

13 REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

13.1 Bi-monthly update: Strategic Finance & Governance Improvement Plan - February 2025

CSP Objective: Outcome 5.3: Council has the right structures, technology, processes and precedures to support delivering for the public.

CSP Strategy: 5.3.2 Council will deliver the actions outlined in the State of the Organisation Report and the Strategic Improvement Plan

Delivery Program: 5.3.2.1 Continuous improvement is embedded in the organisation through delivery of the Strategic Improvement Plan priorities annually.

Item 13.1

Summary

In response to receiving the varied Performance Improvement Order (PIO), Council adopted their Strategic Finance and Governance Improvement Plan at the extraordinary June 2024 meeting.

The varied PIO requires Council to provide bi-monthly reports to both the elected body and the NSW Office of Local Government (OLG) on the status of the implementation of all actions in the PIO.

To satisfy this requirement, a copy of the Strategic Finance and Government Improvement Plan was provided to the OLG following the extraordinary June 2024 meeting.

Bi-monthly implementation status reports have now commenced and will be provided to the elected body and the OLG August, October, December, February, April and June.

Financial implication

Some of the work required to be undertaken has been included in the draft 2024-25FY budget as there are costs associated with completing the activities of the updated Plan.

Risk implication

There is a risk that if Council does not comply with the PIO and improve its operating position that further ministerial interventions will be imposed. Continuing to fail to meet Office of Local Government benchmarks for financial sustainability (performance ratios) is not an acceptable outcome.

There is also a risk that Council will perceive an opportunity to make different decisions or make new commitments beyond what Council is capable of accommodating given the status and the requirements of the PIO. This PIO is proposed to manage that risk by spanning this and the future Council.

Policy

Local Government Act 1993

Report of the Chief Executive Officer

13.1 Bi-monthly update: Strategic Finance & Governance Improvement Plan - February 2025 (cont)

Consultation (internal)

Councillors, Chairs and members of the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee, the Finance Advisory Committee, and the Blue Haven Advisory Committee were informed of the intention to vary the PIO via the supplementary report at the Extraordinary Council meeting on 1 February 2024.

The following staff were consulted with and provided input into the preparation of the attached 'Strategic Finance and Governance Improvement Plan':

- Executive Leadership Team.
- Implementation Team.
- Manager Communications and Engagement.
- Human Resources Coordinator.
- Strategic Planning Coordinator.

Communication/Community engagement

The Strategic Finance and Governance Improvement Plan is operational in nature and therefore there is no need to seek community feedback on its content. However, to ensure ongoing transparency copies of the bi-monthly status reports are published on a dedicated page of Council's website.

Attachments

- 1 Attachment 1 Strategic Finance and Governance Improvement Plan_updated Feb 2025 [↓](#)

Enclosures

Nil

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Receive the Strategic Finance & Governance Improvement Plan – Implementation Status Update – February 2025.
2. Note that the Chief Executive Officer, through the Implementation Team, will:
 - a. provide a copy of the Implementation Status Update – February 2025 to the NSW Office of Local Government, and
 - b. place a copy of the Implementation Status Update - February on Council's website.

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Report of the Chief Executive Officer

13.1 Bi-monthly update: Strategic Finance & Governance Improvement Plan -
February 2025 (cont)

A copy of the varied PIO was placed on Council's website in accordance with section 438D(2) of the *Local Government Act 1993*.

The adopted Strategic Finance and Government Improvement Plan has been prepared to fulfil the requirements of the varied PIO. This Plan responds directly to the requirements of the varied PIO, including compliance with the cycle of reporting to Council and the Office of Local Government.

At all times, the Strategic Finance and Government Improvement Plan demonstrates how each of its actions relates to the actions of the varied PIO. The Plan incorporates the matters identified by the Audit Office of NSW's Management Letter for the 2022-23 Financial Year Audit, the 2024 Todd Hopwood 'Report on Review of Kiama Municipal Council Governance Arrangements' and Council's submission to the Federal Government's inquiry into Local Government sustainability.

