



AGENDA

Extraordinary Council Meeting

Date: Monday, 13 May 2024

Time: 4pm

**Location: Cowra Council Chambers
116 Kendal Street, Cowra**

**Paul Devery
General Manager**

Order Of Business

I Introduction..... 3

1.1 Recording & Publishing..... 3

1.2 Acknowledgement of Country..... 3

1.3 Apologies and Applications for Leave of Absence by Councillors..... 3

1.4 Disclosures of Interest..... 3

1.5 Presentations..... 3

1.6 Public Forum 3

2 General Manager 4

2.1 Draft Delivery Program 2022-2023 to 2025-2026 and Operational Plan 2024-2025; Draft Long-Term Financial Plan 2024-2025 to 2033-2034; Draft Revenue Policy 2024-2025 4

3 Late Reports..... 192

Nil

I INTRODUCTION

I.1 Recording & Publishing

In accordance with the Local Government Act (1993), Cowra Council is recording this meeting and will upload the recording to Council's website. By speaking at this meeting, you agree to being recorded and having that recording published in the public domain. Please ensure that when you speak at Council meetings you are respectful to others and use appropriate language at all times. Cowra Council accepts no liability for any defamatory or offensive remarks or gestures made during the course of this meeting.

I.2 Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we gather, the Wiradjuri people, and pay our respects to elders both past and present.

I.3 Apologies and Applications for Leave of Absence by Councillors

List of apologies for the meeting.

I.4 Disclosures of Interest

Councillors and staff please indicate in relation to any interests you need to declare:

- a. What report/item you are declaring an interest in?
- b. Whether the interest is pecuniary or non-pecuniary?
- c. What is the nature of the interest?

I.5 Presentations

I.6 Public Forum

I invite any member of the public wishing to speak on an item in the agenda to please come to the lectern, introduce yourself, state the item you wish to speak on and allow time for any councillor or member of staff if they have declared an interest in the item to manage that conflict which may include them leaving the chamber during your presentation.

2 GENERAL MANAGER

2.1 Draft Delivery Program 2022-2023 to 2025-2026 and Operational Plan 2024-2025; Draft Long-Term Financial Plan 2024-2025 to 2033-2034; Draft Revenue Policy 2024-2025

File Number: D24/741

Author: Paul Devery, General Manager

RECOMMENDATION

That the following documents be placed on public exhibition for a period of at least 28 days:

- Draft Integrated Delivery Program 2022-2023 to 2025-2026 and Operational Plan 2024-2025
- Draft 10 Year Financial Plan 2024-2025 to 2033-2034
- Draft Revenue Policy 2024-2025

INTRODUCTION

Following the election of a new Council at the 2021 election a new Delivery Program was developed and adopted for the period 1 July 2023 – 30 June 2026.

Each year in the four-year term Council develops and publishes Operational Plan objectives that detail how the four-year Delivery Program objectives will be achieved.

The framework for this draft integrated Delivery Program/Operational Plan is consistent with previous plans where the Delivery Program objectives remain constant from year to year and the focus is on the 2024-2025 Operational Plan actions.

A review of the ten-year Long-Term Financial Plan (LTFP) and the development of the 2024-2025 Revenue Policy has also been undertaken and is included in this report.

2024-2025 OPERATIONAL PLAN OBJECTIVES

The 2024-2025 Operational Plan objectives have been developed to this stage based principally upon projects, services and programs that are either in existence or have been raised in one way or another over the past 12 months.

I have listed below the key objectives that are included in the integrated Plan under the Key Directions headings from the Community Strategic Plan.

