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It's All in the Delivery: An Exploratory Case Study Focusing on the Coffs Harbour City Council DP 2010 – 2016.

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Introduction

Two events prompted my interest in the DP this year: firstly, my appointment as a project planner for infrastructure management which involved preparing lists of priorities for the Delivery Program (DP) and the Operational Plan (OP); secondly the spate of requests from Councillors for new projects towards the end of the Council term.

After reading the guidelines for the DP – the ‘go to’ document for Council’s 4-year term, and where ‘strategies are turned into actions’ (Office of Local Government 2016a) as well as other reports about NSW Councils and strategic management, it became apparent that, in the case of the Integrated Performance and Reporting Framework (IPRF), Martin’s assertion that ‘organisational change by fiat and edict is no guarantee that the culture of Councils will change in accordance with State government’s wishes’ (1999, p. 34) is true in this case.

The case study focuses on the development and implementation of the DP as one of the strategic management plans mandated by the 2009 and 2016 amendments to the Local Government Act. They are contained within the IPRF. In particular, it investigates the experience of Coffs Harbour City Council in implementing this framework and the development of the DP. The study aims to answer three research questions:

- How does Council turn strategies from the Community Strategic Plan incorporating key Councillor’s activities they have committed to undertake over their four-year term?
- How did CHCC manage the development and implementation of the DP and what did they learn from this process?
- What could Coffs Harbour City Council do to improve the DP?

The questions are discussed in the light of a literature review, a document search and interviews with staff and Councillors. The findings are then discussed, highlighting common themes and recommendations for the sector and suggestions for future research.

Following a discussion about the research design, the relevant parts of the Local Government Act and associated guidelines, supplemented by the 2016 amendments to the Act, are described, giving the background to the role of Council, the Councillors and the General Manager. The literature review places the legislation in the context of global Local Government reforms, including New Public Management and discusses the benefits and importance of strategic management for the sector. A model of principle elements of strategic management is discussed in relation to the implementation phase of the process (Poister, Pitts & Edwards 2010) and an implementation model developed by Vinzant and Vinzant (1996) is used as a framework for analysing the Coffs Harbour City Council process.

The process of ‘turning strategies into actions’ and prioritising projects is linked to the discussion around public value and place-shaping. Critically the interaction between the three actors in this process: the staff, the Councillors and the community can be challenging, but research indicates it is important in ‘defining what is publicly valuable’ (Ryan et al. 2015, p. 303).

The findings of the interviews and document search are presented in terms of the three research questions, and then some common themes and perceptions are discussed, extending the ‘delivery’ theme as ‘telling the story’ and employing another metaphor ‘we’re all in the same boat’ to sum up

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some suggestions for the 'coherent synthesis' of top down and bottom up knowledge in the planning process

Research Design

Investigations in the 'real world' lies in seeking to say something sensible about a complex, relatively poorly controlled and generally 'messy' situation'(Robson 2002, p. 4)

Epistemology

This is a case study of a NSW Regional Council's strategic management processes, focussing on the DP. The approach to this research was within the interpretive / constructivist paradigm in that the 'concepts of importance' in the study were allowed 'to emerge... as they had been constructed by the participants' (Mertens 1998, p. 13). This 'more personal, interactive mode of data collection' (1998, p. 13) took into account the '..perceptions and motivations' of the participants. It was mainly 'inductive research generating theory and meaning' (Creswell 2003, p. 9) from the participants and the document review. Despite being a limited study with a small number of interviewees, the data collected was rich and relevant to current debate in the local government sector.

Axiology

Constructivists acknowledge their background as influential in their findings, so 'position themselves' in their research (Creswell 2003, p. 8). In this study, my position as a staff member of Coffs Harbour City Council, and knowledge of actors involved in the development of the DP (although I was not involved in the development of the DP) coloured my approach to this case study. I was aware of confirmation bias, where my attention is drawn to that which confirms my beliefs and ignores negative evidence or that which is not consistent with my 'favoured' theories. The research needs to show that I have considered alternative theories and explain those views that do not support the favoured theories (Venneson 2008, p. 239), or in fact challenge my bias as a staff member. Interestingly, this snapshot of one Council raised questions which go to the heart of the role of local government and the values of the actors involved. I was struck by the disconnect between some of these parties – including legislators and academics and ways in which change is implemented.

It was challenging not to fill in the knowledge gaps, particularly for the Councillors. However, it was an opportunity to discuss strategic planning with some of them after the formal interview which hopefully triggered an interest in this approach to decision-making. The literature confirms that the development of strategic planning processes in public authorities is iterative, long term and unique to each organisation. I believe my research will chart in a constructive way the achievements of the Council and provide some guidelines for future planning.

Methodology

The focus is on the experience of the Administration and Councillors who were involved in the development and assessment of the DP, as well as newer staff members who may have a different perspective. They were asked to participate in a semi-structured interview using open-ended questions. The questions were formulated from an analysis of Council planning documents and based on the theories discovered from the literature review (see

Appendix Two: Research questions: interview and document search).

The design of the interview was flexible, focussing on the participants' view. The plan was 'prepared in full knowledge and expectation that aspects of the work may change' (Robson 2015 chap. 7). 'A case study does not presuppose a relatively bounded phenomenon, nor is it based on the need to select such a phenomenon. The boundaries of the phenomenon are defined by the investigator' (Venneson 2008, p. 230).

Where possible the identities of the interviewees are protected. However, as it is a small sample, it may be apparent who the participants are. All interviewees were provided with a draft copy of the dissertation for their approval.

This dissertation is an example of qualitative social research, constructivist in its approach. The exploratory case study is appropriate. It is a 'strategy more than a method' (Robson 2015 chap. 7) as it focuses on 'a phenomenon in context' (2015 chap. 7) 'to elucidate features of a larger class of (similar) phenomena, by developing and evaluating theoretical explanations' (Ragin cited in Venneson 2008, p. 226).

When conducting the interviews, it was challenging not to fill in the knowledge gaps, particularly for the Councillors, to involve myself in the transactional process. After the formal interview it was an opportunity to discuss strategic planning with some of them which has triggered an interest in this approach to decision-making. Some of my thinking has been influenced by conversations with staff and Councillors, and feedback that I have received from the draft dissertation, which has been critical in presenting a comprehensive representation of the strategic process.

The literature confirms that the development of strategic planning processes in public authorities is iterative, long term and unique to each organisation. The learnings from the first iteration of documents are a vital part of the process. I hope my research will chart in a constructive way the achievements of the Council and provide some guidelines for future planning

Sampling

Interviews gathered data from a small sample, to assist with analysis of interviews within the time constraints. The research includes a document review and semi-structured interviews with Coffs Harbour City Councillors as well as 4 staff members. One former Mayor declined to be interviewed. The three Councillors included the current Mayor and a former Mayor.

The staff members included

- The current corporate planner who was in the position in 2010
- The current General Manager
- Section Leader, Community Planning and Performance - newly appointed to CHCC
- A former Director

Council and other planning documents were analysed before the interviews, and then reviewed in light of the comments from the actors. The documents included, but weren't restricted to the following:

- CHCC Community Strategic Plan. This plan was compared with the DP to investigate how strategies were changed into actions

- CHCC revised Community Strategic Plan. The references to the CSP in the 2014 DP are different from those in the 2010 DP. The CSP was reviewed in 2013. This document and its impact on the DP were reviewed.
- A simple internet search revealed seven DPs for 2010, 2011- 2015, 2012 - 2016, 2013 -2017 and 2014 – 2018, 2015 – 2019 and 2016 – 2020. The DPs were assessed for compliance with the NSW DP Guidelines and adherence to the spirit of NSW Local Government Act 1993 section 404.
- The LKS Quaero Strategic Review of Coffs Harbour City Council conducted in 2014.

The Independent Local Government Review contained a recommendation that Councils incorporate regular service reviews in their DPs (Sansom, Munro & Inglis 2013, p. 16). CHCC DPs will be checked for this component. A search was conducted for the following documents which were reviewed where available:

- IPRF planning documents and meeting minutes including the 6 monthly progress reports and the 2016 end of term report.
- evidence of the mechanisms used for selection of items in the DP including references to the Community Strategic Plan.
- evidence of the process employed for amending the DP.
- Councillor workshops and presentations during the development of 2010 and subsequent revisions and assessments
- Councillor IPRF related induction presentations
- Council meeting minutes relevant to the adoption of the DP 2010 - 2014

Data Analysis

Interviews and documents were used to find ‘connections between things, rather than similarities or differences’ (Robson 2015 chap. 18): Similar themes and connections were mapped from the Council documents particularly in light of the interviews which triggered more scanning of the documents. The themes were compared and contrasted with current literature.

Following analysis, the three elements of the research: the literature review, the document search and the interviews will be compared and common themes and learnings will be extracted from the data. Guidelines and recommendations will be formulated as a result of the data synthesis as well as recommendations for further research.

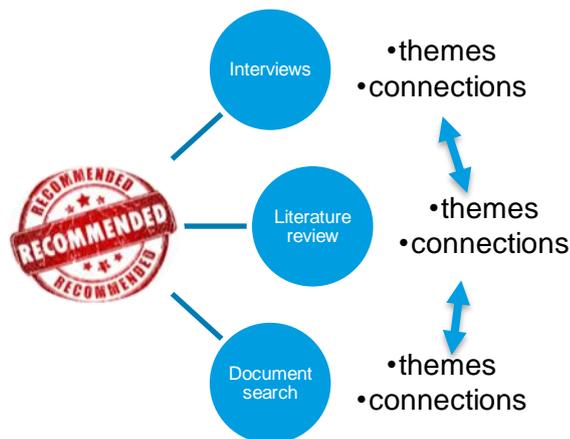


Figure 1 Synthesis of data to provide guidelines

Setting the Context

Local Government Reform

For much of the twentieth century, governments operated with a 'traditional public administration (TPA) perspective' (Stoker 2011, p. 17): 'overhead democracy: voting in elections, mandated party politicians, tasks achieved through control over bureaucracy' (p. 18).

Local government entered a period of continuous reform in the 70s, 80s, and 90s. These reforms were seen as a response to globalisation, urbanisation and climate change (Aulich 2009, p. 9). Private business influenced some of the most significant reforms requiring local government to be 'more businesslike and more accountable for its resources and has required the provision of high quality services with fewer resources.' (Aulich 1999, p. 13). Commonly termed 'New Public Management' the reforms focussed on reducing expenditure and increased accountability, particularly to State Government (p. 13). In an earlier article, Aulich commented that performance evaluation and strategic management had 'been steadily suffused into the management culture of local government during this period' (cited in Aulich 1999, p. 13).

Another significant component of the reforms during this period was the focus on governance issues, 'redefining the roles of various actors in the local sphere' (Aulich 2009, p. 46). Stoker and Rhodes argued 'for a view of the world in which networks vie with markets and bureaucracy as the appropriate means of delivery solutions' (Rhodes cited in Stoker 2011, p. 16). Stoker coined the term 'Networked Community Governance' defined as 'the meeting of community needs as defined by the community within the context of the demands of a complex system of multi-level governance' (p. 17). It was seen as a 'more networked, partnership-based and participative way of doing politics' (p. 16), moving away from the 'technocratic development of policy' to the point where 'some control may be negotiated away from single government agencies (Aulich 2009, p. 53).

In the nineties, States brought in legislation to require councils to develop strategic or management plans, involving more community engagement (Aulich 2009, p. 47), with increased reporting requirements for State government and more transparency and accountability.

Place Shaping

The move towards Networked Community Governance has in turn encouraged 'place shaping' as the 'wider, strategic role for local government' (Stoker cited in Pillora & McKinlay 2011, p. 16), seen as crucial in defining the core business of local government in the Lyons Report (2007, p. 3):

'Whatever the legal and constitutional arrangements for the provision of a service or function, if it has impacts on local people, then the local authority should have a role in representing the community interest and influencing that service. That requires not just the joining-up of resources and activities, but also a leadership and influencing role to ensure that the efforts of all agencies are focused on the outcomes of greatest importance to local people. Local government is well placed to play this convening role.'

He sums up the place-shaping role with eight objectives:

1. Building and shaping local identity
2. Representing the community, including in discussions and debates with organisations and parts of government at local, regional and national level
3. Regulating harmful and disruptive behaviours
4. Maintaining the cohesiveness of the community and supporting debate within it, ensuring smaller voices are heard
5. Helping to resolve disagreements, such as over how to prioritise resources between services and areas, or where new housing and development should be located
6. Working to make the local economy more successful, to support the creation of new businesses and jobs in the area, including through making the area attractive to new investment and skilled workers, and helping to manage economic change.
7. Understanding local needs and preferences and making sure that the right services are provided to local people through a variety of arrangements, including collective purchasing, commissioning from suppliers in the public, private and voluntary sectors, contracts or partnerships and direct delivery.
8. Working with other bodies to respond to complex challenges, such as natural disasters and other emergencies' (Lyons 2007, p. 3)

Australian Councils do not perform as many functions as those in the United Kingdom as they have been traditionally based on property services. Despite this, the role of Local Government in Australia has expanded such that it can achieve many of Lyons' eight objectives. The stated aim of the 2016 amendments to the Local Government Act 'to provide guidance to enable Councils to carry out their functions in a way that facilitates local communities that are strong, healthy and prosperous' (NSW Government 2016, p. 3) echoes Lyons' definition of place-shaping as 'the creative use of powers and influences to promote the general well-being of a community and its citizens' (cited in Pillora & McKinlay 2011, p. 16).

Public Value

As place-shaping describes Council's role, the concept of Public Value suggested by Mark Moore (1995) is a guide for making decisions and 'solving the puzzle of balancing democracy and efficiency'. The philosophy 'rests on a fuller and rounder vision of humanity than does either public administration or new public management' (Stoker cited in Fisher & Grant 2013, p. 252). Even

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though New Public Management borrowed from private business principles there is a significant difference in the way the two sectors measure value. For private business, profit is an immediate measurable of the private value of their products (Moore 1995). For public managers, the public has 'first claim on being able to say what should be valued and what interests should be satisfied in the operation' because it 'pays for an enterprise and gives up some of its freedom for it to succeed' (Moore 1995, p. 301). The question of what should be collectively produced with public resources is 'analytically unresolvable', so 'responding to politics and accepting its demands is as fundamental to public managers as responding to the market is to private managers.Thus, it is in learning to read, respond to, and help to shape political aspirations that managers can learn to create public value' (p. 303). Moore goes on to say that the 'value of some government organisations lies not in the satisfaction of clients they meet at the business end of their operations, but in the satisfaction that citizens and politicians and judicial overseers take in the overall fairness of the organisation's operations'(Moore 1995, p. 302). Fairness underpins much of the debate about Council's outputs and operations and is probably the best assessment of whether it has achieved public value.

The Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework

The requirements for Integrated Planning and Reporting (IPRF) first instigated in the NSW Local Government Act 1993 section 404 (2009) are consistent with the significant global reforms and philosophies described above. The framework ensures that Council is the 'agent of the collective' (Moore 1995, p. 302), reflecting their aspirations. The plans and policies which flow from this process will achieve the government's goal of creating 'public (social) value'(Moore & Khagram 2004, p. 2)

The Office of Local Government diagram below illustrates the components of this framework:

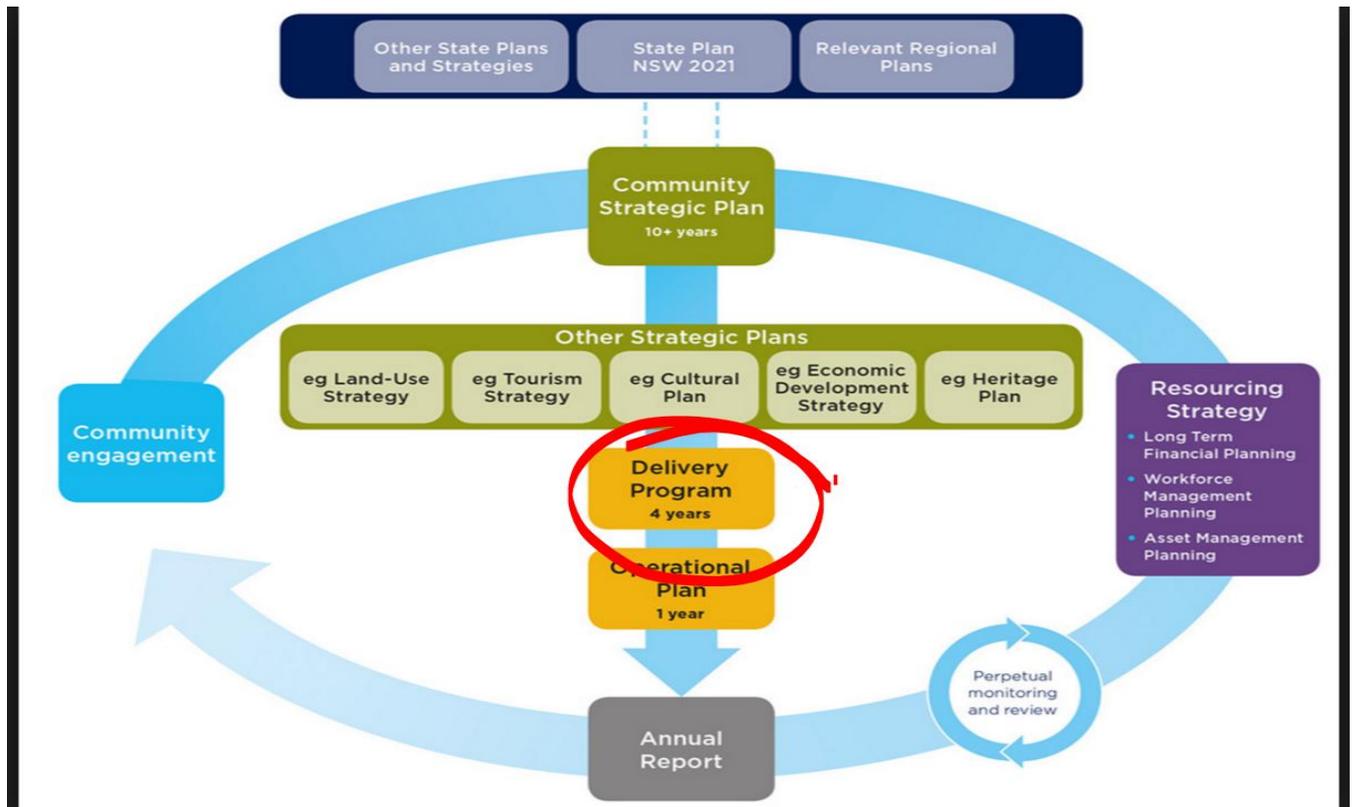


Figure 2 the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework (Office of Local Government 2013)

The Community Strategic Plan

Central to the 2009 reforms is the requirement to prepare a Community Strategic Plan (CSP). Coffs Harbour City Council (CHCC) nominated to be part of the first tranche of Councils to introduce this framework. This was typical of this Regional Council – often at the forefront of progressive policy. It is the highest level plan containing ‘the community’s main priorities and aspirations for future and planned strategies for achieving these goals’ (Office of Local Government 2014). It must give ‘due regard’ to the State Plan and other relevant State and Regional plans (Office of Local Government 2014). It is mandatory for Councils to have an engagement strategy to involve the community in important ‘discussions about funding priorities, service level, preserving local identity and the plan in partnership for a more sustainable future’ (NSWDLG cited in Prior 2010, p. 49). Council is the custodian of the plan ‘for the local government area on behalf of their community’ (NSWDLG cited in Prior 2010, p. 52). The success or otherwise of the IPRF depends on the capture of this information which is the foundation of all the other associated documents.

The DP

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The DP is the 'kernel' of the Integrated Performance and Planning Framework, legislated in NSW in the 2009 Local Government Act (Bass 2012, p. 21) in that it is where the strategies from the Community Strategic Plan are developed into actions which, in turn, inform the annual OP (Office of Local Government 2016a). This sits in the implementation phase of the strategic management process (see page 14). A successful DP will provide opportunities for councillors and staff 'to collaborate in setting goals for the council term that respond to the higher level, long term goals in the CSP' (p. 21; Office of Local Government 2013)

Provisions for the DP in NSW are set out in the Local Government Amendment (Governance and Planning) Bill 2016, section 404:

(1) A council must have a program (called its DP) detailing the principal activities to be undertaken by the council to perform its functions (including implementing the strategies set out in the community strategic plan) within the resources available under the resourcing strategy.

(2) The council must establish a new DP after each ordinary election of councillors to cover the principal activities of the council for the 4-year period commencing on 1 July following the election.

(NSW Government 2016, p. 13)

The Office of Local Government lists twelve 'Essential Elements' for the DP:

1. Each council must prepare and adopt its DP by 30 June in the year following a local government ordinary election.
2. The DP must directly address the objectives and strategies of the Community Strategic Plan and identify specific actions that the council will undertake in response to the objectives and strategies.
3. The DP must address the full range of council operations.
4. The DP must inform and be informed by, the Resourcing Strategy.
5. Financial estimates of the income and expenditure for the four-year period must be included in the DP, in line with its activities.
6. The DP must allocate responsibilities for each action or set of actions
7. The council must consider the priorities and expected levels of service expressed by the community during the engagement process for the Community Strategic Plan when preparing its DP.
8. The draft DP must be exhibited for public comment for a minimum of 28 days and public submissions considered before the final program is adopted.
9. The council must review its DP each year, before preparing the OP
10. The council may choose to roll the DP forward beyond its elected term to enable effective forward planning, provided it is consistent with its Community Strategic Plan and Resourcing Strategy. Where a council does this, it is still required to report on the implementation of its initial DP. The new council is also still required to prepare a new DP for its electoral term as per Essential Element 3.1.
11. Where an amendment to the DP is proposed, it must be included in a council business paper which outlines the reasons for the amendment and be tabled and resolved to be noted at that meeting and considered by the council at its next meeting.
12. Where significant amendments are proposed, the Program must be re-exhibited as per Essential Element 3.8.

(Office of Local Government 2016b)

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Local Government Amendment (Governance and Planning) Bill 2016

The 2016 amendments to the Act further clarify the role of Council, the Councillors and Staff in the implementation of the framework. It is clearly stated that all parties should be active in the development, promotion and play an advisory role in the implementation of the IPRF. In addition, the Act specifies that the General Manager should 'advise the Mayor and the governing body on the appropriate form of community consultation' (NSW Government 2016, p. 3).

The Act details broad guidelines for decision making, including the recognition of 'diverse local community needs and interests', 'social justice principles', the long term and cumulative effects of actions on future generations', the principles of ecologically sustainable development'. 'Decision-making should be transparent and decision-makers are to be accountable for decisions *and omissions*' (my italics). See appendix three for relevant sections of the 2016 Act.

Literature Review

The Community Strategic Plan

Prior and Herriman (2010) outline the history of CSPs in NSW which led to the new legislation in 2009 and the development of the mandatory IPRF. Before 2009, the requirements were for a 3-year Management Plan and a one-year OP. Even though it wasn't compulsory in the former Act, some Councils such as Blue Mountains, and Coffs Harbour developed Community Strategic Plans (p. 49). Prior and Herriman suggest that the experience of pathfinder Councils laid the groundwork for the new 'laws: providing legislators with tangible evidence of the feasibility of long-ranging planning horizons, the benefits of wide-ranging community engagement, and the value of comprehensive 'holistic' planning for local community priorities extending beyond councils' own responsibilities.' (p. 49).

In Bass' review of the first three years of the legislation, he notes that Prior and Herriman's paper places the NSW reforms in their historical context, relating to other countries such as the US, UK and New Zealand, whose local authorities were also developing long term strategic plans based on 'genuine engagement with the community and which allows communities to be fully involved in establishing both the long term vision and priorities for action' (Prior 2010, pp. 46-7). Other related influences driving this long term planning trend were: 'a desire for longer-term and more integrated forms of planning, and increasing concern about sustainability and social equity' as well as 'the emergence of corporate planning within NSW local government' (Prior 2010, p. 47).

Worrall lists common elements of strategic plans across many jurisdictions:

- a statement of organisational values and key goals and priorities
- an internal and external environmental scan
- an interpretation of the results of analysis against the core values and aims
- a distillation and evaluation of options
- an integration of existing plans and policies towards achievement of the goals

(Worrall, 1998 p. 475; Sansom & McKinlay 2013, p. 179-180)

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The DP represents a four year program of relevant strategic operations which Council can undertake to achieve its responsibilities in the CSP (Moore & Khagram 2004, p. 9). It replaced the three year rolling Management Plan which was 'subject to annual update and revision (Bass 2012, p. 21). The DP 'highlight[s] the role of councillors as civic leaders' (p. 21). The goals contained within the DP depend on decisions about service delivery and questions such as:

- What types of services are needed?
- What level of service delivery is required and how should they meet the community's expectations?
- What are the priorities for service delivery?
- How should services be delivered and by whom?
- Who should pay for services? What mixture of private and public money is appropriate?
- Who should decide on the answers to these questions? (Ryan et al. 2015, p. 12)

Also differing from the former Management Plan, the DP is 'a single point of reference and accountability, where key elements of the CSP, Resourcing Strategy and OP come together' (Bass 2012, p. 21). The integrated planning mechanisms reflect many of the recommendations from the literature such as links to capacity, resourcing, budgets and asset management plans (Edwards 2012; Poister 2005a; Poister, Pitts & Edwards 2010; Poister 2005b; Prior 2010; Vehaun & Croskey 2014; Walker & Andrews 2015) and highlight 'the fundamental connections and interrelationships that link council activities and decision making across broad operational areas' (Bass 2012, p. 21).

Bass' review of a cross section of DPs in 2012 found that 'councils have had problems moving away from the previous management plan format and its primary focus on the next budget year' (2012, p. 20). Some Councils were 'shoehorning' the old Management Plan into the new format; others combined the DP and the OP into one document, and others asked Councillors to approve a complete document with no consultation (p. 21). His view was that some Councils have 'squandered' the opportunity for Councillors 'to provide a higher level, strategic view more suited to their role as civic leaders' (p. 22).

Prior and Herriman note the considerable resourcing challenges and skill shortages experienced in particular by smaller and regionally isolated Councils in their strategic planning attempts. The challenges of strategic planning were apparent before the 2009 reforms, as Sproats notes in 1997: 'councils do not possess sufficient resources and expertise to construct sophisticated management processes (or they are unwilling to commit the energy and resources)' (Sproats 1997, p. 503).

The Local Government Management Association (LGMA), now (Local Government Professionals) identified that there was no 'explicit and targeted State Government funding stream to support the transition (cited in Prior 2010, p. 56). NSW Councils have requested assistance with the transition to integrated planning by providing "templates, check lists, standards and a resource library" (LGMA cited in Prior 2010, p. 60).

The Independent Local Government Review was commissioned by the NSW Government in 2012 to progress strategic directions from the Destination 2036 Action Plan and to further the objectives of the NSW 2021: A Plan to Make NSW Number One (the State Plan) (Sansom, Munro & Inglis 2013, p. 9). The Panel was tasked with 'formulating options for a stronger and more effective system of Local Government' (p. 7). The Panel's principal recommendations included:

- Introduce more rigorous guidelines for the DP, and

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- Amend IP&R guidelines to require councils to incorporate regular service reviews in their DPs (p. 16)

The Panel suggest that DPs should accurately 'reflect the provisions of [Council's] asset and financial plans', and 'embed fiscal responsibility'. The recommendations outlined by the Panel are 'central' to their 'proposals to replace or streamline rate-pegging' (p. 35)

Their recommendations for expanded mandatory guidelines include the following:

- Give effect to long-term financial and asset management plans prepared fully in accordance with IPR guidelines.
- Contribute effectively to progressive elimination of an operating deficit.
- Establish a 4-8 year 'revenue path' for all categories of rates linked to specific expenditure proposals for infrastructure and services.
- Clearly justify any proposed increases in services or creation of new assets, based on regular service reviews and community consultation to determine appropriate levels of service.
- Incorporate substantially increased funding for infrastructure maintenance and renewal (where backlogs have been identified).
- Apply increased borrowing to meet infrastructure needs wherever appropriate and financially responsible.
- Ensure a fair and reasonable distribution of the rate burden across categories of ratepayers (p. 35)

Strategic Management

The 2009 NSW local government reforms legislated planning which form the strategic management framework. There are many books and articles, particularly in the US and UK, about the use of strategic management in the private sector, and then subsequently in the public realm (Walker & Andrews 2015). Mintzberg (1994) described strategic planning as the 'key to improved organisational performance' which would enable Councils to respond effectively to 'a complex and uncertain future' (cited in Walker & Andrews 2015, p. 105). There is a body of literature that supports strategic management of public services as 'the appropriate and reasonable integration of strategic planning and implementation across an organization (or other entity) in an ongoing way to enhance the fulfilment of its mission, meeting of mandates, continuous learning, and sustained creation of public value' (Bryson et al cited in Edwards 2012, p. 9)

Strategic management, defined by Bryson et al. (2010), is 'the appropriate and reasonable integration of strategic planning and implementation across an organization (or other entity) in an ongoing way to enhance the fulfilment of its mission, meeting of mandates, continuous learning, and sustained creation of public value' (cited in Edwards 2012, p. 9). Furthermore, public value as a 'guiding principle' 'enhances democratic and service provision outcomes for local communities' (Benington cited in Wedderburn 2015, p. 14). Strategic planning is just one aspect of strategic management. Other elements include resources allocation, evaluation and performance management (p. 10).