The Strategic Finance and Government Improvement Plan provides the background for Council's current financial situation, defines financial sustainability and identifies the following eight levers for achieving financial sustainability:

1. Sustainable cash reserves and responsible borrowing
2. Optimised revenue opportunities
3. Well planned assets
4. Reviewed and efficient service landscape
5. Investment in transformation
6. Robust financial management
7. Prioritising advocacy and partnerships
8. Ensure good governance.

The 40 or so outstanding SIP2 actions have been incorporated into the attached Plan. Where possible these actions have been consolidated and rationalised. Rather than focusing on operational outputs, the updated Plan seeks to identify and establish organisational outcomes for achieving financial sustainability.

In a similar fashion to Council's Delivery Program and Operational Plan, each Strategic Finance and Government Improvement Plan action has been assigned to an individual business unit.

Reporting and transparency

The varied PIO requires Council to provide bi-monthly reports to both the elected body and the NSW Office of Local Government (OLG) on the status of the implementation of all actions in the PIO. The Implementation Team will continue to liaise with the OLG on a regular basis to ensure the State Government is comfortable with the approaches being taken to achieve financial sustainability.

All Strategic Finance and Governance Improvement Plan actions have been loaded into Council's Pulse software solution to enable regular reporting to occur within a regulated system rather than via excel spreadsheets.

Report of the Chief Executive Officer

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February 2025 (cont)

Some actions require the preparation of new/updated Council policies, reviewing level of services, reviewing operating models and master planning key catalyst sites. Council will undertake community consultation process, in line with the adopted Community Engagement Strategy, for these projects.

Council is clear on the actions it will take over the next financial year to move towards financial sustainability. Actions for years 2 and 3 are somewhat unclear at this stage, given the evolving nature of Council's financial situation and its progression of the Strategic Finance and Governance Improvement Plan actions. It is therefore proposed that the Strategic Finance and Governance Improvement Plan will be reviewed and updated in the next quarter. As some actions are completed, consequently actions may arise.

February 2025 actions update

The Strategic Finance and Governance Improvement Plan was reported to Council and the OLG in December 2024.

The varied PIO also requires monthly reports on the Council's financial position to be reported to the elected body. This report is the progress on all other actions of this Plan that need to be reported to the elected body bi-monthly.

Significant actions have occurred over the last two months, the following actions have been completed:

- Grant funding applied for the masterplanning for the Kiama Sports precinct. Preliminary concepts for the depots have been developed.
- Catalyst site program and options delivered on paper, a councillor workshop to be scheduled.
- The project management framework has now been completed and has commenced testing with three separate projects at various phases.
- The CEOs of the neighbouring Council's agreed to share benchmarking information and data as part of the service review collaboration between the Council's.
- The 4-year strategic internal audit plan was approved by AIRC. The plan addresses Council's strategic risk.

Attachment 1 outlines that significant actions have been completed since the Strategic Finance and Governance Improvement Plan was endorsed in June 2024.

To ensure ongoing transparency copies of the bi-monthly status reports will be published on a dedicated page of Council's website.