Health and Well-being

- Ensure Council is regularly advised of progress with construction of the new Cowra hospital
 - Maintain a food shop inspection program
 - Promote Volunteers Week
 - Provide funding to community groups via Council's Community Grants Scheme
 - Advocate for retention and/or expansion of youth mental health and welfare services
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- Support community-based initiatives for wellbeing programs eg International Women's Day, Men's Health Week, International Day of People with a Disability and Carer's Week
- Support community health programs that encourage increased physical activity
- Deliver health and well-being programs for Council staff
- Continue the companion animal re-homing program
- Review signage directing residents and visitors to shared footpath and cycling routes
- Recognise and celebrate volunteers within our community
- Co-ordinate Youth Week activities
- Co-ordinate Senior's Week activities

Innovation and Education

- Support operation of the Cowra Country Universities Centre
- Meet with local school representatives and advocate for their needs
- Support Cowra Agricultural Research station
- Continue to lobby for the delivery of courses at Cowra TAFE and from other providers that meet community and business demands

Liveability

- Plan and deliver civic events and activities including the Festival of International Understanding, Australia Day, World Peace Day, Seniors Week and Youth Week
- Continue to develop and foster the Cowra – Japan relationship
- Plan and deliver events commemorating the 80th anniversary of the POW breakout
- Develop masterplans for West Cowra Recreation Ground, River Park precinct, Edgell Park precinct and Mulyan Recreation precinct
- Maintain Cowra library and operate in accordance with Central West Libraries service level agreement arrangements including trial of extending operating hours
- Progress planned asset renewal of Cowra Aquatic Centre
- Implement building improvements identified in the Building Asset Management Plan
- Continue to provide and maintain high quality parks, gardens and sportsfields
- Support the Cowra Youth Council
- Advocate for upgrades to the Wyangala State Recreation Area
- Deliver a program of high-quality exhibits at the Cowra Regional Art Gallery
- Present and promote a diverse program of high-quality events, workshops, activities and entertainment at the Cowra Civic Centre
- Continue to pursue funding to implement projects identified in adopted strategic plans including:
 - Village Improvement Plan
 - Peace Precinct Masterplan
 - Lachlan River Precinct Masterplan
 - Sculpture Park Masterplan
 - Sport and Recreation Plan
- Develop and adopt four-year Cultural Plan
- Advocate for a 24-hour police station in Cowra

Community Leadership and Engagement

- Provide appropriate mechanisms for Council to consult, inform and engage with the community in accordance with adopted Communication Strategy
 - Maintain relationship with key bodies including LGNSW (Local Government New South Wales) and Central NSW Joint Organisation
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- Support Council's Section 355 Committees including:
 - Access Committee
 - Australian Chapter of World Peace Bell Association
 - Cowra Breakout Association
 - Cowra Festival of International Understanding
 - Cowra Regional Art Gallery Advisory Committee
 - Cowra Sport & Recreation Council
 - Cowra Youth Council
 - Natural Resource Management Advisory Committee
 - Saleyards Committee
- Assist NSW Electoral Commission in conduct of 2024 election
- Deliver induction to new councillors and provide support for the continued professional development of councillors

Business and Industry

- Pursue objectives identified in the Cowra Shire Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS)
- Support Cowra Tourism Corporation
- Adopt CBD Activation strategy and commence implementation of recommended actions
- Review plans for Macquarie Street redevelopment
- Advocate for continued improvement in mobile telephone service coverage in the shire
- Monitor the roll-out of the NBN in the shire and advocate on behalf of residents and business where performance falls short of expectations

Transport and Infrastructure

- Lobby Transport for NSW to include the following projects in the planning for transport in the region:
 - a new mid-level bridge crossing in the Cowra township
 - a heavy vehicle bypass of the Cowra CBD
 - re-open the Blayney-Demondrille rail line
 - improve the connections between the state road network in the region
- Deliver the Roads to Recovery program
- Deliver the Fixing Country Roads program
- Undertake Integrated Water Cycle Management strategy including review of Water and Sewer Strategic Business Plans
- Plan for next stage of development at Cowra Airport
- Finalise the Billimari bore project
- Operate the Wyangala water treatment plant with the view to meeting the testing regime required for Health NSW to declare it a potable supply
- Continue planning and consideration of the West Cowra sewer network augmentation project
- Undertake construction of identified stormwater mitigation measures in West Cowra
- Complete review of updated Pedestrian and Cycling plan and seek funding for identified projects