Edwards clarifies the terms 'strategy, strategic management and strategic planning'. She quotes Boyne and Walker's definition of strategy within the public sector as the way 'organisations relate to their environment and progress purposely into the future by improving services and performance (2012, p. 8). Strategy can be seen 'from two perspectives: process and content' (p. 8). The process

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stage involves 'comprehensive planning' and 'strategy formulation'. Of the elements of the IPRF this stage would include strategic planning and resources strategies (long term financial plan, workforce management plan and asset management plan) as well as performance management. Content is the how the organisation relates to external and internal factors of which there are several typologies. Boyne and Walker developed private sector models of strategic stance (2004, p. 232) which is the 'organisation's position and the way it relates to its environment' (p. 232); and strategic actions which are the 'steps an organisation takes to operationalise its stance' (p. 232). Compared to the private sector, public authorities are highly constrained in terms of strategic actions, so they are mostly focussed on internal and external changes. Internal actions include 'organisational arrangements for service provision' (p. 243). These are, very commonly, changes to structure, as well as culture, leadership and strategic planning (Boyne 2004, p. 243).

Edwards and others developed a conceptual model to assist with their review of research into strategic planning and management in the public sector (figure 3). This model 'is not intended to identify steps taken in the strategic planning process but, rather, to represent the logic underlying the principle elements of strategic management, their determinants, and their impact on an organization's capacity and performance' (Poister, Pitts & Edwards 2010, p. 525).

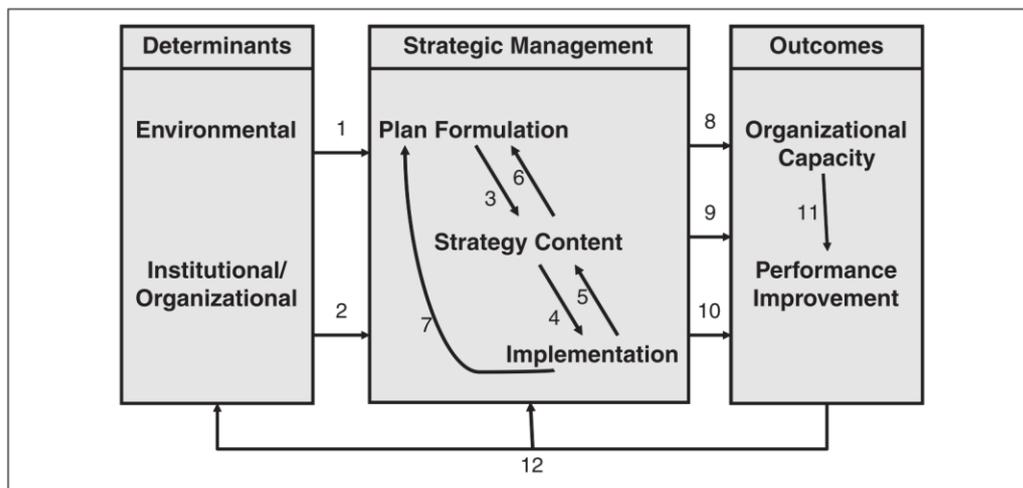


Figure 3 Principle elements of strategic management (Poister, Pitts & Edwards 2010, p. 525)

Implementation

The DP sits in the implementation phase of the strategic management process. The literature documents the many challenges of strategic management processes, no less in NSW - some of which are detailed below. But research indicates that the implementation phase poses even more challenges (Poister, Pitts & Edwards 2010, p. 527). The reason for this, in Sproats' view, is that, 'even if a satisfactory strategy does emerge, organisational objectives, programs, structures and budgets must then be aligned so that implementation can be effected' (1997, p. 501). Mintzberg commented that these elements may not 'mesh quite so cleanly' as the 'rational-model suggests' (p. 501). Poister et al. point to the technical, organisational reasons for these challenges, rather than environmental or political (2010, p. 537).

There are internal and external factors which influence the implementation of a strategic plan. Senior staff are able to deal with internal constraints given adequate time and resources, but external constraints are 'more difficult to overcome' (Vinzant & Vinzant 1996, p. 143). They cite Nutt and Backoff who so far as to say that 'external constraints make strategic management ill-suited to the public sector' (p. 143). However, Councils implementing strategic planning have often found it benefits their organisation. Local Government managers believe that strategic planning 'improved performance, in terms of financial conditions, operations management and delivering services' (Poister and Streib cited in Edwards 2012, p. 42). Despite some of the implementation issues in NSW Councils since 2009, Bass reports that 'most councils have achieved significant milestones in establishing collaborative relationships with stakeholders, facilitating the development of long term goals for their local areas and communities and improving their internal systems and structures for planning and management of their operations (Bass 2012, p. 25). This despite no additional resources, often no experience of strategic management and minimal resources (p. 25)

There are two external factors that affect implementation: autonomy and stimuli (Poister, Pitts & Edwards 2010, p. 526; Vinzant & Vinzant 1996, p. 143). Autonomy can be classified as statutory or fiscal. Statutory autonomy is the extent to which an organisation is governed by mandates and legislation. NSW Councils have a low degree of statutory autonomy as they are required to align their CSP (and therefore the DP) 'to 'statutory government strategies and other planning instruments (such as regional land use plans) (Prior 2010, p. 65). More support from NSW Government in the implementation of the IPRF is required to assist with some of the technical aspects of implementation and organisational reform, as well as the larger questions around fiscal and statutory autonomy. Dollery, Crase and O'Keefe describe 'barriers of oversight' by the NSW Government citing auditing requirements and environmental legislation as examples. Relevant to this discussion is the requirement for ministerial approval of all classifications of public land despite the mandate for community participation in the development of the CSP (Grant, Dollery & Kortt 2014, p. 65) In some cases, public authorities are not aware of 'the full extent of their prescribed choices, and the specificity of their mandates (Vinzant & Vinzant 1996, p. 143).

Similarly, NSW Councils have low fiscal autonomy (Vinzant & Vinzant 1996, p. 143), given the 'acute degree of fiscal imbalance in the Australian federation, and the limited 'own' sources of revenue available to local councils' (Grant, Dollery & Kortt 2014, p. 67) (rates and Central Government grants) (Vinzant & Vinzant 1996, p. 143). Indeed this point was emphasised in 'Destination 2036' and the review of NSW local government in 2013 (Sansom, Munro & Inglis 2013, p. 10) with recommendations for strengthening the revenue base and fiscal responsibility (p. 16).

Stimuli can be classified as threats and opportunities. The most significant threat to local government across Australia has been well documented as financial austerity and concerns about the fiscal sustainability of Councils, including cost-shifting (Grant, Dollery & Kortt 2014, p. 67). In NSW there was the inquiry into the financial sustainability of NSW Local Government conducted in 2006 which reported 'a public infrastructure backlog across the State with an estimated value in excess of \$6 billion' (LGA 2006 cited in Bass 2012, p. 9). Other concerns were poor financial management and the bureaucratisation of the sector. (Rhodes cited in Bass 2012, p. 6; Government of Western Australia 2010, p. 4; Sansom, Munro & Inglis 2013, p. 34; Tan & Artist 2013). A survey of councils in Western Australia in 2009 found that;

- 36% of the State's 139 local governments undertook limited or no strategic planning
- 81% undertook limited or no planning for asset maintenance and renewal
- 77% undertook limited or no financial management planning, and

- 82% of local government undertook limited or no financial planning to identify asset maintenance and renewal gaps. (Government of Western Australia 2010, p. 4).

More recently Councils have been under pressure to demonstrate financial sustainability from NSW Government, in many cases leading to amalgamations for Councils deemed not to be 'fit for future' (Baird 2015; Dollery, Grant & Kortt 2013).

About half of all NSW Councils had not developed strategic plans before 2009, and the ones that had were generally the richer, city based or regional Councils (Bass 2012, p. 18). Approximately one third of NSW Councils did not meet the deadline of June 2012 'citing severe resource limitations as a primary reason' (Bass 2012, p. 13). However, the imposition of a three-year deadline for all Councils across NSW, regardless of their previous experience is unrealistic in light of experiences in other jurisdictions such as Rock Hill in the USA. Their planning evolved over a period of ten years with several iterations of the process and additional components factored in each time (Vehaun & Croskey 2014). Research also suggests that contents of plans and strategies could be revised several times as suggested by links 5 and 6 in Vinzant and Vinzant's model (figure 3, page 15) (Vinzant & Vinzant 1996, p. 528) and Edwards cites research from the private sector suggesting a more realistic timeline of at least four years leads to better performance in organisations (Brews and Hunt cited in Edwards 2012, p. 39). Vinzant and Vinzant conclude that as the 'number of constraints increases the usefulness of strategic management diminishes' (p. 144). Some Councils experiencing difficulty with the new IPRF may agree with this analysis, although this is an area where representations to State Government could alleviate the constraints.

It is clear from Vinzant and Vinzant's model for successful implementation that the process could take many years to achieve (p. 149). A summary of this model is:

- the education and development of the Senior Management Team
- the identification of desired outputs and outcomes by Senior Executives [which includes the strategic plan, the mission and vision and the budgets linked to the SP].
- A pre-implementation assessment of internal and external factors
- A review and modification of desired outputs and outcomes to align the organisational capacity with its aspirations
- Process design tailored to the unique circumstances of a particular organisation
- Capacity building modifications to be able to produce the services and/or products. This may involve structural changes, staff, information systems and reports and so on.

(pp. 149 - 53)

Vinzant and Vinzant (1996) also provide a model and tools for the development and integration of the strategic management process in public service organisations, involving 'large scale complex organisational change' over many years (p. 156). There are four levels in this model:

Level 1: successful implementation is defined as the completion of a strategic planning process. If an organisation completes a 'series of analytic procedures' and formulates an agreed mission and vision 'so that these concepts are widely known and shared in the organisation' this level is deemed to be accomplished

Level 2: successful implementation is defined as the completion of a strategic planning process and the production of a strategic planning document.

Level 3: successful implementation is defined as Level 2 accomplishments plus resulting changes in the resource allocation process. Specifically, allocation of resources (human, financial, physical, and technological) in the operating and capital budgets is tied to the accomplishment of specific strategies within specified time periods.

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Level 4: successful implementation is defined as Level 3 accomplishments plus specific changes in control and evaluation processes that provide feedback on implementing elements of the strategic plan.

Levels 1 - 3 are represent progressive stages of development towards full implementation and level 4 represents the implementation of a comprehensive strategic management (adapted from Vinzant & Vinzant 1996, p. 141).

As the research demonstrates, the process is a long iterative one whilst NSW Councils are still grappling with planning, financial and asset management challenges (Sansom, Munro & Inglis 2013, p. 31).

Stakeholders in the Planning Process

The way Councils respond to planning legislation and formulation of plans, depend on many factors including among other things 'prevailing political, social and public administration ideologies' (Ryan et al. 2015, p. 12), values and opinions held by the principal actors involved (the community, elected politicians and the administration) and the 'aspects of different public management 'paradigms' under which they operate' (p. 12)

The IPRF has the potential to bring various stakeholders such as 'citizens, business leaders, employees of the city and politicians' (Denhardt, Gabris, Berry and Wechsler cited in Edwards 2012, p. 16) together by increasing communication and educating them about the goals and purposes of a public organisation (Pindur cited in Edwards 2012, p. 16). Herriman and Prior provide examples of NSW Councils that employ 'communicative' or 'pluralist' approaches to planning (Innes cited in Prior 2010, p. 53) as 'they encourage a participatory approach emphasizing an inclusive planning process and highlighting the planner's role in mediating among stakeholders' (Healy and Habermas cited in Prior 2010, p. 53). Coffs Harbour City Council has been successful in promoting this approach to planning as, for example their inclusive approaches to the Jetty Foreshores design. Other Councils quoted were Parramatta and City of Sydney. Herriman and Prior provide examples of NSW Councils that employ 'communicative' or 'pluralist' approaches to planning (Innes cited in Prior 2010, p. 53) as 'they encourage a participatory approach emphasizing an inclusive planning process and highlighting the planner's role in mediating among stakeholders' (Healy and Habermas cited in Prior 2010, p. 53). New challenges arise with the emergence of community governance. There are challenges in blending expert knowledge with 'emerging knowledge' from the community (p. 53) as well as determining the role of politicians within this process. Some Councils, such as Ashfield, are developing a 'series of principles and analytical frameworks for constructing a coherent synthesis' (p. 65). Of particular interest is the assertion that the 'experiences and knowledge of the service user' is 'at the heart of effective public service design and delivery' (Osborne, Radnor & Nasi 2013, p. 146).

Leadership

The success of the strategic management process depends on effective leadership by Councillors and senior staff (Bass 2012, p. 15). Bligh, Dollery and Gow see this as underpinning the discussion about local government in international literature, although not 'fully explored in Australia' (2011, p. 66). Overseas, there are examples of 'the transformational role local leadership can have, including improving economic development, democratic legitimacy and administrative functioning' (p. 54).

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They must 'create a process of continuous change' taking 'an active role, encouraging creativity and innovation' (Nutt and Backoff cited in Vinzant & Vinzant 1996, p. 146).