Strategic Finance Governance Improvement Plan

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action cod	Action	Progress to dat	Progress Comments
IP.1.1	Develop a Cash Reserves Policy to establish a minimum cash position.	100	Restricted Funds Policy adopted by Council at their Ordinary June 2024 meeting
IP.1.2	Establish following reserves: • Restricted reserve to meet the cost of replacement/renewal of Blue Haven Terralong assets	100	Internal restricted reserve commenced July 2024 for major capital works. Amount based on deemed depreciation amount.
IP.1.3	Ongoing annual investment in identified cash reserves	0	Not due
IP.1.4	Develop a Borrowing Policy based on sound, long-term financial management principles.	0	Not due
IP.1.5	Continue to pursue grant funding with low exposure to residual/recurrent expenditure or growth in depreciation/renewal	70	Significant work has been reviewed and completed - this is part of the business as usual for the grants officer
IP.1.6	Nominate estimated costs and distribution of proceeds of sales of property resolved to divest (liquidity plan schedule).	0	Not due
IP.2.1	Develop Pricing Policy for fees and charges, including applying user pays principles where it is appropriate to do so	0	Not due
IP.2.2	Utilising Planning Agreements or site-specific Section 7.11 Contribution Plans, continue to pursue developer funding, including in perpetuity funding, to mitigate the financial burden on Council.	35	Developers are being encouraged to utilise Planning Agreements for new urban release areas through scoping proposals. The use of site specific Section 7.11 Contribution Plans will be further considered as part of the Growth and Housing Strategy development.
IP.2.3	Prepare a Parking Strategy to introduce paid parking for certain areas of the Municipality	15	Financial data obtained from regional NSW council on implementation and operational costs of paid parking. Data is being reviewed internally.
IP.3.1	Review existing Asset Management Policy and prepare and adopt an improvement plan to ensure Policy is contemporary and aligned with IP&R Guidelines.	40	The recently formed Asset Management Steering Committee has agreed this is a priority with the current target date for adoption by Council being by end April 2025
IP.3.2	As part of preparing next Community Strategic Plan, review and update Asset Management Strategy to incorporate contemporary Asset Management Policy.	5	Once the AM Policy has been adopted by Council (April 2025) the AM Strategy will be reviewed
IP.3.3	Commence review of individual Asset Management Plans to include forward maintenance and renewal requirements for individual asset types.	0	The AMSC has reviewed this item and agreed the templates will be updated in 2025 however completion of all elements of all AMPs is a longer term action - timings and prioritisation of this are to be reviewed by AMSC in early 2025

Strategic Finance Governance Improvement Plan

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Action cod	Action	Progress to dat	Progress Comments
IP.3.4	Complete and make public a dilapidation/building report for Terralong and Havilah	45	Council has received a preliminary building assessment report for its Blue Haven Terralong assets. Council is now seeking the skills of a suitably qualified person/s to review and undertake a financial analysis of this building assessment report with the objectives to: •Confirm accuracy of preliminary building assessment report against the relevant requirements of National Construction Code and the Aged Care Act 1997 (C'with), the Retirement Villages Act 1999 and the Retirement Villages Regulation 2017 •Determine the cost of undertaking the required works required to ensure the Blue Haven Terralong assets comply with the requirements of above listed requirements, •Determine the appropriate maintenance fees for Blue Haven Terralong residents considering the above objectives
IP.3.6	Complete Plan of Management for Blue Haven Terralong, including, examining options to retain and refurbish Terralong to conform with contemporary independent living units	0	Not due
IP.3.7	Prepare business cases and masterplans to identify revenue opportunities associated with the following catalyst sites: • Kiama Sports Precinct, including Kiama Leisure Centre • Havilah Place • 11 Manning Street • Council's Works Depot • Council's Waste Depot • Spring Creek	50	Grant funding applied for the masterplanning for the Kiama Sports precinct. Preliminary concepts for the depots have been developed. Catalyst site program and options delivered on paper, councillor workshop scheduled for March.
IP.3.8	Update and finalise Property Plan including reviewing existing revenue generated by each property, current financial performance and potential for growth for each property, and underperforming properties.	60	The Property Plan/ Strategy is being reviewed internally with a plan to presented to Council in February 2025.
IP.4.1	Prepare and adopt a Continuous Improvement Framework, including the identification of services to be reviewed in Years 1, 2 and 3	100	The framework developed and consultation has occurred, the framework is currently being reviewed by ELT
IP.4.2	Hold a Service Review Think Tank to consistently determine the key priorities for each service within the Council's budgetary constraints.	100	Completed. Held in September 2024
IP.4.3	Develop an actions matrix to identify which actions of the completed service reviews should be prioritised, based on risks, costs and timeframes and to identify quick wins.	100	Completed.

