reductions in operating costs to be considered in the development of the LTFP scenarios.
6	Develop Community Engagement Strategy	Need to formulate well considered approach to engaging the community to achieve the best possible involvement and feedback and build the communities confidence in, and respect for, Council. Cohesive, well structured, inclusive, non-confronting, simple English process to maximise participation	Review the draft Community Engagement Strategy prepared in January 2013 and update the scope to cover the development of the 20 year LTFP and Community Strategic Plan (CSP) review. Incorporate this timetable and action plan into document. Include outcomes from visioning workshop of operation of Focus Groups. Present revised Community Engagement Strategy to Council for adoption.	July Ordinary Meeting	Community Engagement Strategy adopted by Council.

Item No.	Activity	Why	How	When	Outcome
7	Develop 20 year LTFP model based on existing 10 year budget	Provides "Base Line" for assessing impact of LTFP scenarios	<p>Take existing 10 year budget and expand to 20 year period.</p> <p>Review assumptions used in existing 10 year budget and document to allow for future sensitivity analysis.</p> <p>Establish reporting formats that include calculation of the financial sustainability KPIs.</p>	End of July 2014	<p>20 year base line LTFP model.</p> <p>Assessment of current 10 year budget against financial sustainability KPIs.</p> <p>Documentation of assumptions made in the current 10 year budget.</p>
8	Develop service level measures for infrastructure asset maintenance and renewals	To allow assessment of the impact of LTFP scenarios on service levels.	<p>Identify the classification or hierarchy to be used for each asset class.</p> <p>Identify the treatment types, units of measure, and unit rates to be applied to each asset class.</p> <p>Document basis for service level measurement and cost calculations.</p>	End of July 2014	Clearly defined premise for the measurement of service levels and costs calculations for each asset class.
9a	Develop at least three scenario-based LTFPs for Council to consider	Provides options for Council to further consider to ensure informed decision making	<p>Prepare service level measurement for each scenario.</p> <p>Establish triple bottom line social, environmental and economic criteria to allow assessment of the LTFP scenarios.</p> <p>Background information prepared for discussion at workshop with Councillors.</p>	Council Workshop prior to August 2014 Ordinary Meeting	<p>Service levels quantified.</p> <p>Criteria established for triple bottom line assessment of LTFP scenarios.</p>

Item No.	Activity	Why	How	When	Outcome
9b	Develop at least three scenario-based LTFPs for Council to consider	Provides options for Council to further consider to ensure informed decision making	Use LTFP model to develop scenarios that allow Council to meet its financial sustainability targets within the agreed timeframe. (20 years)	Council workshop at end of August.	LTFP scenarios developed and impact on financial sustainability KPIs and service levels quantified. LTFP scenarios documented for presentation to the community.
10	Commence community consultation on LTFP development and CSP review	Need to seek community feedback on LTFP and input to CSP review.	Follow Community Engagement Strategy Record and review submissions and feedback from community.	September 2014	Input by broad cross section of the community of the future direction of council with sustainability constraints recognised. Summary of submissions and feedback received.
11	Preparation of Draft LTFP and CSP	To provide the basis for the preferred LTFP and CSP to allow further community consultation	Review of submissions and feedback received. Background information prepared for discussion at workshop with Councillors. Undertake triple bottom line assessment of LTFP scenarios during workshop.	Council Workshop prior to October Ordinary Meeting Draft LTFP and CSP presented to October Ordinary Meeting for public display.	Agreed draft documents to go on display for public comment
12	Public display of draft LTFP and CSP for 28 days	Statutory requirement, ensures community issues are heard, allows democratic process	Follow engagement strategy Record and review submissions and feedback from community.	October/November 2014	Informed community and well informed comment and feedback. Summary of submissions and feedback received.
13	Extraordinary Meeting of Council to adopt LTFP and CSP	To formally adopt the final strategic documents.	Review of submissions and feedback received. Possible modification of draft documents. Report to Council for decision	1 December 2014	Formal adoption of LTFP and CSP.

Item No.	Activity	Why	How	When	Outcome
14	Develop an Implementation Plan	To ensure the requirements of the adopted LTFP and CSP are implemented efficiently and effectively	Plan to be developed by executive team and implemented through training and information sessions. Incorporated as KPI for relevant staff.	Development – October/November 2014 Implemented – December 2014	Ensures success of program. Reduces miscommunication. Maintains morale and staff “buy-in”.
15	Resolution by Council for submission to IPART for above rate pegging increase (if required by LTFP)	To ensure compliance with process required by IPART	Additional resolution of Council at same meeting where LTFP and CSP are formally adopted.	1 December 2014	Formal resolution of Council to advise IPART that Council intends to make application for an above pegging increase.
16	Submission to IPART for above rate pegging increase (if required by LTFP)	To ensure compliance with process required by IPART	Preparation of prescribed application documentation and supporting evidence.	February 2015	Submission of application for above rate pegging increase to IPART.
17	Reporting against LTFP and KPIs	To keep Council and the community informed of the implementation and effectiveness of the LTFP	Report prepared that compares actual performance against the projected performance of the LTFP as part of the annual reporting process.	October 2015	Informed Councillors and public
18	Review required annual renewal costs, and infrastructure backlog	Ensure accuracy and currency of data used to calculate some financial sustainability KPIs	Review treatment costs, and intervention frequencies for the various asset classes and their associated hierarchy. Review measure of satisfactory standard for various asset classes and hierarchy. Undertake detailed condition assessments for each asset class. Review asset valuation costs, useful lives and depreciation calculations.	Ongoing process to occur in line with revaluation of the various asset classes.	Ongoing improvements in the accuracy and currency of asset accounting information that is used in the calculation of financial sustainability KPIs.

Item No.	Activity	Why	How	When	Outcome
18	Preparation of strategic plans for key areas	To provide long term strategic direction to the key functions delivered by Council	<p>Focus Group Processes for;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village Life • Aging in Place • Visitor Attraction • Agriculture • Governance <p>Preparation of Waste Management Strategy, both regional and local.</p> <p>Review of Road Hierarchy and classification system.</p> <p>Review of Road Network Management Plan.</p> <p>Review of Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy and expansion to cover the whole Local Government Area.</p> <p>Review of Water Supply and Sewerage Strategic Business Plans.</p> <p>Review of Crown Reserves and preparation of Village Plans of Management.</p> <p>Preparation of Quarries Strategic Business Plan.</p>	March 2016	Strategic Plans adopted for key areas.
19	Review LTFP and CSP	To ensure accuracy and currency, and to incorporate any changes required to deliver strategic plans.	Similar to process outlined in this document	June 2016	Updated LTFP and CSP adopted by Council.