The 2016 Act requires the General Manager to 'advise the mayor and governing body on the development and implementation of the strategic plans' and 'to prepare, in consultation with the mayor and the governing body, the council's community strategic plan, community engagement strategy, resourcing strategy, DP, OP and annual report' (NSW Government 2016). Bass lists the challenges:

- The nature of the pre-existing relationship between the staff and the councillors
- Individuals controlling the implementation process
- No interest from councillors and staff
- Lack of understanding or attention to the legislated requirements

(2012, p. 15)

However, under the new legislation, councillors and staff are required to take responsibility for the IPRF as stated in clause 8A 2(e): 'Council decision-making should be transparent and decision-makers are to be accountable for decisions *and omissions*' (NSW Government 2016, p. 4). [my italics]

There are case studies from the US which attributed their success in implementing plans to strong leadership and incentives for strong employee participation – such as the City of Rock Hill and the US Air Force and other military organisations (Vinzant & Vinzant 1996, p. 533). The pre-dominant leadership model in Australia is the council-manager form 'in which the administrative executive or council manager can be removed by the elected council' (Mouritzen and Svava cited in Grant, Dollery & Gow 2011, p. 55) as opposed to the mayor-council form where the Mayor has semi-executive functions. Whether one is more effective leadership model for successful strategic planning has been researched, but the results are not conclusive (Poister 1999, p. 534; Poister, Pitts & Edwards 2010), although Sansom convincingly argues the case for a directly elected Mayor with executive functions giving examples from many cities around the world (Sansom 2012b). However, both forms of leadership 'endorse a principle of cooperation as well as accountability between two spheres of government' (Grant, Dollery & Gow 2011, p. 55). The Lyons Report suggested that the 'roles for leadership were dependent upon a blurring of political and administrative roles at the local level, with appointed executives being encouraged to not overshadow the public profile of locally elected leaders 'all of the time' (p. 59)

The Political Process

The status of the DP as the 'go to' document for Councillors highlights Moore's views on the relationship between politics and public management. Moore says 'we cannot banish it [politics] by importing professional standards or relying on analytical techniques, nor shifting our attention to the satisfaction of clients or government programs'. (Moore 1995, p. 303). 'Responding to politics and accepting its demands and expectations is as fundamental to public managers as responding to the market is to private managers.... it is politics that authoritatively defines what is publicly valuable' (p. 303; Ryan et al. 2015).

The legislation and New Public Management reforms reinforce the separation of powers where Councillors 'set policy and strategy and monitor performance whilst management should be otherwise left alone to deal with implementation of policy and plans and service delivery' (Sansom 2012a, p. 10). Several authors question the practicality of this artificial divide (Marshall N & Sproats K 2000; Sansom 2012a; Sproats 1997; Svava 1998) due to 'a substantial number of the functions of local government, given the often fine line between policy and practice [and]the small scale of many

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authorities (Sansom 2012a, p. 10). Svava suggests that the 'dichotomy idea shields administrators from scrutiny and serves the interest of politicians who can pass responsibility for unpopular decisions to administrators' (p. 11). Moore and Khagram state that having a view of public value is not enough: 'others have to share it' (2004, p. 9), as in the governing body and community. He describes the governing body as legitimizing and supporting public value. (p. 9)

However, Councillors may struggle with 'the growth in scope, function and complexity of local authorities in the future' (p. 509). Their ability to think strategically may be limited 'because of the short attention spans', due to the electoral cycles, so that 'what is important one day may very well be of little importance the next day' (Edwards 2012, p. 16). Dore found that 'broad policy aspects 'can scare them. Many of them tend to be a 1-2-3-4-5 issue person' (cited in Marshall N & Sproats K 2000, p. 503). If the administration does not work with the Councillors and enable them 'to lead the process, then it is not difficult to understand why plans prepared largely by officials are adopted by councillors without sufficient consideration of their implications and with little solid commitment to their implementation' (Sansom 2012b, p. 27).

There are problems of mistrust and misunderstanding of roles (Marshall N & Sproats K 2000, p. 504) in the relationship between the administration and Councillors, but both are critical in the implementation of strategic management processes (Hambleton 2000; Marshall N & Sproats K 2000; Svava 2008). Hughes says 'It must be remembered that a public service is a political institution and that public servants must operate in a political environment. The potential danger remains that the views of senior executives may diverge from those of both councillors and constituents and may exert undue influence over policy direction (Marshall N & Sproats K 2000, p. 504). This interplay between Councillors and the administration can be explained with reference to Goffman's dramaturgical metaphors of actors and 'impression management' (cited in Sheridan 2016, p. 68). Goffman described interactions between key players, similar to a theatre performance where 'impression management' can be used as a method of control, whilst the 'audience' support their role through the 'belief that the actor is who he says he is' (p. 67). Goffman describes a situation which was cleverly portrayed in the BBC Television series, "Yes Minister" where the 'government department managers ensure that their minister does not know everything that is going on: the minister is part of the political system and is not necessarily in agreement with the executive function of government' (p. 69).

The Australian Local Government Association warns that a 'balance between effective democratic control and the role of managers' must be maintained for effective administration (cited in Aulich 2009, p. 299). Svava describes a 'model of complementarity' where 'administrators accept the control of elected officials and elected officials respect what administrators do and how they do it' (Svava 2008, p. 1081). Sproats advocates 'frameworks of local governance' and a 'symbiotic relationship' between the politicians and the administration (Marshall N & Sproats K 2000, p. 509). In fact, several authors discuss the 'longstanding myth' about the 'sharp separation of roles' between the administration and the Councillors (Sansom 2012a, p. 26).

The NSW IPRF and the amended NSW Local Government Act require a prominent role in the strategic management process by Councillors in line with this thinking (NSW Government 2016; Sansom 2012b, p. 26). Networked Community Governance and the LG Act also emphasise the importance of community engagement. Hambleton describes civic leadership as 'place-based' leadership (Hambleton 2011, p. 14). He provides a model demonstrating the three 'realms of civic leadership' and their interaction (p. 17):



Hambleton describes the areas of overlap in the model as 'innovation zones' (p. 17). If mishandled these could be areas for conflict and power plays. Effective leadership can exploit these innovation zones with education and effective communication. 'This, in turn, requires emotional sensitivity and an awareness of the importance of various sources of community identity' (p. 17).

Findings

Question one: How does Council turn strategies from the Community Strategic Plan into actions, incorporating key Councillor's activities they have committed to undertake over their four-year term?

The Vinzant and Vinzant model defines the successful implementation of levels 1 and 2 as the completion of a strategic planning tool and strategic planning process as well as the production of a strategic planning document. (Vinzant & Vinzant 1996, p. 156) (page 14). The interviews and document search explored the extent to which CHCC had achieved these milestones.

The first stage of the CHCC 2030 process was to develop a collaborative community Vision. This was undertaken through a series of community consultation activities. Over 700 community members gave their vision for a sustainable Coffs Harbour in 2030 and beyond (Salter 2009). The CSP was developed by Council in 2008 -2009 funded by an Office of Environment and Heritage grant for sustainability project. Council was aware of the impending reforms in the Local Government Act 2009 which would require Councils to prepare a long term Community Strategic Plan and decided that Coffs Harbour 2030 Plan would meet the criteria for this plan under the IPRF.

Council undertook a comprehensive consultation process including:

- A community questionnaire which received 269 responses
- A series of community workshops with 60 community participants
- A telephone poll of 300 community members
- A creative arts competition which received 86 entries
- A series of targeted community forums with 83 participants
- A 2030 Summit with 160 participants

The data from these consultations was collated to form the Draft Coffs Harbour 2030 Plan. The report describes an internal Working Group involved in the design and development of the Draft Coffs Harbour 2030 Plan with representation across all Council departments and across different levels, i.e. officer and manager levels. A Steering Committee - consisting of the General Manager, It's All in the Delivery: An Exploratory Case Study Focusing on the Coffs Harbour City Council DP 2010 – 2016.

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senior staff, the Mayor and Councillors - oversaw the development of the Draft Coffs Harbour 2030 Plan (Salter 2009, p. 22)

The report goes on to describe a number of staff briefings about the development of the 2030 Plan. The managers were briefed throughout the process via the regular Managers' Forum and the Draft Coffs Harbour 2030 Plan was circulated to all managers and executive staff for comment. An external review was also undertaken and further comment was sought from all staff during the public exhibition phase. (Salter 2009, p. 22)

Despite this, a strategic review of CHCC reported that Council staff had a 'poor awareness' of the CSP in 2012, which improved to a 49% net positive result in 2014. At a Councillor focus group, Councillors said they were 'mostly aware' of the Council's strategic intent and direction, but 'ownership of the content was more limited' (LKS Quaero 2014, p. 6). There was a range of understanding about the CSP: 'Some Councillors described the vision as 'growth of the city' especially economically, while others were of the view that residents were much more interested in the quality of local services such as footpaths.' (p. 7).

When interviewed for this case study, Councillors did not recall in any detail their involvement with the community consultation process or any input into the DP; even though there is evidence that they were included in the discussion. They could not clearly articulate the role and purpose of the DP, often confusing it with the OP despite their prominent role as Mayors and considerable accumulated experience of Local Government. One Councillor was concerned that the 4 year timeline for the DP was too long: 'because things do pop up that were unknown when we first did it, so a good thorough revision halfway would be a good way to go about it'.

One Councillor who did not attend the workshops, described the new IPRF as 'what they called in the old days, the budget'. He understood that the IPRF was about forecasting ten or more years ahead 'with sound financial plans in place to be able to implement it.' 'It's about being financially sound in your decision making - about the projects you are doing. What is planned for the future, and I say it's a forward plan, so you're looking at 10+ years ...paints more of a picture of where you're going, what you need and what your costs are going to be'.

A staff member suggested that the CSP 'is a set of motherhood statements which doesn't give any specific guidance'. Surveys and staff feedback reveal that the CSP did not reflect the actual operations of Council, even though the Council report demonstrates the involvement of all managers and Councillors in its development. The strategic review found that despite 'all the detail that is provided, these documents [the CSP, DP and OP] do not convey the key differences that the Council seeks to bring about, and therefore the value delivered by the Council to its communities' (LKS Quaero 2014, p. 8).

Despite evidence of stakeholder participation, the narrative is that the 'body of work was developed in a silo and didn't have buy in from across the organisation.' 'It was developed from an environmental perspective'. 'The Sustainability Plan was re-badged as the Community Strategic Plan.' So when they tried to match the plan up with Council services 'there was a mismatch'.

In short, the 'golden thread of Council vision, corporate strategies and delivery plans' was 'not readily discernible' (LKS Quaero 2014). The lack of Councillor engagement with the process demonstrates the challenge of 'cutting through' despite extensive stakeholder consultation. The inability of Councillors to describe the function and content of the DP indicates a 'top-down' approach and the dominance of the administration in producing these documents.

Question Two: How did CHCC manage the development and implementation of the DP and what did they learn from this process?

The responses from staff suggest that the Council 'shoehorned' the former Management Plan format into the new DP. Staff did discuss projects with the Councillors who backed major projects such as the Regional Skate Park and the Jetty Foreshores redevelopment, but these projects are not listed clearly in the DP as outputs for the Council term. Councillors could not cite any specific actions contained in the plan which reflected their wishes. It is not clear what mechanisms were employed to make changes to the DP, apart from email and formal Council approval of revised plans. The process seems to require responsible managers to produce an annual list to be included. Following the most recent restructure, senior management are now required to submit a 'bid' to include projects in the DP to be decided by the group but it is still unclear how they will incorporate Councillor and Community input.

In addition, Councillors often confused the DP with the OP. Indeed, that confusion is understandable, given that the DP contained list of works for the four-year term, and sometimes just for that financial year (see Appendix 1). Seven DPs exist: for 2010 – 2014, 2011 – 2015, 2012 – 2016, 2013 – 2017, 2014 – 2018, 2015 – 2019 and 2016 – 2020 – which indicates that the Council didn't waver from the former practice of submitting an annual Management Plan.

One staff member describes how the program had changed over the years: 'We've progressively tweaked the DP - as I say in 2011 we had that service review and the decision was made to restructure our OP – which is our view of the organisation, to align with those services – so that happened after 2011. And now, we've moved away from services to try and reflect the actual organisational hierarchy which is in the group structure under the directorates in the group structure.'

He goes on to say: 'So I think the DP today is still viewed through the prism of the budget, it's not viewed through, oh let's go through this strategic document that says where we plan to be in 4 years' time. It's all about what the budget allows us to do in a particular of activity for the next 4 years'.

Other changes affecting the DP and triggering revisions included the rate rises and the organisational restructure as well as a review of the CSP in 2012 which 'resulted in a number of key changes to the document designed at making the document easier to understand' (LKS Quaero 2014, p. 7).

Another staff member commented: 'I don't think you can ever think of the DP as something that exists in isolation to the CSP, and that's one of the problems that Councils everywhere have had to deal with that they have had a management structure based on the way they've always done things and the way their budgets have always been framed and everything. There's always been some connection with communities, in terms of communities making it clear what they want Councils to do, but in practice the introduction of CSPs is still a work in progress'.

The Council Administration began an improvement program following the appointment of a new General Manager in 2010 which were reflected in changes to the DP and, to a lesser degree, the CSP. Some elements of this improvement program included:

- A service review in 2011 – 2012 which informed the community engagement regarding levels of service in 2013.
- A review of the CSP to streamline the strategies and

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- Initiatives to improve the awareness of the CSP, 'strategic capability and leadership capacity' (LKS Quaero 2014, p. 1)
- Service alignment
- Performance Management

The organisation then embarked on a major review and overhaul of internal and external services which they tagged 'Transformation to Sustainability' (T2S).