Environmental Sustainability and Stewardship

- Develop and Pursue objectives identified in the adopted Waste Management strategy including:
 - FOGO implementation for high use commercial operators
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- Adopt a Material Recycling Facility (MRF) masterplan
- Expand storage area for recycling
- Review village transfer stations
- Consider providing bulk rubbish collection days
- Pursue funding for renewable energy options identified in the Energy Efficiency Plan
- Promote waste reduction and recycling programs
- Provide grants for community groups to undertake environmental improvement projects
- Monitor roll-out of the NSW Government Container Deposit Scheme and grow the Cowra MRF as a regional processing point for CDS material

Reconciliation and Inclusion

- Continue development of a Reconciliation Action Plan under the auspices of Reconciliation Australia
- Work with the local First Nations community to develop an agreed scope for an interpretive centre in the Cowra Peace Precinct
- Adopt reviewed and updated Disability Inclusion Action Plan
- Establish a section 355 committee to investigate options for an inclusive playground in Cowra township

I would note the attached draft objectives and finance estimates do not at this stage include items that have been raised by councillors and require further information and consideration. These include the Family Day Care grant program and the Dolly Parton Imagination library program. Further information will be provided to council to enable final decisions to be made on these matters, and I am sure others that will arise, prior to council adopting a plan at the June 25 council meeting.

FINANCES

The Long-Term Financial Plan (LTFP) is a component of the NSW Government's Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) framework for Local Government. It is a dynamic document that is amended to reflect changes when they are required.

Council's 2022-2023 financial statements indicated a sound financial position with the majority of key indicators exceeding the benchmark set for the industry. This position is a result of a sustained, disciplined approach to financial management over many years by the elected body and management. The 2024-2025 Operational Plan and the revised LTFP continues in that vein.

The major infrastructure projects under investigation, planning and/or delivery include:

- West Cowra sewer network
- Billimari borefield and connection to Cowra water supply
- Aquatic centre redevelopment
- Depot redevelopment
- West Cowra drainage
- Significant road projects funded by grants
- Integrated Water Cycle Management strategy
- Depot re-development
- Development of masterplans for key sporting precincts

In addition, it is important to note the LTFP details a number of other projects that will only proceed in full with substantial grant funding eg aquatic centre upgrade.

Executive Summary

The tables and graphs below show Council's continuing operating deficits over the term of the plan. While every year shows a deficit before capital grants and contributions, the level of the deficit is consistent over the period. The annual deficit is largely driven by the significant depreciation expenses incurred annually. Operating surpluses or deficits vary in amounts in each of the funds over the life of the plan and individual results should not be seen in isolation of other factors such as cash flow all of which are detailed in the financial attachments.

The underlying cash position remains stable and the levels of unrestricted cash indicate council is able to operate sustainably over the term while continuing to deliver the safe, functional assets and levels of service the community expects.

It is reasonable to state that the outlook for the LTFP period is more positive than it was at the same time last year. This can be attributed to a number of factors including increased revenue expected from investments, continued payment of employee costs by grant funding such as the Roads to Recovery doubling announcement and healthy reserve levels.

Notwithstanding the comments above, Cowra Council, like most rural and regional councils remains on a deficit trajectory where expenses exceed operating revenue, driven primarily by rate pegging, cost shifting and a capital-based grant framework.

Net Operating Result (Including/After Capital Contributions)

Fin Year ended	Consolidated \$'000s	General \$'000s	Water \$'000s	Sewer \$'000s	Waste \$'000s
2025	971	1,638	(61)	(832)	227
2026	905	932	(95)	(107)	174
2027	(224)	(286)	(79)	(39)	180
2028	378	302	(36)	(55)	167
2029	220	(157)	(8)	231	154
2030	318	(137)	69	219	167
2031	21,472	6,304	14,383	495	290
2032	(447)	(279)	(804)	428	207
2033	(526)	(602)	(684)	537	223
2034	(288)	(579)	(576)	633	235

Operating Result (Before Capital Contributions)

Fin Year ended	Consolidated \$'000s	General \$'000s	Water \$'000s	Sewer \$'000s	Waste \$'000s
2025	(1,685)	(915)	(96)	(901)	227
2026	(1,480)	(1,347)	(130)	(177)	174
2027	(888)	(841)	(116)	(111)	180
2028	(303)	(267)	(73)	(129)	167
2029	(477)	(741)	(47)	156	154
2030	(397)	(735)	30	141	167
2031	(261)	(309)	(657)	416	290
2032	(1,198)	(907)	(845)	347	207
2033	(1,296)	(1,246)	(726)	453	223
2034	(1,077)	(1,240)	(619)	548	235

Cashflow

The cashflow table below shows the net impact on cash each year across the funds. Ideally these should be predominately positive, which they are, as mentioned earlier in this report, and reflect a more positive outlook for the 10-year timeframe.

