

Criterion 2 Community Engagement Annexures

Attachment 2.a

- **Community Engagement Plan**



maitland
city council

FUNDING OUR FUTURE

Community Engagement Plan

APRIL 2013 - JANUARY 2014



Approval process

ACTION	WHO	DATE	SIGNATURE
PREPARED BY			
APPROVED BY			
DEPARTMENT			
PROJECT MANAGER			
CORPORATE PLANNING			
MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS			
PLACED ON SHAREPOINT			

Document history

VERSION	AUTHOR	DATE

Associated documents

1. Maitland City Council Community Engagement Strategy

1. Introduction

With the finalisation of Council's second ten year community strategic plan 'Maitland +10' and the development of the draft Delivery Program 2013-2017, the challenges faced by Council in delivering the services our growing community needs and wants has become increasingly evident.

Council's operations have been underpinned by a long term financial plan and asset management strategy since 2005, and this has revealed a significant shortfall in funding required to deliver our programmed services for our growing population the future.

Developing a balanced budget position for the 2013/14 has reinforced the need for Council to make decisions to avoid deficit budgets. While there are many factors at play, fundamentally these decisions hinge on raising revenue sufficient to cover projected expenses, or cutting expenditure to align with revenue.

Whilst all 'own source' revenue options will be explored by Council as it pursues long term financial sustainability, a key component is rating income. Should Council determine an increase in rating is part of the solution; an application would be lodged with the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal for a special rate variation. In applying for such a variation, Council's must show adequate community consultation regarding the reasons for the variation and its impact on ratepayers.

This Funding our Future Community Engagement Plan outlines how the community will be informed and consulted. The goal is to ensure community awareness of the need for additional revenue; explore options for the future (including reductions in service levels); communicate the impact of rises on resident's rates; and Council's preferred option for the future.

The title of this campaign, being Funding our Future, has been developed to express the opportunity Council and the community has to take the potentially transformative steps to become financially sustainable and secure services and infrastructure to meet the needs of our community now and into the future.

2. Background

Council has been open in sharing the long-term financial challenges it faces over recent years, with active efforts made to share these challenges with the community in a range of corporate documents and engagement processes.

In 2011/12, Council was successful in obtaining and implementing a special variation that was for an additional 7% above the rate peg for two consecutive years. The application for the variation was premised on a sound understanding of community priorities from strategic planning and engagement activities, including for the development of the City's first ten year community strategic plan.

The variation generated an additional \$16 million over four years, to be expended on an identified 26 projects across the City. The focus was on restoring and renewing aging community assets, and improving the overall appearance of the City.

In seeking the variation, Council made clear this was just the first step in efforts to reach a position of financial sustainability. The challenge for Council now extends beyond addressing infrastructure backlog works, to being an urgent need to address financial issues that will impede or prevent the delivery of Council services into the future.

3. Engagement purpose

The engagement purpose for Funding our Future is to inform the community of the challenges faced, explore possible options to address these challenges and consult on the best approach for moving forward that enables Council to provide sustainable services into the future.

4. Engagement & communication objectives of this plan

The Funding our Future engagement process will include six phases. The objectives for the phases are included below.

Phase 1– 24 April to 14 June 2013

- Initiate community awareness campaign on the services provided by Council.
- Seek feedback from the community on the objectives and 4 year actions in the Delivery Program 2013-17
- Inform the community of the financial challenges faced in delivering these.
- Introduce the three broad options available to Council and the community to address projected financial deficits.
- Consult with the community on the importance of, and satisfaction with, Council services and what the community values most.
- Undertake direct engagement on the three options available to council as part of the annual Community Research Survey

Phase 2 – 16 August to 4 October 2013

- Develop a level of broad community awareness and understanding of the sources of Council revenue, our services and costs
- Consult with the community on levels of service into the future
- Consult with the community on the three options to achieve sustainable services into the future.
- Report outcomes to Council

Phase 3 – 22 October to 29 November 2013

(if a preferred option is developed and supported by the community)

- Develop preferred rating proposal/s
- Advise the community on how their feedback contributed to the preferred rating proposal/s
- Inform community on the impacts of the preferred rating proposal on rates and service levels
- Consult with the community on the preferred rating proposal
- Report outcomes to Council