A snapshot of each DP illustrates the changes of approach and organisational change over the six years:

Looking after our Community

THEME: Looking after our Community (Our Community is healthy, informed and engaged)			
OUTCOME: LC1 We are healthy and strong			
OBJECTIVE: LC1.1 We take pride in Coffs Harbour as a strong and adaptable community. (Director, City Services)			
OBJECTIVE MEASURE: Incorporating the results from Council's implementation of strategies during the period, assess the community's level of pride in Coffs Harbour, strength and ability to adapt.			
Strategy	CHCC Role	CHCC Work Area	Responsible Officer
LC1.1.1 Build pride and identity in Coffs Harbour as a community and a place.	Facilitator, Provider	516 Community Development	Executive Manager, Cultural and Community Development
		517 Economic Development	Manager, Economic Development Unit
LC1.1.2 Develop community resilience to change including disaster preparedness and response mechanisms.	Facilitator, Provider	250 Animal Control and Enforcement	Manager, Land Use Management
		412 Rural Fire Service	Executive Manager, Finance
		420 Information Services	Chief Information Officer
		521 Operational Administration	Executive Manager, CityWorks

Figure 4: 2010-2011. Themes, outcomes objectives and strategies are from the CSP

Looking after our Community (Responsibility of: Director – City Services)

THEME: LOOKING AFTER OUR COMMUNITY (Our Community is healthy, informed and engaged)			
OUTCOME: LC1 We are healthy and strong			
OBJECTIVE: LC1.1 We take pride in Coffs Harbour as a strong and adaptable community			
OBJECTIVE MEASURE: Incorporating the results from Council's implementation of strategies during the period, assess the community's level of pride in Coffs Harbour, strength and ability to adapt.			
Strategy	CHCC Role	Service Description	Responsible Officer
LC1.1.1 Build pride and identity in Coffs Harbour as a community and a place	Facilitator, Provider	Community Services	Executive Manager - Cultural & Community Development
		Economic Development	Manager - Economic Development
LC1.1.2 Develop community resilience to change including disaster preparedness and response mechanisms	Facilitator, Provider	Emergency Management	Executive Manager - Coffs City Works
		Compliance	Manager - Land Use Management
		Corporate Information Services	Chief Information Officer

Figure 5: 2012 - Tasks are now assigned to a service following the 2011 - 2012 service review

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Looking after our Community (Director – Community Development)

THEME: LOOKING AFTER OUR COMMUNITY (Our Community is healthy, informed and engaged)				
OBJECTIVE: LC1 Coffs Harbour is a strong, safe and adaptable community				
STRATEGY: LC1.1 Build pride and identity in Coffs Harbour as a community and a place				Council Role: Provider, Facilitator
Service	Service Name	Deliverable	Deliverable Name	Responsible Officer
S01	Arts and Culture		See reporting for LC4.1 (M01.01-08)	Manager Community Development
S02	City Image - Cleaning	B02.01	Level of satisfaction with cleanliness of streets	Manager - Asset Maintenance
		B02.02	level of satisfaction with cleanliness of public toilets	
S03	Community Services	B03.11	The extent to which people feel part of the community (2030 Indicator and annual survey) (Also applies to LC1.4)	Manager Community Development
S07	Economic Development	NRN*		Manager - Economic Development
S10	Event Management	NRN*		Manager - Sports Unit
S17	Parks and Facilities	M17.01	Seek a 5% increase in the number of patrons visiting Botanic Gardens annually	Manager - Recreational Services
		M17.37	Street tree planting schedule implemented as per annual program	
		B17.02	Customer satisfaction with roundabouts/reserves - reference group survey	

*No Reporting Necessary – Indirect alignment between Service and 2030 Strategy.

Figure 6: 2013 - More Council services have been aligned with the strategy with performance indicators. Note change of Directorate following a restructure

Looking after our Community – (Director – Community Development)

THEME: LOOKING AFTER OUR COMMUNITY - Our Community is healthy, informed and engaged			
OBJECTIVE: LC1 Coffs Harbour is a strong, safe and adaptable community			
STRATEGY: LC1.1 Build pride and identity in Coffs Harbour as a community and a place			CHCC Role: Provider, Facilitator
Service Name	Action	Description	Responsible Officer
City Image - Cleaning (S02)	B02.01 Satisfaction with cleanliness of streets	Level of satisfaction with cleanliness of streets	Executive Manager Operations
City Image - Cleaning (S02)	B02.02 Satisfaction with cleanliness of public toilets	Level of satisfaction with cleanliness of public toilets	Executive Manager Operations
Community Services (S03)	B03.11 Community Inclusiveness and Pride	The extent to which people feel part of the community (2030 Indicator and annual survey)	Community Services Manager
Parks and Facilities (S17)	B17.02 Customer satisfaction	Customer satisfaction with roundabouts/reserves - reference group survey	Corporate Planner
Parks and Facilities (S17)	M17.01 Gardens visitor growth	Percentage change in the number of visitors to the Botanic Gardens from the same period last year	Manager – Rec. Services
Parks and Facilities (S17)	M17.37 Street tree planting	Street tree planting schedule implemented as per annual program	Manager – Rec. Services
Economic Development (S07)	B07.01 Love Our City; B07.03 Place Making	See PL1.6	Manager - Economic Development
Event Management (S10)	M10.01 Event Seed Funding approvals	See LP1.3	Coordinator Events

Figure 7: 2014 - 2015 Services and performance metrics are refined. Another change of Directorate following the Transformation to Sustainability (T2S) restructure.

LOOKING AFTER OUR COMMUNITY

'Our Community is healthy, informed and engaged'

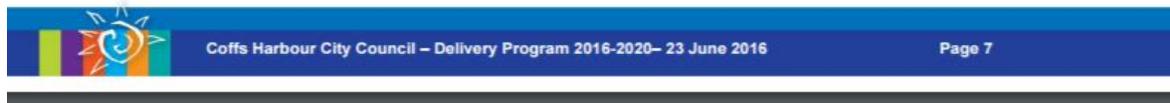
Objectives:

1. Coffs Harbour is a strong, safe and adaptable community
2. We lead healthy lives
3. We have strong civic leadership and governance
4. We have many opportunities to enjoy life together

OBJECTIVE 1: LC1 - Coffs Harbour is a strong, safe and adaptable community

STRATEGIES:

- LC1.1 Build pride and identity in Coffs Harbour as a community and a place – (CHCC Role: Provider, Facilitator)
- LC1.2 Develop community resilience, disaster preparedness and response mechanisms – (Provider, Facilitator)
- LC1.3 Promote a safe community – (Provider, Facilitator, Advocate)
- LC1.4 Promote a caring, inclusive and cohesive community – (Facilitator)
- LC1.5 Support the vulnerable and disadvantaged – (Provider, Facilitator, Advocate)
- LC1.6 Promote opportunities for all to fulfil their potential – (Provider, Facilitator, Advocate)



LOOKING AFTER OUR COMMUNITY

Objective 1: LC1 - Coffs Harbour is a strong, safe and adaptable community

How Council will respond	Responsible Officer	Services involved in the planning and implementation
Plan and implement public space cleaning programs	Group Leader Asset Construction & Maintenance	City Image - Cleaning (S02)
Develop and deliver sustainable living and community capacity building and behaviour change programs	Group Leader Community and Cultural Services	Community Programs (S03)
Manage lifeguard patrols, rescues, response, first aid and beach safety education	Group Leader Community and Cultural Services	Lifeguard Services (S16)
Provision of safe, cost effective, functional and accessible recreational services to the wider community and visitors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain gardens in an aesthetically pleasing and sustainable manner • Provide professional burial services whilst maintaining and developing Council Cemeteries • Provide well maintained reserves and bushland for public use and enjoyment 	Group Leader Asset Construction & Maintenance	Open Spaces and Facilities (S17)
Undertake the maintenance and repair of Council buildings	Group Leader Asset Construction & Maintenance	Property (S18)
Co-ordinate Council's resources and attention to Council, LGA and regional emergency response planning and resourcing	Group Leader Governance Services	Governance (S34)

Figure 8: 2016 - The format change reflects the restructure and appointment of new staff in the corporate planning area. Note the increased clarity and simpler format.

The original DP does not refer to State Planning documents, but a reference to NSW 2021, Mid North Coast Regional Strategy and the Mid North Coast Regional Action Plan was included in the revised CSP in 2012. To comply with the essence of the LG Act, the DP is required to show how it is contributing to State and Regional priorities. Council is the only stakeholder involved in the CSP that

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is required to report on their progress. Some interviewees felt that the CSP should be driving the strategic direction for the area and commenting that the new Joint Organisations and Regional Managers' groups would be the forum for high level strategic discussions with the State Government to better align the plans.

Other aspects of the DP comply with the Essential Elements stipulated by the Office of Local Government:

Office of Local Government DP Guidelines: Essential Elements	Coffs Harbour City Council DP critique by author
1. Each council must prepare and adopt its DP by 30 June in the year following a local government ordinary election.	The DP was adopted following each Local Government Election within the timeframe
2. The DP must directly address the objectives and strategies of the Community Strategic Plan and identify specific actions that the council will undertake in response to the objectives and strategies.	The DP listed specific actions they would undertake in response to the Community Strategic Plan (CSP) objectives and strategies
3. The DP must address the full range of council operations.	Each iteration of the DP addressed included more Council operations. However, there are still omissions, including water and sewer
4. The DP must inform and be informed by, the Resourcing Strategy.	The DP informs the Resourcing Strategy, although the Asset Management Plan and Workforce Management Plan is still under development. To enable comprehensive and meaningful planning, the timeline needs to be extended.
5. Financial estimates of the income and expenditure for the four year period must be included in the DP, in line with its activities.	Financial Estimates were included
6. The DP must allocate responsibilities for each action or set of actions	Responsibilities were allocated
7. The council must consider the priorities and expected levels of service expressed by the community during the engagement process for the Community Strategic Plan when preparing its DP.	This is not clearly articulated in the present CSP and subsequent DPs
8. The draft DP must be exhibited for public comment for a minimum of 28 days and public submissions considered before the final program is adopted.	yes
9. The council must review its DP each year, before preparing the OP.	yes

10. The council may choose to roll the DP forward beyond its elected term to enable effective forward planning, provided it is consistent with its Community Strategic Plan and Resourcing Strategy. Where a council does this, it is still required to report on the implementation of its initial DP. The new council is also still required to prepare a new DP for its electoral term as per Essential Element 3.1.

CHCC chose to produce a new DP every year - so the latest version is 2016 - 2020. This did not assist with clarity of reporting for the Elected Members

11. Where an amendment to the DP is proposed, it must be included in a council business paper which outlines the reasons for the amendment and be tabled and resolved to be noted at that meeting and considered by the council at its next meeting.

This is not apparent from public documents.

12. Where significant amendments are proposed, the Program must be re-exhibited as per Essential Element 3.8. (Office of Local Government 2016b)

The DPs have been exhibited annually.

(Office of Local Government 2016b)

Figure 9: Review of CHCC DP Essential Elements listed by the Office of Local Government

Usefully, a former CHCC Director has documented his thought process over the years – initially dealing with the service review and asset management, but then coming to similar conclusions about the strategic management process as others. He writes that ‘there are a number of oversimplifications which determined the format of our CSPs and DPs. These, ironically coupled with excessive detail, have made most ‘first generation’ IPR documents inaccessible and unsuited to the fundamental task in IPR: getting everyone – community, councillors and staff – ‘on the same page’ and achieving a high degree of transparency and accountability (Lawson B 2016, p. 1). He and others talked about the confusion with outputs and outcomes which then filters into the Resourcing Strategy as well as the CSP and the DP (Lawson B 2016, p. 1). This is one of the reasons Councillors seemed non-plussed when asked about the plans leaving the preparation of the plans up to the administration.

Question three: What could Coffs Harbour City Council do to improve the DP?

Telling the story

A theme that has emerged from the research and the literature is the need for a ‘distillation and evaluation of options’, for greater specificity and refinement (Prior 2010; Sansom 2013; Vebaun & Croskey 2014; Worrall 1998) – a less is more approach. The Council strategic review recommended that ‘at the next opportunity, revise the Strategic Plan to include clear priorities for action (goals) with SMART objectives and targets. The scope of the plan should include all aspects of community life, wellbeing and public service delivery within Coffs Harbour’ (LKS Quaero 2014, p. 13).

Through his attempts to improve asset management plans, Lawson also seeks to simplify the ‘immense detail required for councils to do comprehensive business planning appropriately by sharing a story about ‘where we are, where we want to be and how we’ll get there’. His story is

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framed in 'Service Dashboards' making 'services the 'common thread'; telling the story simply 'with a path to the detail (in various supporting policies, plans and strategies as well as a priority projects list that means the story is tangible). The story 'meaningfully relates outputs (DP) to outcomes (CSP) in a way that facilitates an ongoing conversation in local communities - the objective of the new Local Government Act '(Lawson B. Christensen M 2016, p. 2). It's fitting therefore that the title of this assignment is a reference to 'delivering' a story.

The place shaping model lends itself to this technique. All parties should focus on scenarios based on State priorities, future land use planning and, importantly the vision of 'a strong, healthy and prosperous' community as stated in the amended Local Government Act (NSW Government 2016, p. 3) In the process they will develop outcomes for their neighbourhood which 'still acknowledges the diversity of views that will always exist in a community' (Lawson B 2016, p. 8). The 'place shaping' approach is a meaningful and visionary approach to setting outcomes, to which Council activities and services can be aligned. It complements the Networked Community Governance approach and is an essential part of modern democracy.

The strategic planner cited an example of the projection of 15 000 more homes on the Northern Beaches. The story will focus on what it means for the people living in that area. He felt that no-one was using this model to its full extent at the moment, although City of Ryde DP tries to bridge the CSP in a thematic, concept based way with clear links to the OP (see Fig. 11 below)

The information can be presented in a simple format with options to drill down to more detail. Technology lends itself to this presentation and is used effectively to present the [NSW Government State Plan](#)

City of Liveable Neighbourhoods

A range of well-planned clean and safe neighbourhoods, and public spaces, designed with a strong sense of identity and place.

Expenditure by Program over 4 years

Base budget	\$ 38,666,729
Projects	\$ 2,393,703
Total	\$ 41,060,435

Over the next four years we will be spending \$41 million on the following programs to deliver a city that is designed for the enjoyment of residents so that they are able to experience the opportunities and lifestyle that Ryde has to offer close to home. This will be split across the following programs.



Centres and Neighbourhood program
Land Use Planning program
Open Space, Sport & Recreation program
Paths and Cycleways program
Regulatory program

Total Spend by Program 2016-2020	Income \$	Expenditure \$	Base Expenditure \$	Project Expenditure \$	Total Nett \$
Centres and Neighbourhood program	-18,673	1,462,613	334,320	1,128,293	1,443,940
Land Use Planning program	-1,270,279	5,810,324	5,258,209	552,115	4,540,045
Open Space, Sport & Recreation program	-565,046	9,447,744	8,734,446	713,298	8,882,699
Paths and Cycleways program		472,520	472,520		472,520
Regulatory program	-12,481,405	23,867,235	23,867,235		11,385,830
Outcome Total	-14,335,402	41,060,435	38,666,729	2,393,706	26,725,033

Outcome: A City Of Liveable Neighbourhoods

Our progress on this outcome will be measured against the following goals:

GOAL ONE

All residents enjoy living in clean, safe, friendly and vibrant neighbourhoods.

STRATEGIES

To create welcoming neighbourhoods that are inviting, safe and enjoyable.