action cod	Action	Progress to dat	Progress Comments
IP.5.1	Develop a Technology One Roadmap, that examines the full cost of fully implementing Technology One.	100	Completed.
IP.5.2	Undertake an analysis of available software solutions already utilised by Council to determine the most efficient and effective software solution/s for Council.	60	The review has commenced following the analysis
IP.5.3	Develop a Strategy for deploying a new: · Salary System · Position Description Framework · Payroll Cycle · Performance Review processes	70	The new salary system commenced in November 2024, this includes a new performance review process. The position description framework project commenced in January 2025
IP.6.1	Adopt a year-on-year operational savings program across the business to grow cash balances	70	On track. Briefing held February 2025.
IP.6.2	Continue rigorous internal monthly and quarterly financial monitoring processes	100	Monthly and quarterly reports continue to be prepared and reported to both Council and the OLG.
IP.6.3	Develop and implement a Project Management Framework to ensure all Council projects are consistently managed on time and on budget.	90	draft Project Management Framework currently being developed. Presented to ELT in February 2025.
IP.6.4	Address issues associated with Blue Haven Terralong including, but not limited to: · The true cost which should be applied and whether the general rate revenue is subsidising its operations · The adequacy of current and proposed future maintenance fees · Review the level of maintenance fees	0	Action requires finalisation of Action 3.4
IP.6.5	Ongoing review of operating costs with the goal of identifying permanent savings	50	Ongoing reviews continue to occur.
IP.6.6	Restructure the presentation of draft and published budgets to detail programs and activities compared to current and previous years and funding sources for each capital project.	100	QBR now contains this information.
IP.6.7	Revalue land improvements (non-depreciable and depreciable), other structures, swimming pools, open space and recreational assets, library books and other assets within 'infrastructure, property, plant and equipment' to bring Council closer to verifying all IPPE balances.	0	Swimming pools, open space and other structures are scheduled for completion in the 2024/25 FY.
IP.6.8	Revalue stormwater drainage assets and land under roads to bring Council closer to verifying all IPPE balances	100	Complete and included in 2023/24 financials
IP.6.9	Continue identified processes and procedures to ensure that Council resolutions are obtained when internally restricted cash is going to be released for alternate purposes where possible.	50	Identified process continues.
IP.6.11	Review audit logs for privileged and super user accounts from One Council and Authority to ensure privileged and super user access is appropriate	0	To be included/reviewed as part of Action 8.22
IP.6.12	Review user access for Authority and One Council to ensure staff have appropriate access	0	To be included/incorporated into Action 8.22

Strategic Finance Governance Improvement Plan

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action cod	Action	Progress to dat	Progress Comments
IP.6.13	Continue to reconcile grant income and expenses on a monthly basis going forward in order to calculate reserve balances. This will also provide an overview of the grant receipt, cost and any required funding (acquittal) request.	100	Monthly reconciliation procedure is now in place.
IP.6.14	Continue weekly independent review of exception payroll report to ensure anomalies in remuneration etc. which could indicate potential fraud are captured.	100	Weekly independent reviews of exception payroll reports continue to occur.
IP.6.15	Continue review of termination payments	100	Regular review of termination payments continues to occur.
IP.6.16	Review and capitalise Work in Progress YR1	0	Not due
IP.6.17	Implement a robust quality review process for asset classes which are not subject to comprehensive revaluation, to assess for any potential impairment. This impairment exercise should be conducted on an annual basis	100	Completed.
IP.6.18	Continue implementing the following best practice procedures: • Enforce segregation of duties when processing manual payments • Periodic review of all supplier Masterfile changes"	100	Completed.
IP.7.1	Adopt and implement an Advocacy Strategy which seeks to address cost-shifting, facilitate key actions of this Plan, leverage partnership funding with neighbouring councils and strategic partners.	70	Draft Advocacy Strategy to be prepared and presented to new Council in December 2024. Refine of Strategy to occur in conjunction with Actions 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 to ensure advocacy actions align with infrastructure requirements. To be finalised February 2025.
IP.7.2	Work with ISJO to prepare a new Statement of Regional Priorities, including opportunities to investigate opportunities for resource sharing and combined advocacy approaches.	20	Statement of Regional Priorities underway
IP.7.3	Continue to collaborate and share benchmarking information with neighbouring councils	100	Data continues to be shared between neighbouring councils. Discussions about establishing a State-wide 'service review group' occurring.
IP.8.1	Undertake an immediate review of the Policy Register and ensure that: • any policy that has not been reviewed in the last 5 years is identified for review as soon as possible	70	All policies have been moved to a central register as part of the policy register in the pulse system. The policies have been grouped into responsible teams and highlighted if an urgent review is requirement. This project will continue into the new year.
IP.8.2	Undertake a desktop review of the entire policy register occur to generate a policy status list categorising each document as follows, or similar: • Maintain as Council Policy • Maintain as Internal/Operational Policy • Change from Council Internal/Operational Policy • Amend / Merge with another policy • Redundant - to be deleted • Change from Council / Internal Policy to Procedure	70	Refer to Action 8.1 comments