Phase 4 – 11 December 2013- 24 January 2014

(if Council approves to proceed with a special rate variation to IPART)

- Inform the community of Council's decision to proceed with a special rate variation application
- Consult the community on the package outlined in the revised Delivery Program 2013-17
- Report outcomes to Council
- If Council does not approve proceeding with a special rate variation application, advise the community of the steps moving forward

Phase 5 – 10 February 2014 – 24 February 2014

(if Council approves to submit the developed special rate variation to IPART)

- Inform the community of the final special rate variation proposal
- Inform the community of how their feedback has contributed to the development of the outcome

Phase 6 – June 2014

(If Council approves to submit the developed special rate variation to IPART)

- Advise the community of the outcome of the application to IPART and the steps moving forward

5. Key engagement messages

The Funding our Future engagement process will include six phases. The general key messages to be used throughout the community engagement phases are included below along with key messages for each phase.

- Council is committed to providing factual information to the community and genuinely listening to community views.
- Council has an insight into what the community wants from its planning for the city including, city centre revitalisation, better roads and footpaths, improved traffic management and better information and engagement with the community.
- The Delivery Program 2013-17 outlines the work Council is aiming to achieve through to 2017 and details the significant challenge facing Council in financially sustaining services to our fast growing city over time
- Council is facing a financial challenge and without an increase in revenue, Council will need to cut services or reduce service standards.
- At the end of ten years, Councils financial forecast shows a deficit of \$92 million
- Maitland is not unique in facing this challenge – it is a common problem across local government in New South Wales
- While Council has continued to improve the way we operate, we are exploring all options for alternative revenue and cost savings
- This is a challenge that Council and the community face together. We are seeking to develop a solution in partnership with the community

Specific phase 1– 24 April to 14 June 2013

- We want to find out what services you value the most and how we can continue to provide them in a financially sustainable way
- We need to know what you can live without and where you want your money spent

Specific phase 2 – 16 August to 4 October 2013

- There are primary options for the future we would like to talk to the community about.
- We can look at cutting services or reducing the level of service.
- We can look at ways to generate revenue to enable us to have the same level of service now for our growing population for the future.
- We can look at ways to generate revenue we would require to not only deliver what we do now, but also enhance facilities and services to meet community expectations over the next 10 years

Specific phase 3 – 22 October to 29 November 2013

(Pending Council determination)

- Your feedback has helped to develop a preferred rating proposal/s
- The rating proposal will ensure Council delivers the level of service the community wishes to see into the future whilst becoming financially sustainable
- Outline of what the service/s level/s will be under the final rating proposal
- Outline of what the rating implication/s will be under the final rating proposal

Specific phase 4 – 11 December 2013- 24 January 2014

(Pending Council determination)

- Council has resolved to proceed with developing an application for a special rate variation to IPART
- A revised Delivery Program and Operational Plan have been prepared incorporating the proposal.
- We want your feedback on the revised Delivery Program 2013-17, including the rating proposal

Specific phase 5 – 10 February 2014 – 24 February 2014

(Pending Council determination)

- Council has resolved to proceed in lodging a special rate variation application to IPART
- The final rating proposal will ensure Council delivers the level of service the community wishes to see into the future whilst becoming financially sustainable
- Outline of what the service level will be under the final rating proposal
- Outline of what the rating implication will be under the final rating proposal

Specific phase 6 – June 2014

(If Council approves to submit the developed special rate variation to IPART)

- Outline of what IPART have approved/not approved and the impact and the impact this will have on rating and service levels

6. Level of impact on the community

The level of impact of Funding our Future on the Maitland community is expected to align with Level 1 of the Council's Community Engagement Strategy– High level impact to the whole of the community within the LGA.

7. Level of engagement and community participation

The levels of engagement to be applied during the Funding our Future sit at Inform and Consult level on the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum.

8. Target stakeholders and 'communities of interest'

Simply, our primary target audience is the residents, and in particular rate payers, of the Maitland Local Government Area. Further detail on the targeted stakeholders can be seen below.