To support a variety of uses and activities in our neighbourhoods, which contribute to a desirable lifestyle.

To collaborate with our partners to increase social and recreational opportunities in our neighbourhoods.

GOAL TWO

Our community has a strong sense of identity in their neighbourhoods and are actively engaged in shaping them.

STRATEGIES

To plan and design our neighbourhoods in response to our community's needs, wants and sense of belonging.

To encourage and support local identity and character in our suburbs and neighbourhoods and protect our local heritage.

GOAL THREE

Our neighbourhoods thrive and grow through sustainable design, planning and regulation that support community needs.

STRATEGIES

To design our city to reflect the unique character, identity and housing needs of our community.

To pursue sustainable design and adopt best practice in the planning of our suburbs and neighbourhoods.

To create active public places and spaces through good planning and design.

Operational plan projects for 2016/17

Program / projects	Responsible Service Unit	Budget \$ 2016/17
Open Space, Sport and Recreation Program		
Street Tree Planting Program	Operations	75,000
Centres and Neighbourhood Program		
Gladesville Clocktower Monument Conservation	Strategic City	25,000
Ryde Town Centre Monuments	Strategic City	15,000

Operational plan projects for 2016/17

Program / projects	Responsible Service Unit	Budget \$ 2016/17
Centres and Neighbourhood Program		
Neighbourhood Centre Renewal	Strategic City	60,000
Land Use Planning Program		
Affordable Housing - Inclusionary Zoning Testing and Analysis	Strategic City	20,000
Affordable Housing Calculator	Strategic City	20,000
Section 94 Contribution Plan	Strategic City	100,000
Bushfire Mapping System	Environment, Health and Building	72,750
Open Space, Sport and Recreation Program		
Update Open Space Plans of Management and Site Masterplans	Strategic City	100,000

Figure 10: Extract from Ryde Council DP 2016-2020

This approach is a useful tool to engage Councillors and the community. The DP will effectively work as a prospectus for the Council term.

Vehaun also came to a similar conclusion over a ten-year period when refining the Rock Hill strategic management process. Staff and Councillors would work together to refine goals focusing on place. 'For example, in the quality community focus area, a goal might be strengthening neighborhoods through partnerships. A quality places supporting goal might be creating a vibrant downtown' (Vehaun & Croskey 2014, p. 34) The Rock Hill 2010 update included 'measurable,

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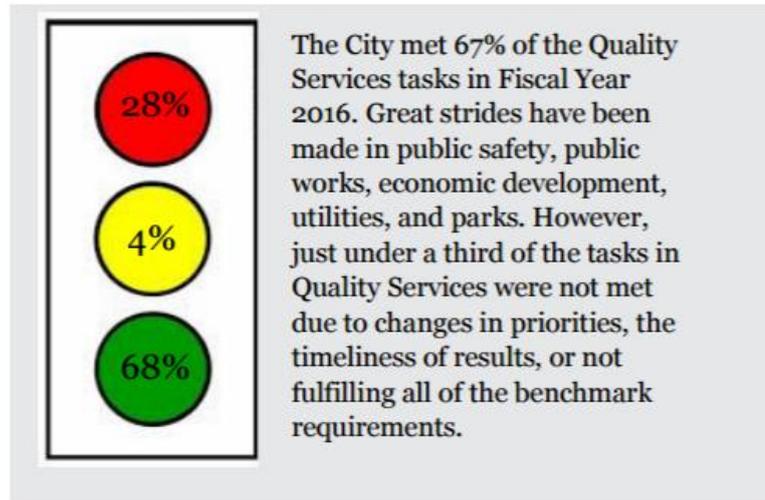
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defined targets' which required 'a change in culture and 'increased accountability in all departments' (p. 32). Most CSPs and, therefore, DPs are based on broad themes such as 'Looking after our community' 'Moving Around' or 'Protected and Enhanced Environment'. Rock Hill distilled their outcomes into three broad themes: Quality Services, Quality Places, Quality Community.

All IPRF documents may be refined in this way. For example, Lawson and Christensen combined Tumut and Tumbarumba OPs when they amalgamated and then reduced the activities thematically into eight dashboards, based on the services, covering all functions of Council (Lawson B. Christensen M 2016, p. 3). A similar refinement reduced the size of the planning documents in Rock Hill: 'bulky, intensely narrative quarterly reports were replaced with easy-to-browse semi-annual reports that included both quantitative and qualitative data' (Vehaun & Croskey 2014, p. 31).

Accountable Evaluation

Performance reports provide the City a formal opportunity to both evaluate and communicate its performance to the Mayor and City Council, City staff, Rock Hill residents, and all those interested in the well-being of Rock Hill.



QUALITY SERVICES

Goal: Provide high quality public safety and judicial services

Reduce the crime rate and improve the community's perception of safety.

•Respond to 70% of Priority One calls within 5 minutes	●	<i>76% of high priority calls were responded to within five minutes. This represents a significant improvement over previous years.</i>
•Reduce citywide property crime by 2% or more per year (41.2 per 1,000 or less) based on a five-year trend	●	<i>40.2 property crimes per 1,000 residents. This represents a 3% decrease in property crimes over the five year trend.</i>
•Reduce citywide violent crime by 1% or more (5.9 per 1,000 or less) based on a five-year trend	●	<i>6.5 violent crimes per 1,000 residents. This represents a 9% increase in violent crimes over the five year trend.</i>

Engage citizens and communicate current police initiatives and performance.

•Engage the public on a regular basis	●	<i>The RHPD held four "Coffee with a Cop" events throughout the City.</i>
•Inform the community about crime prevention and law enforcement activities by utilizing social media	●	<i>Over the year, RHPD tweeted 516 times and posted 276 on Facebook. Additionally, RHPD has live streamed two events on Periscope.</i>
•Attend community events and neighborhood meetings	●	<i>RHPD representatives attended 330 community events and neighborhood meetings.</i>

Spotlight: Knowledge Park

Fiscal Year 2016 has been a busy year in the development of Knowledge Park. Conceptual ideas have become formalized plans. These steps included the selection and signing of a master developer, Sora-Phelps Rock Hill. In partnership with Sora-Phelps Rock Hill, the City and other key stakeholders have diligently worked with community members to garner support and direction on the future of this site. As a result, City officials have signed both Development and Financing Agreements. These steps now lay the foundation for private development to occur. Within University Center alone, projected impacts include \$230 million of investment, 850 residents, and 1,100 permanent jobs. Future plans also include a hotel adjacent to an indoor sports facility, student housing, and office space created at the former Lowenstein Building. Although the tangible impacts of this work will not be seen for years to come, the momentum of this transformative project will drive Rock Hill's dynamic 21st century economy.



knowledge park
ROCK HILL, SC

Figure 11: Rock Hill City Council Performance Report Sample Pages (City of Rock Hill Council 2016, pp. 7-8)

The website contains the 'path to detail', ranking performance against other councils, and displaying easy-to-read, transparent information, such as these finance reports:

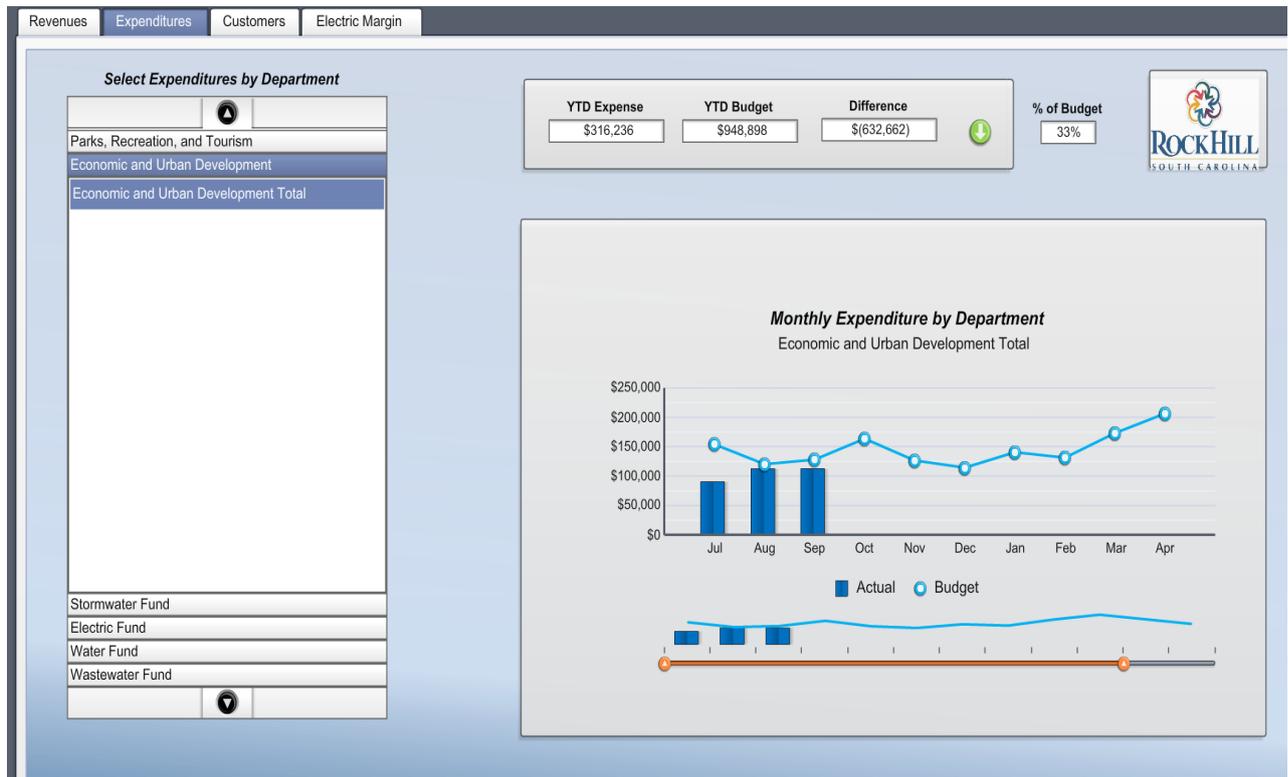


Figure 12: Rock Hill City Council financial dashboards; 'simple with a path to detail'

(City of Rock Hill Council 2016)

Lawson suggests 'cutting the cake' based on services in the DP as these are the 'principal activities' of Council ('Local Government Act' 1993). The service dashboards will be aligned with the CSP outcomes to which he then applies the '3 R's' formula:

- The **reason** council delivers it: to implement the strategies established by the CSP
- The **resources** available to deliver it under the resourcing strategy (RS) and
- The **results** being achieved so as to determine the effectiveness of the activity in achieving the strategic objectives (from the CSP) at which it is directed

(Lawson B. Christensen M 2016, p. 5).

The process of distilling and organising the information about Council's business improves understanding of the function of Local Government, and communication with Councillors and the Community. Any meaningful conversation about services and asset management has to involve the users since they are the ones that have expectations that it is 'fit for purpose'. Their judgement of its performance is based on 'their expectation and experience of the process of service delivery rather than upon outcomes alone. (Lovelock cited in Osborne, Radnor & Nasi 2013, p. 139). 'This means that influencing and understanding a user's expectations of a service is fundamental to their experience of and satisfaction with, that service – and that this experience then affects quite

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profoundly the effectiveness and impact of that service. (p. 139). So, for example, parks may change their usage over years to better cater for the demographic, perhaps removing a soccer field and replacing it with a community garden. The requirement for on-going engagement with the community is critical in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery.

Council staff members also need to be part of the story: they need to understand the '3 R's' (reason, resources, results) and how it relates to their service, as well as their accountabilities (Lawson B. Christensen M 2016, p. 9). The performance dashboards are a clear, user-friendly tool to assist with performance planning and reporting.

Level 3 of Vinzant and Vinzant's model is concerned with the Resourcing Strategy, which is beyond the scope of this paper, and so is level 4 which is concerned with 'control and evaluation processes' (Vinzant & Vinzant 1996, p. 141). However, the implementation of these levels, as well as the integration of strategic plans into everyday business practices and decision-making, is facilitated by the successful completion of the earlier levels of comprehensive strategic management levels (p. 141)

We're all in the same boat

The collaboration between the staff and the Councillors is critical to the success of the strategic management process and the definition of 'what is publicly valuable' (Moore & Khagram 2004; Ryan et al. 2015, p. 303). Research has shown that political actors need to be involved in Council's decision making to ensure public value and democracy. However, the research documents the challenges of engaging with the Councillors and influencing them to see the benefits of strategic thinking. This was confirmed in interviews with staff. Interaction depends on the nature of the pre-existing relationship between the staff and the councillors, the person(s) controlling the implementation process, whether councillors and staff are engaged in the process, and the level of understanding of legislated requirements (Bass 2012, p. 15). The lack of engagement in the process by the Councillors interviewed indicate that Coffs Harbour City Council administration is exerting 'too much influence over policy direction' (Marshall N & Sproats K 2000, p. 504). The challenge lies in developing mutual trust to share the view of public value, re-framing planning processes and creating frameworks of governance and mechanisms which facilitate Councillor engagement.

A staff member said that staff, Councillors and the community should be 'steering the ship' together: 'Staff are in the engine room, at least, the community should be informing the direction; and it should be the Councillors that are at the wheel..... At the moment I would suggest that the community's still at the port – doesn't even know that the ship's sailed; the councillors are trying to get into the engine room to get into the details of DA and bla bla, and actually it's the staff that's up there steering the ship. So actually, how do we turn that around?'

The new Local Government Act makes it clear that the Mayor and Councillors, with the General Manager, have clear roles to play in the strategic management process.

'Telling the story' and clarification of Council business in the DP, with SMART goals, will provide a more user-friendly business plan to which Councillor's may refer. Some Councillors suggested more information sessions at the beginning of the Council term, in addition to the formal induction, would help them better understand Council's business and processes. As the literature on leadership suggests, it's about developing trust and developing Hambleton's 'innovation zones' between the three actors: and on-going conversation between the community, councillors and the administration (2011, p. 17).

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Genuine engagement with the Councillors, as with the community, depends on the 'decision – space': 'the greater the decision space, the greater the potential for meaningful public participation. Decision-space is an important element that differentiates limited or traditional participation from more innovative and interactive participation' (Walker 2004, p. 119). A Councillor strategy based on the traditional IAP2 public participation spectrum (Inform – consult – involve – collaborate – empower) would ensure more clarity in their engagement (p. 118). As much as the Councillors have to adapt to Networked Community Governance, the staff also have to re-think their approach to planning.