Strategic Finance Governance Improvement Plan

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IP.8.3	Report to the Council Executive recommending the revocation of redundant policy and other documents, confirmation of correct categorisation of each document and details of policies requiring significant review.	50	Refer to Action 8.1 comments.
IP.8.4	The Policy Framework and Policy Development and Review Procedure be reviewed to consider the following: a) Requiring policies to be reviewed every three years. b) Require each policy to be either formally reconfirmed or re-adopted once every four years by either the Executive Leadership Team or COuncil (once every Council term) as appropriate. i.e., other review can simply be a desktop review if no changes required. c) State that policies will only be submitted to the Consultative Committee if they relate to matters impacting on workplace safety, staff behaviour or conduct or would involve a significant impact on levels of staff resourcing. d) Determine whether "internal policy" or "operational Policy" will be the term consistently applied to policies set by the Executive Leadership Team. e) Implementation of appropriate KPIs to ensure timely review of all policies.	50	Refer to Action 8.1 comments.
IP.8.5	Undertake a review of policy and procedure templates to consider the following: a) Remove the consultation section from all policy and procedure templates. b) Review the "Operational Policy". This is inconsistent with the terms used in the Policy Framework. Council will need to determine whether "internal policy" or "operational Policy" will be the term consistently applied to policies set by the Executive Leadership Team. c) Update the procedure template to provide advice to staff that replication of content between policies and procedures should be avoided	50	Refer to Action 8.1 comments.
IP.8.6	A review of staff knowledge and understanding of the PULSE Policy Module be undertaken and an appropriate training plan be developed in response.	50	Refer to Action 8.1 comments.
IP.8.7	An urgent review of the Business Continuity Plan and Crisis Management Framework, and all associated documentation be undertaken, with updated copies of separate Business Continuity Plan, Crisis Management Plan and Crisis Management Communications Plan to be adopted and accompanied by an appropriate training and awareness campaign for relevant staff.	10	Internal review has commenced and need for review has been raised with Audit, Risk & Improvement Committee.
IP.8.8	Six months after the adoption of the updated Business Continuity Plan and Crisis Management Plans an appropriate scenario testing event be scheduled to confirm staff understanding of the application of the plans.	0	To be progressed within 6 month of completing Action 8.7