Who	Description
Residents – city and rural	People who live or own property in the Maitland Local Government area.
Students/youth	Students of local primary and high schools, TAFE and other training providers, Newcastle University.
Businesses and industry groups	Includes owners, operators and employees of small, medium and large businesses as well as industry representative groups.
Landowners/developers	All landowners (<i>that are not residents, business operators, government departments or infrastructure providers</i>) in the Maitland Local Government area.
Visitors/residents from neighbouring LGAs	People who travel through Maitland or use assets and infrastructure provided here.
Reference Groups & Advisory Boards	All existing Council managed groups and boards.
Local Organisations and Interest Groups	Local business, sport, cultural, heritage, performance, church and charity groups
Local Councillors and Members of Parliament	<p>Local Government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All MCC Councillors; <p>NSW Government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member for Maitland and Minister for Environment and Heritage– Ms Robyn Parker MP; • Member for Newcastle- Mr Timothy (Tim) Owen MP; • Minister for the Hunter– Mr Michael Gallacher MLC; • Premier of NSW – Mr Barry O'Farrell MP; • Minister for Local Government – Mr Donald Page MP <p>Federal Government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal Minister for the Hunter – Mr Joel Fitzgibbon MP • Federal Member for Paterson – Mr Bob Baldwin MP
Maitland City Council Staff	All staff, including those in office and field-based positions.

9. Methodology

A range of communications methods will be used to ensure all target audiences are aware of Council's intention to seek a rate rise, the consultation and engagement opportunities available, as well as Council's role in the community. Diverse engagement opportunities will also be used to provide as many avenues as possible for community participation. It is expected that the community engagement will progress through 6 phases and include a

defined engagement process for each phase. The following community and engagement methods will be undertaken specific its appropriate phase:

- Phase 1 – 24 April to 14 June 2013
 - Public exhibition of draft Delivery Program, annual operation plan, budget and fees and charges
 - Media releases announcing public exhibition of the draft Delivery Program 2013-17 and Council's intention to explore options to generate additional revenue with the community
 - Maitland Your Say hub set up with online forums relating to the Delivery Program with forums, quick polls, and opportunity for submission for Delivery Program
 - Correspondence to key stakeholders promoting the public exhibition period for the Delivery Program
 - Release of information sheets relating to on core topics such as revenue, Councils services, and assets onto Maitland Your Say and in hard copy and Council sites
 - Article to all residents as part of Momentum announcing public exhibition of Delivery Program 2013-17 and promoting a Community Information session
 - Community information session at Maitland Town Hall about the Delivery Program 2013-17 and its proposed actions
 - Advertisements in the paper advising of public exhibition period of Delivery Program 2013-17, Maitland Your Say hub and Community Information session.
 - Facebook posts directing to Maitland Your Say
 - Information on Council website directing to Maitland Your Say
 - Displays in the Council admin building and the libraries
 - Community research with contracted company to undertake randomly selected phone survey to examine community views around the revenue options and seek feedback. It is possible to tie this in with the annual community research survey.
- Phase 2 – 16 August 2013 to 4 October 2013
 - Design and development of booklet information detailing the story and options that will be distributed to all households in Maitland via letterbox drop
 - Media releases announcing revenue options, the detail within each option and promoting community information sessions
 - Maitland Your Say hub set up with online forums, quick polls and survey relating to revenue options, the detail within each option and seeking the community's views
 - Release of information sheets relating to councils previous SRV, progress to date and expected progress; revenue options and the detail within each one onto Maitland Your Say and in hard copy and Council sites