For example, to reinforce community ownership of the CSP, Councillors' participation would be to listen to the community, as advocates of the community engagement process, and demonstrating civic leadership. They would play a more active and collaborative role in the decision space when developing the DP: The Council action plan for the 4-year term. Dialogue with Councillors and the community at all levels of the spectrum needs to be on-going and iterative to check understanding and gain feedback (Edwards 2012; Vehaun & Croskey 2014; Vinzant & Vinzant 1996).

Prior discusses 'optimal planning instruments' which can use and merge 'knowledges collected during the plan-making processes' (Prior 2010, p. 64). It is challenging to deal with different levels of knowledge and input and how to prioritise 'tacit/experiential knowledge of the local community [including Councillors] over the formal knowledge of planning experts'. In response to these concerns, Ashfield Council has developed a 'series of principles and analytical frameworks for constructing a coherent synthesis.' (p. 64)

There needs to be clear mechanisms and evidence-based adaptations in place for revisions of the DP which have Councillor and community input based on public value principles, but also 'top down' imperatives such as the State Plans and legislative requirements. Senior staff are seeking to form stronger links with State Government planning processes on a Regional and higher level. There needs to be robust discussions with NSW Government in order to align the communities' plans with the NSW Government priorities.

More support from NSW Government in the implementation of the IPRF is required to assist with some of the technical aspects of implementation and organisational reform, as well as the larger questions around fiscal and statutory autonomy, as documented in the Lyons Inquiry, and which would question the whole effectiveness of strategic management in the public realm.

Conclusion

The development of the DP from 2010 – 2016 in Coffs Harbour City Council highlighted some key issues for strategic management in NSW Local Government. The process could be likened to a large ship changing direction (Lawson 2014, p. 2), made more challenging when some crew members are not engaged in the process, and others are resisting the change. Some may be too busy dealing with the everyday processes of keeping the engine going, unaware of the order to reset the compass!

The Councillors did not feel that they were engaged in the process of developing the program, and did not see it as their 'go to' document. There was some confusion with the OP, which is not surprising, as it was reviewed on an annual basis, and did not function as a 4-year prospectus reflecting the Council term. There were no apparent mechanisms for including Council in the development of the DP or for proposing and approving amendments to the program. Under the Local Government Act and to achieve the goal of public value, decisions must reflect the community's aspirations and the responsibility must be shared by Councillors and staff.

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The presentation of the DP has changed and refined over the six-year period. It is now based on services and reflects the new administration structure. It has become clearer and progressively easier to read over time. The organisational changes are reflected in this document, including a service review, rate rises, two restructures and reorganisation of services reflecting the 'golden thread' of the strategic management documents.

Council has now launched a review of the CSP which will be conducted at the same time as the preparation of newly elected Council's DP – required to be submitted by 1 July 2017. Corporate Planners are not expecting any major changes in the DP this term (although it will be a four-year plan). However, once the CSP is completed, this will serve as a basis for an improved DP for the next Council term. The process demonstrates the misalignment of plans in the mandated Framework, and the necessity – documented in the research – for the strategic management process to be implemented over a period of four to ten years. The CHCC experience also demonstrates the requirement for on-going dialogue and reviews of documents to refine and distil the concepts, strategies, outputs and outcomes, whilst maintaining the 'golden thread' of the strategic management process. This is particularly the case when it involves a highly complex business such as local government.

Two main themes emerged from the research and the literature review. Firstly, it's about 'telling the story' in a way that engages all stakeholders, and conveys the ideas in a simple, easy-to-browse format with 'a path to the detail'. The 'place shaping' approach is a meaningful and visionary approach to setting outcomes, to which Council activities and services can be aligned. It complements the Networked Community Governance approach and is an essential part of modern democracy. Practitioners operating independently of each other have produced infographics and dashboards to summarise complex operations. The use of information technology is useful, allowing users to drill down to a level of detail that meets their needs and presents exciting opportunities for an interactive interface with the community,

The second theme refers again to the nautical theme: 'We're all in the same boat'. Research has shown that political actors need to be involved in Council's decision making to ensure public value and democracy. The research documents the challenges of engaging with the Councillors and influencing them to see the benefits of strategic thinking. It requires as much planning as community engagement, perhaps using similar tools such as the IAP2 community engagement spectrum, to include Councillors in the 'decision-space'.

Further Research

A useful subject for direct action research would be to work with Councillors over their four year term to develop their strategic thinking and strategies for 'symbiotic' collaboration with the administration and the community.

Other questions which could be the subject of further research include:

- Organisational change and the alignment of the IPRF Resourcing Strategy
- The debate around the fiscal imbalance in the local government sector, and the question of whether the redressing of this balance would facilitate strategic management.
- The role of the State Government in the IPRF.
- Innovation and collaboration in relation to the IPRF and local government.

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A draft article has been appended summarising the findings of this dissertation with a view that the information could be shared with the Local Government sector (see Appendix five).

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Appendix One: List of projects from the DP

The program of environmental works for 2013/2014 is as follows:

Projects	Amount
Bush Regeneration	201,571
Environmental Weeds	103,000
Conservation & Sustainable Management of Biodiversity	209,000
Environmental Levy Coordination	64,247
Boambee Beach Bush Regeneration – North of Deep Sea Release Pipeline	19,992
Botanic Garden Education Program	16,000
Coffs Ambassadors Interpretive Tours	43,509
Coffs Harbour Community Seed Bank Network	9,982
Coffs Jetty Foreshore Reserve Follow-up Chemical Weeding	19,992
Coffs Harbour Vertebrate Pest Management Strategy Implementation	14,000
Darkum Headland Access Rehabilitation	50,000
Darrunda Wajaarr Repair to Country Priority Sites	19,900
Green Schools Sustainability Fund	29,500
Impacts on Fresh Water Systems	2,000
Implementation of Coffs Harbour Koala Plan of Management	20,000
Koala / Wildlife Corridor - Bakker Drive Bonville Stage 1	5,260
Orara River Rehabilitation Project	215,500
Our Living Coast Sustainable Festival	29,000
Shorebirds of the Coffs Coast – Signage & Brochures	4,391
Strategic Planning - Biodiversity	40,000

Appendix Two: Research questions: interview and document search

Questionnaire for Elected Members*

1. Describe your experience in Local Government

Has the role of Councillor changed since you were first elected?

2. What is your role in relation to the community with the new emphasis on network governance?
3. How do you view your role in relation to the community? To the administration?
4. What do you know about the Integrated Planning and Reporting requirements for NSW Local Government?
5. What do you know about the DP?
6. Describe Council's response to the first DP
7. To what extent were you involved in the development of the Community Strategic Plan?
8. To what extent were you involved in the development of the 2012 CHCC DP.
9. How much do you think the DP represented the wishes of
 - a. The community
 - b. The Councillors
10. What actions listed in the 2012 DP were completed during the 2012-2016 term of office?
11. As a Councillor, what changes did you observe in Council as a response to the IP&R legislation?
12. The IP&R guidelines describe the DP as the 'go to' document for Council. Do you agree? Please say why.
13. What still needs to be done?

Questionnaire for Staff Members*

1. What is your role in Coffs Harbour City Council?
2. What do you know about the Integrated Planning and Reporting requirements* for NSW Local Government?
3. What do you know about the DP?
4. What is the role of the Councillor in relation to the new emphasis on network governance?
5. Describe Council's response to the development of the DPs so far
6. To what extent were you involved in the development of the 2010 (2014) CHCC DP.
7. How much do you think the DP represented the wishes of
 - a. The community
 - b. The Councillors
8. How were the links made to the CSP?
9. How was the DP developed?
10. What was the process for selecting projects for the DP?
11. What was the process for amending the DP?
12. What was the role of the Elected Members in the development of the DP?
13. (What changes were made in the revised versions of the DPs in 2012, 2013 and 2014
14. How was the CSP changed in 2013?_

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15. What actions listed in the 2010 DP were completed during the 2010 – 2014 term of office?
16. What were the challenges you faced during the development of the DP?
17. What were the successes of the DP?
18. What are your views of the DP, and how could it be improved?
19. What organisational changes has Council instigated as a response to the IP&R legislation?
20. Is the DP the 'go to' document for Council? Why?
21. Why do Councillors request projects which are not in the DP or OP?
22. How could the approach to the DP be changed to ensure that Councillors are satisfied that it contains their 'wishlists'?
23. What still needs to be done?

**Note that these were semi-structured interviews. Participants were encouraged to add extra comments, and the researcher added more questions in response to comments, the literature review and document search.*

Document Search Enquiry

- 1 What is the link between the Community Strategic Plan and the DP
- 2 Review the DPs in relation to the Office of Local Government DP guidelines, particularly the Essential Elements.
- 3 What changes are made to the revised versions of the DP in 2012, 2013 and 2014
- 4 How were the Councillors' priorities included in the DP
- 5 Did the 6 month assessments provide feedback to the Councillors and the community regarding their priorities?
- 6 Is there a list of changes that were made to the revised DPs?
- 7 What was the basis for selection of priorities in the DP?
- 8 What was the mechanism for amendments to the DP to add projects that demand attention?
- 9 What are the general learnings from the first version of the DP?
- 10 What are the learnings for the sector?
- 11 What is the measure for valuing DP projects and amendments (public value)?
- 12 Were the Councillors given information about the IP&R and the DP during their induction?
- 13 Does the DP contain references to service reviews?

Essential Elements from the Office of Local Government DP Guidelines

1. Each council must prepare and adopt its DP by 30 June in the year following a local government ordinary election.
2. The DP must directly address the objectives and strategies of the Community Strategic Plan and identify specific actions that the council will undertake in response to the objectives and strategies.
3. The DP must address the full range of council operations.
4. The DP must inform and be informed by, the Resourcing Strategy.
5. Financial estimates of the income and expenditure for the four year period must be included in the DP, in line with its activities.
6. The DP must allocate responsibilities for each action or set of actions

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7. The council must consider the priorities and expected levels of service expressed by the community during the engagement process for the Community Strategic Plan when preparing its DP.
8. The draft DP must be exhibited for public comment for a minimum of 28 days and public submissions considered before the final program is adopted.
9. The council must review its DP each year, before preparing the OP.
10. The council may choose to roll the DP forward beyond its elected term to enable effective forward planning, provided it is consistent with its Community Strategic Plan and Resourcing Strategy. Where a council does this, it is still required to report on the implementation of its initial DP. The new council is also still required to prepare a new DP for its electoral term as per Essential Element 3.1.
11. Where an amendment to the DP is proposed, it must be included in a council business paper which outlines the reasons for the amendment and be tabled and resolved to be noted at that meeting and considered by the council at its next meeting.
12. Where significant amendments are proposed, the Program must be re-exhibited as per Essential Element 3.8. (Office of Local Government 2016b)

Appendix Three: Ethics Documents



Project Information Sheet

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the research project

It's all in the Delivery: an Exploratory Case Study Focusing on the Coffs Harbour City Council Delivery Program.

The research will be conducted by Anne Shearer as part of her Masters in Local Government studies at the University of Technology Sydney

The purpose of the research is to review the development of the first mandated Delivery Program prepared by Coffs Harbour City Council as part of the mandatory NSW Integrated Planning and Reporting requirements. The case study will build on existing research about strategic planning and exploring how the Delivery Program was formulated as well as the changing roles of the administration, Elected Members and the Community in the strategic management process

Your participation will involve an interview and will take approximately 1-2 hours of your time.

You can contact Ron Woods if you have any concerns about the research. You are also free to withdraw your participation from this research project at any time without giving a reason.

Ron Woods tel: 9514 1112; Ronald.Woods@uts.edu.au can answer your questions about the project.

You will be given the opportunity, prior to publication, to check any text that is to be used in the published report that identifies you or your organisation to ensure the meaning was interpreted correctly by the researcher.

Note:

Studies undertaken by the Centre for Local Government and Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government have been granted program approval by the University of Technology, Sydney, and Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any aspect of your participation in this research you may contact Su Fei Tan T: 9514 8223 or the UTS Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officer, [tel: 02 9514-9772]. Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.

Consent Form

I *[participant's name]*

agree to participate in the research project

It's all in the Delivery: an Exploratory Case Study Focusing on the Coffs Harbour City Council Delivery Program.

The research is being conducted by Anne Shearer as part of her Masters in Local Government studies at the University of Technology, Sydney

I understand that the purpose of the research is to review the development of the Delivery Program 2013-2016 prepared by Coffs Harbour City Council as part of the NSW Integrated Planning and Reporting requirements. The case study will build on existing research about strategic planning and exploring how the Delivery Program was formulated as well as the changing roles of the administration, Elected Members and the Community in the strategic management process

I understand that my participation will involve an interview and will take approximately 1-2 hours of my time.

I am aware that I can contact Ron Woods T: 9514 1112 if I have any concerns about the research. I also understand that I am free to withdraw my participation from this research project at any time I wish without giving a reason.

I agree that Anne Shearer has answered all my questions fully and clearly.

I understand that I will be given the opportunity, prior to publication, to check any text that is to be used in the published report that identifies me or my organization to ensure the meaning was interpreted correctly by the researcher.

Signature Date

Note:

Studies undertaken by the Centre for Local Government (CLG) and the Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government (ACELG) have been granted program approval by the University of Technology, Sydney, and Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any aspect of your participation in this research you may contact SuFei Tan T: 02 9514 8223 email: sufei.tan@uts.edu.au or the UTS Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officer, [tel: 02 9514 9772]. Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.

Title of research project: It's all in the Delivery: an Exploratory Case Study Focusing on the Coffs Harbour City Council Delivery Program.

ACELG ETHICS PROGRAM FORM

Title of research project: It's all in the Delivery: an Exploratory Case Study Focusing on the Coffs Harbour City Council Delivery Program.