Fin Year ended	Consolidated \$'000s	General \$'000s	Water \$'000s	Sewer \$'000s	Waste \$'000s
2025	(909)	(1,231)	357	(540)	505
2026	(618)	(1,199)	76	(13)	518
2027	602	1	306	(235)	531
2028	1,025	416	474	1	135
2029	347	(572)	490	299	130
2030	1,178	(311)	669	281	540
2031	2,240	1,029	16	525	670
2032	385	78	(715)	426	595

2033	(1,857)	(133)	(2,368)	26	619
2034	314	(1)	(481)	549	248

The table below details the forecast Unrestricted Cash in the General Fund over the ten-year timeframe. For the majority of the period the level is relatively stable with a drop-off in the last two years.

Unrestricted Cash	
	General
2025	5,135
2026	5,206
2027	5,821
2028	5,606
2029	5,093
2030	4,561
2031	4,592
2032	4,095
2033	3,540
2034	2,930

Key Assumptions Used in LTFP

Category	2025	2026 to 2034
Materials, contracts & other expenses	2.4%	2.4%
Wages & salaries	3.5%	3%
Depreciation	2%	2%
Rates income	4.5%	2.4%
User fees and charges & other income (IPART Rate Peg)	4.5%	3%
Interest on investments	4.5%	4.5%

Revenue Policy – Rates, Annual Charges and Fee

The draft revenue policy is attached for Council’s consideration.

The rate structure has been adjusted following a significant number of changes in rate categories over the past 12 months. While the yield remains within the 4.5% rate peg, in an effort to smooth any volatility in individual levies the percentage of the total yield collected from each category has

been slightly adjusted. This is detailed in the rate structure table contained with the revenue policy.

Annual charges relating to water, sewerage, waste and recycling services have all been increased by 4.5% commensurate with the rate peg. Council should acknowledge this increase falls short of matching the increase in fuel, power, wages, materials and other costs required to provide these services. It is interesting to note that in 2023 IPART provided a 7% increase in charges for Sydney Water and Hunter Water yet seem incapable of applying that logic to the rate-pegging regime for general purpose councils.

Other fees and charges are listed and depending upon whether they are set by council or statute have either a nil increase or a range of increases with those set by council utilising the 4.5% rate peg as a guide. Attention is drawn to the revised fees for the civic centre as well as new fees for planning proposals.

Reserves and their Purpose

Councillors are referred to the appropriate Reserve schedule in the budget papers. Reserves are generally set aside for known or anticipated expenditures. As highlighted earlier in this report the reserve levels remain healthy over the term of the LTFP and provide capacity, for example, to undertake some of the initiatives contained within the recently adopted Waste Strategy.

CONCLUSION

Over the past few months councillors and staff have been working hard to review and refine priorities for inclusion in the Operational Plan as well as the ten-Year Financial Plan. Having developed the document to this point, Council now seeks input from the community. All members of the community are encouraged to review the document and provide feedback to Council. All written submissions received by the due date will be presented to Council for consideration prior to the final adoption of the document in June.

The plan will be available on the Council website, at the customer service centre and the Cowra Library. Copies will also be provided to each of the village resident groups.

BUDGETARY IMPLICATIONS

As above

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft Integrated Delivery Program 2022-2023 to 2025-2026, Operational Plan 2024-2025, Draft Revenue Policy 2024-2025 and Draft 10 Year Long Term Financial Plan 2024-2025 to 2033-2034 [↓](#)
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Delivery Program to 2022-2023 to 2025-2026
Operational Plan 2024-2025
Long Term Financial Plan 2024-2025 to 2033-2034
DRAFT – Public Exhibition May- June 2024

www.cowracouncil.com.au

3 LATE REPORTS

Nil