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IP.8.9	That the draft four-year internal audit plan consider the inclusion of appropriate internal audits relating to the following strategic risks. Noting that the financial security of the Council, the Performance Improvement Order and Blue Haven site are priority risks for the Council, the internal audits should be considered for scheduling from 2025/26 onwards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk Management • Governance Arrangements • Organisation Capability 	100	Completed. The 4 year strategic internal audit plan was approved by AIRC. The plan addresses Council's strategic risk.
IP.8.10	That the following registers be reviewed to ensure that they contain all required information, and are up to date in accordance with publishing timeframes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contracts Register required under s27 of the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 • Development Contributions Register required under cl217 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021 	100	Contracts Register, as at 18 July 2024, published on Council's website Contributions Register, as at 30 June 2024, published on Council's website
IP.8.11	Confirmation of the status of the Draft Development Application Policy be urgently undertaken. The policy should be published to the Council website if adoption has occurred, and if not the policy should be immediately placed before Council for adoption in accordance with the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021.	100	Completed. Development Application Policy adopted by Council at their Ordinary July 2024 meeting
IP.8.12	The current work on developing an updated compliance policy be expedited and an updated policy covering the areas identified in the report be presented to Council at the earliest opportunity.	80	Draft Compliance Policy has been circulated to the department for comment and feedback is being collate; This will be exhibited and final adoption to Council early 2025.
IP.8.13	A defined process be immediately established to call for conflicts of interest at the commencement of Councillor briefing sessions, including the application of the requirements of the Code of Conduct in the management of those conflicts and maintain a register of conflicts declared at briefing sessions in accordance with clause 3.39 of the Code of Meeting Practice.	100	Process being defined and will be implemented with significant training etc. for new Council as part of induction program.
IP.8.14	Establish a procedure to follow when a Councillor declares a pecuniary or significant non-pecuniary interest in a matter at a briefing, with particular reference as to whether the Councillor is still provided copies of briefing materials or reports after making the declaration.	100	Procedure being defined and will be implemented with significant training etc. for new Council as part of induction program.
IP.8.15	The codes of conduct be urgently reviewed to include specific definition and prohibition of sexual harassment, to contribute towards compliance with Council's positive duty requirements under the Sex Discrimination Act 184 (Cth).	50	Code of Conduct being included in Policy Review Program, Refer to Actions 8.1-8.6.

Strategic Finance Governance Improvement Plan

action cod	Action	Progress to dat	Progress Comments
IP.8.16	An immediate review of the Internal Reporting (PID) Policy be undertaken to ensure compliance with PID legislation with particular emphasis on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renaming the policy "Public Interest Disclosures Policy" The process for how a complaint in relation to the Council Chief Executive Officer can be made, how it would be handled and what responsibilities the Mayor would have in such circumstances. 	50	Review of PID Policy underway as part of Policy Review Program. Refer to Actions 8.1-8.6.
IP.8.17	Urgent training for all Public Interest Disclosure Officers be undertaken in relation to the changes to PID legislation and Council's Policy and updated responsibilities of Disclosures Officer.	80	Training currently occurring.
IP.8.18	Urgently complete a self-assessment against the foundational requirements within the Cyber Security Guidelines – Local Government and report the results to management and the Audit Risk and Improvement Committee.	100	Completed.
IP.8.20	A review of arrangements for establishing new suppliers to Council be undertaken to ensure the separation of the functions of creating new suppliers from accounts payable. It is recommended that council give consideration to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing a policy requiring that the employee who sets up new vendors or changes vendor information does not have the ability/access in the financial system to create vendor payments, Ensure that an independent officer reviews and approves the vendor account creation process, this officer is to have no ability to create vendors in the system, Appropriate configurations and restrictions be implemented in the Tech1 Financial System to ensure the above two points occur, periodically verifying any changes to vendor master files', and A requirement for mandatory vacations, or job rotations, of all key personnel involved in the vendor payment process. 	100	Completed. Segregation of duties and independent review is now in place and operational.
IP.8.21	The development of appropriate exception reporting in relation to procurement and accounts payable, as identified in the previous internal audit on procurement, be expedited to enhance and expand the current range of reporting available to potentially identify irregularities in procurement and accounts payable functions.	100	Completed. Periodic exception reports are in place and operational.
IP.8.22	Develop a strategic roadmap for when and how the remaining recommendations for the 2024 Hopwood Report are to be implemented	100	The roadmap has been drafted and presented to the CEO in february 2025.