- Advertisements in the paper promoting Maitland Your Say and the Community Information sessions.
 - Direct correspondence to community organisations to attend a community information session
 - Community information sessions at various locations across the city (minimum 1 per ward) discussing the revenue options, detail within each and taking feedback.
 - Information session aligned with the community information sessions but specifically for businesses
 - Focus groups as part of the annual Community Research Survey undertaking further exploration of resident perceptions of the revenue options
 - Engagement booth at the Aroma Festival outlining revenue options and seeking community views
 - Engagement booths are various shopping centres
 - Facebook status posts directing to Maitland Your Say
 - Set up of Hotline for the project and distribution of business cards promoting this avenue
 - Development of website that enables calculation of rating for residents under options
 - Information on Council website directing to Maitland Your Say
- Phase 3 – 22 October to 29 November 2013 (Pending Council determination)
 - Design and development of flyer/brochure detailing the preferred option and rating and service implication distributed to all Maitland households via letter box drop
 - Media release announcing the communities preferred revenue option and ways to comments through Maitland Your Say
 - Direct correspondence (where possible) to community organisations and those who have participated in previous phases advising of the communities preferred revenue option and the ways to provide further comment
 - Advertisements of preferred option and the ways to provide further comment
 - Facebook Status posts directing to Maitland Your Say
 - Maitland Your Say hub set up to include online forums, quick poll and survey relating to preferred revenue option and testing community support
 - Information sheets on process to date and preferred option to be included on Maitland Your Say and in hard copy at Council sites
 - Direct correspondence to Maitland Your Say registered members advising of the communities preferred revenue option and the ways to provide further comment
 - Information included in the rates notice information slip
 - Randomly selected phone survey undertaken by contracted company to test community support for the preferred rating package and seek feedback.
 - Continuation of hotline for residents to contact directly

- Phase 4 – 11 December 2013 – 24 January 2014 (Pending Council determination)
 - Advertisements in the newspaper advising of public exhibition period
 - Media release advising how residents can comment during public exhibition of revised Delivery Program
 - Media release announcing Council resolution and what will be included in the application to IPART (if one is to be submitted) as well as how people can comment during the public exhibition of the Delivery Program
 - Maitland Your Say hub set up to include online forums and quick polls relating to the Delivery Program package and rating proposal
 - Email distributed to Maitland Your Say registered members
 - Direct correspondence (where possible) to those who have participated in previous phases announcing Councils resolution and what will be included in the application to IPART (if one is to be submitted)
 - FB Status posts directing to Maitland Your Say

- Phase 5 – Feb/March 2014 (Pending Council determination)
 - Direct correspondence (where possible) to those who have participated in previous phases announcing Councils determination and what will be included in the application to IPART (if one is to be submitted)
 - Media release providing outcomes of the Council meeting and final rating proposal
 - Facebook status posts on Maitland Your Say
 - Newspaper advertisement advising of outcomes of Council meeting and final rating proposal

- Phase 6 – June 2014
 - Media release announcing outcome of application and process from here.
 - Direct correspondence (where possible) to those who have participated announcing outcome of application and process from here.
 - Updated news article on Maitland Your Say and Council's website
 - FB Status posts directing to Maitland Your Say
 - Article in Councils newsletter Momentum
 - Information on Council's rates notice information slip

10. Related projects and current events

Related projects to the Service Sustainability include:

- Adoption of the new Community Strategic Plan 'Maitland +10'
- Revision of the 4 year Delivery Program 2013-2017
- Revision of the 4 year Resourcing Strategy 2013-2017
- Development 1 year Operation Plan
- Councils Service Sustainability Program currently commencing in Customer Service
- Councils Core Activity Efficiency Reviews
- Departmental restructures

- Organisational Development Project
- Existing Engagement booth programs

11. Legislative requirements

The legislative requirements for Integrated Planning and Reporting are contained within

- NSW Local Government Act 1993
- NSW Local Government (General) Regulation 2005
- NSW Integrated Planning and Reporting Guidelines March 2013

12. Evaluation

A range of qualitative and quantitative measures will be used to assess the success of this engagement plan. This will include:

- Number of people participating in each of the engagement opportunities provided eg attending community information sessions, online forums, surveys etc.
- Number of responses/submissions received
- Number of visitors accessing the Maitland Your Say site
- Number of increased registered members of Maitland Your Say
- Number of those actively engaged on Maitland Your Say Facebook page
- Number of people who knew of the engagement (identified in surveys)
- Media coverage and tone
- Quality of independent community research responses

13. Reporting

The results of the engagement activities undertaken as part of this engagement plan will be reported to Council throughout the process at the end of Phase 2, 3 and 4. If Council decides to proceed with an application to IPART, it is expected that the entirety of engagement activity is reported as a whole in February 2014 prior to application being made to IPART by 24 February 2014.