Chief Investigator: Anne Shearer

Additional researchers: none

Funding body (including client): not applicable

Project start date: 11 April 2016

Is your project classified as research for reporting purposes?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No → No need to use this form
Does the research involve humans?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No → No need to use this form
Does the research support evidence-based policy formulation, promote informed debate on key policy issues and help address major challenges facing the local government sector?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No → Need to go through the HREC
What method/s does your proposed project use?	Please describe briefly, including description of participants:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Focus groups		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interviews (structured and semi-structured)	Interviews with Coffs Harbour City Council (CHCC) staff and elected members – some who have since left CHCC.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Analysis of secondary data		
<input type="checkbox"/> Surveys		
<input type="checkbox"/> Deliberative panels		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Desktop literature reviews	Reviewing the body of literature about strategic management, in particular implementation of	

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Anne Shearer

Student Number: 10497283

November 2016

	strategies and the political / administrative divide.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other → Need to go through the HREC		
Does the research target any members of the following groups? <input type="checkbox"/> Women who are pregnant and the human foetus <input type="checkbox"/> Children and young people (clarify definition) <input type="checkbox"/> People in dependent or unequal relationships <input type="checkbox"/> People highly dependent upon medical care who may be unable to give consent <input type="checkbox"/> People with a cognitive impairment, an intellectual disability or a mental illness <input type="checkbox"/> People who may be involved in illegal activities <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples <input type="checkbox"/> People in other countries.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes → Need to go through the HREC

Please complete the following ethics checklist and submit your application for ethics approval to the Delegated Approving Officer.

- Are all researchers competent and familiar with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, the UTS Privacy Principles, the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007 (Updated December 2013) and the UTS Ethical Conduct of Research Policy?
- Have you developed appropriate Project Information sheets and Consent forms for all participants (or alternatives when methods are not undertaken face to face)?
- Does your project plan detail whether the data collected will be anonymised and at what stage?
- Have you identified appropriate storage for the data (physical and electronic)?

APPROVAL

- Ethics form and checklist reviewed
- Any issues discussed with the chief investigator (please note below)
- Approved on [Click here to enter a date.](#) by [Click here to enter text.](#) (Delegated Approving Officer)

Notes:

13/5/16

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[Click here to enter text.](#)

Appendix four: Extracts from the Local Government Amendment (Governance and Planning) Bill

Section 8A

(2) **Decision-making**

The following principles apply to decision-making by councils (subject to any other applicable law):

- (a) Councils should recognise diverse local community needs and interests.
- (b) Councils should consider social justice principles.
- (c) Councils should consider the long term and cumulative effects of actions on future generations.
- (d) Councils should consider the principles of ecologically sustainable development.
- (e) Council decision-making should be transparent and decision-makers are to be accountable for decisions and omissions.

(3) **Community participation**

Councils should actively engage with their local communities, through the use of the integrated planning and reporting framework and other measures.

8a 1(c): Councils should plan strategically, using the integrated planning and reporting framework, for the provision of effective and efficient services and regulation to meet the diverse needs of the local community.

(d) Councils should apply the integrated planning and reporting framework in carrying out their functions so as to achieve desired outcomes and continuous improvements (NSW Government 2016, p. 3)

8C Integrated planning and reporting principles that apply to councils

The following principles for strategic planning apply to the development of the integrated planning and reporting framework by councils:

- (a) Councils should identify and prioritise key local community needs and aspirations and consider regional priorities.
- (b) Councils should identify strategic goals to meet those needs and aspirations.
- (c) Councils should develop activities, and prioritise actions, to work towards the strategic goals.
- (d) Councils should ensure that the strategic goals and activities to work towards them may be achieved within council resources.
- (e) Councils should regularly review and evaluate progress towards achieving strategic goals.

- (f) Councils should maintain an integrated approach to planning, delivering, monitoring and reporting on strategic goals.
- (g) Councils should collaborate with others to maximise achievement of strategic goals.
- (h) Councils should manage risks to the local community or area or to the council effectively and proactively.
- (i) Councils should make appropriate evidence-based adaptations to meet changing needs and circumstances.

In the amended Act, the Mayor's role in relation to strategic planning is:

- to ensure the timely development and adoption of the strategic plans, programs and policies of the council,
- to promote the effective and consistent implementation of the strategic plans, programs and policies of the council,
- to promote partnerships between the council and key stakeholders,
- to advise, consult with and provide strategic direction to the general manager in relation to the policies of the council,

and the role of the Councillor among other requirements, is to:

- participate in the development of the integrated planning and reporting framework,
- to represent the collective interests of residents, ratepayers and the local community,

and

- to facilitate communication between the local community and the governing body

The role of the General Manager is:

- to advise the mayor and the governing body on the development and implementation of the strategic plans, programs, strategies and policies of the council,
- to advise the mayor and the governing body on the appropriate form of community consultation on the strategic plans, programs, strategies and policies of the council and other matters related to the council,
- to prepare, in consultation with the mayor and the governing body, the council's community strategic plan, community engagement strategy, resourcing strategy, DP, OP and annual report.

402A

Community engagement strategy: A council must establish and implement a strategy (called its community engagement strategy) for engagement with the local community when developing its plans, policies and programs and for the purpose of determining its activities (other than routine administrative matters).

Resourcing strategy: A council must have a long-term strategy (called its resourcing strategy) for the provision of the resources required to perform its functions (including implementing the strategies set out in the community strategic plan).

404 DP

(1) A council must have a program (called its DP) detailing the principal activities to be undertaken by the council to perform its functions (including implementing the strategies set out in the community strategic plan) within the resources available under the resourcing strategy.

(2) The council must establish a new DP after each ordinary election of councillors to cover the principal activities of the council for the 4-year period commencing on 1 July following the election.

405 OP

A council must have a plan (called its OP) that is adopted before the beginning of each year and details the activities to be engaged in by the council during the year as part of the DP covering that year.

406 Integrated planning and reporting guidelines

(1) The regulations may make provision for or with respect to integrated planning and reporting guidelines (referred to in this Chapter as the guidelines) to be complied with by councils.

(2) Without limiting subsection

(1), the regulations may impose requirements in connection with the preparation, development, consultation on and review of, and the contents of, the community strategic plan, resourcing strategy, DP, OP, community engagement strategy, annual report and environment reporting of a council.

Appendix Five: Short Article “It’s All in the Delivery”

It’s All in the Delivery

Public Value

Over the last few decades, many of the reforms in Local Government were implemented to make Councils more accountable and efficient, adopting ‘New Public Management’ practices. This has benefited the operation of public authorities, although there is one fundamental difference between public and private organisations: private business can immediately assess the effectiveness of their goods and services by the profit they make. Public authorities produce goods and services. The value of these to the public may be evaluated and assessed, but it is a slow, expensive process and causation can be difficult to prove. So how does a Council prioritise the delivery of goods and services, and how can they know the outcomes will provide public value?

For Councils, the public has ‘first claim on being able to say what should be valued and what interests should be satisfied in the operation’ because it ‘pays for an enterprise and gives up some of its freedom for it to succeed’ (Moore 1995, p. 301). Moore goes on to say that the ‘value of some government organisations lies not in the satisfaction of clients they meet at the business end of their operations, but in the satisfaction that citizens and politicians and judicial overseers take in the overall fairness of the organisation’s operations’ (Moore 1995, p. 302). Fairness underpins much of the debate about Council’s outputs and operations compared to the cost (the rates) and is probably the best assessment of whether it has achieved public value.

The question of what should be collectively produced with public resources is ‘analytically unresolvable’, so ‘responding to politics and accepting its demands is as fundamental to public managers as responding to the market is to private managers.Thus, it is in learning to read, respond to, and help to shape political aspirations that managers can learn to create public value’ (Moore 1995, p. 303).

The Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework

The Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework (IPRF) is a tool for NSW Councils to implement long term strategic management planning. It comprises the Community Strategic Plan, The Delivery Program, the Operational Plan and the associated Resourcing Strategy. Strategic management, defined by Bryson et al. (2010), is ‘the appropriate and reasonable integration of strategic planning and implementation across an organization (or other entity) in an ongoing way to enhance the fulfilment of its mission, meeting of mandates, continuous learning, and sustained creation of public value’ (cited in Edwards 2012, p. 9). Underpinning the process are the decision-making guidelines including the recognition of ‘diverse local community needs and interests’, ‘social justice principles’, the long term and cumulative effects of actions on future generations’, the principles of ecologically sustainable development’. ‘Decision-making should be transparent and decision-makers are to be accountable for decisions *and omissions*’ (my italics) (NSW Government 2016)

Extensive and on-going community engagement is required in formulating the long term strategic plan. Council is custodian of the plan, owned by the community. Many agencies and organisations could have responsibility for implementing the strategies in the plan. The plan is the ‘agent of the collective’ (Moore 1995, p. 302), reflecting their aspirations.

The subject of my dissertation completed in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Local Government at UTS was 'It's All in the Delivery: an exploratory case study focusing on the Appleby* Council Delivery Program (DP)'. The case study focussed on the content of the program, what the priorities are and the three main actors involved in the process: the Councillors, the staff and the community.

The DP sits in the implementation phase of the IPRF: 'a single point of reference and accountability, where key elements of the Community Strategic Plan, Resourcing Strategy and Operational Plan come together' (Bass 2012, p. 21). It is challenging to turn 'strategies ... into actions' (Office of Local Government 2016a). Despite being the 'go to' document for Councillors - the 'kernel' of Council's strategic management process, containing 'all Council's activities' that are 'doable' from the strategic plan, my study found that Councillors were not engaged in the process, and were unaware of the purpose of the DP.

This paper is a summary of some of the main points and guidelines from the dissertation which may assist Council's in their strategic planning and implementation.

Research shows that the development of successful strategic management documents could take between four and ten years, and several iterations. Vinzant and Vinzant's model for successful implementation lists several stages to the process:

- the education and development of the Senior Management Team
- the identification of desired outputs and outcomes by Senior Executives [which includes the strategic plan, the mission and vision and the budgets linked to the SP].
- A pre-implementation assessment of internal and external factors
- A review and modification of desired outputs and outcomes to align the organisational capacity with its aspirations
- Process design tailored to the unique circumstances of a particular organisation
- Capacity building modifications to be able to produce the services and/or products. This may involve structural changes, staff, information systems and reports and so on.

(pp. 149 - 53)

Place Shaping.

The seminal report from the UK Lyons Enquiry stated the Local Government is 'well placed' to play the convening role in representing matters of greatest importance to local people and influencing the appropriate service or function. It requires the 'joining-up of resources and activities [and] a leadership and influencing role'(Lyons 2007, p. 3)

The aim of the 2016 amendments to the Local Government Act 'to provide guidance to enable Councils to carry out their functions in a way that facilitates local communities that are strong, healthy and prosperous'(NSW Government 2016, p. 3) echoes Lyons' definition of place-shaping as 'the creative use of powers and influences to promote the general well-being of a community and its citizens' (cited in Pillora & McKinlay 2011, p. 16). It is more meaningful for the community and Councillors if they have a vision of their ideal 'place', rather than a list of services and broad motherhood statements or aims. The content of the Delivery Program would have more meaning for Councillors and the local community if it was based on building local identity and places. It is a visionary approach to setting outcomes, to which Council activities and services can be aligned.

**Council name has been changed*

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The information can be presented in a simple format with options to drill down to more detail. Technology lends itself to this presentation and is used effectively to present the [NSW Government State Plan](#)

Councils implementing strategic planning have often found it benefits their organisation. Local Government managers believe that strategic planning 'improved performance, in terms of financial conditions, operations management and delivering services' (Poister and Streib cited in Edwards 2012, p. 42) .

Telling the Story

A theme that has emerged from the research and the literature is the need for a 'distillation and evaluation of options', for greater specificity and refinement (Prior 2010; Sansom 2013; Vehaun & Croskey 2014; Worrall 1998) – a less is more approach. Lawson seeks to simplify the 'immense detail required for councils to do comprehensive business planning appropriately by sharing a story about 'where we are, where we want to be and how we'll get there'. His story is framed in 'Service Dashboards' making 'services the 'common thread'; telling the story simply 'with a path to the detail (in various supporting policies, plans and strategies as well as a priority projects list that means the story is tangible). The story 'meaningfully relates outputs (DP) to outcomes (CSP) in a way that facilitates an ongoing conversation in local communities. So therefore, It's all in the delivery!

All in the Same Boat

The lack of engagement in the process by the Councillors interviewed indicate that Appleby Council administration is exerting 'too much influence over policy direction' (Marshall N & Sproats K 2000, p. 504). The challenge lies in developing mutual trust and transformational leadership skills to share the view of public value, re-framing planning processes and creating frameworks of governance and mechanisms which facilitate Councillor engagement.

A staff member commented that the administration, Councillors and the community should be 'steering the ship' together: 'Staff are in the engine room, at least, the community should be informing the direction; and it should be the Councillors that are at the wheel..... At the moment I would suggest that the community's still at the port – doesn't even know that the ship's sailed; the councillors are trying to get into the engine room to get into the details of DA and bla bla, and actually it's the staff that's up there steering the ship. So actually, how do we turn that around?

New challenges arise with the emergence of community governance such as blending expert knowledge with 'emerging knowledge' from the community as well as determining the role of politicians within this process. Some Councils, such as Ashfield, are developing a 'series of principles and analytical frameworks for constructing a coherent synthesis'. Of particular interest is the assertion that the 'experiences and knowledge of the service user' is 'at the heart of effective public service design and delivery' (Osborne, Radnor & Nasi 2013, p. 146). Moore and Khagram state that having a view of public value is not enough: 'others have to share it' (2004, p. 9), as in the governing body that legitimizes and supports public value, and the community (p. 9).

Both Councillors and the administration are critical in the implementation of strategic management processes (Hambleton 2000; Marshall N & Sproats K 2000; Svara 2008). Hambleton describes civic leadership as 'place-based' leadership (Hambleton 2011, p. 14). He provides a model demonstrating the three 'realms of civic leadership' and their interaction (p. 17):

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The areas of overlap in the model are ‘innovation zones’ (p. 17). If mishandled these could be areas for conflict and power plays. Effective leadership can exploit these innovation zones with education and effective communication. ‘This, in turn, requires emotional sensitivity and an awareness of the importance of various sources of community identity’ (p. 17).

Genuine engagement with the Councillors, as with the community, depends on the ‘decision – space’: ‘the greater the decision space, the greater the potential for meaningful public participation. Decision-space is an important element that differentiates limited or traditional participation from more innovative and interactive participation’ (Walker 2004, p. 119). A Councillor strategy based on the traditional IAP2 public participation spectrum (Inform – consult – involve – collaborate – empower) would ensure more clarity in their engagement (p. 118).

To continue the nautical theme, Council can be compared to a large ship trying to turn around (Lawson 2014, p. 2). made more challenging when some crew members are not engaged in the process, and others are resisting the change. Some may be too busy dealing with the everyday processes of keeping the engine going, unaware of the order to reset the compass! The strategic management process is a considerable challenge, but can pay dividends if all parties are working together to reach the destination set by the community.

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