

ORDINARY MEETING 3 JUNE 2014	5.6
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REPORT FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Linda Cardew – Chief Executive Officer

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council receives and notes the report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report presents an outline of the operational initiatives and progress made by Council's administration during April and May 2014.

BACKGROUND:

This report continues the initiative introduced earlier this year whereby an overview of Council's operations is provided by the Chief Executive Officer. The aim of these bi-monthly reports is to communicate how the administration is managing the diverse activities and challenges arising in the course of Council's business, and to summarise work in progress and the milestones achieved.

This report is also an invitation to the community to provide feedback on any aspect of Council's service delivery. The organisational goal of continual improvement will be always better informed if staff have a greater understanding of the community's observations and so we welcome and encourage all comments.

REPORT:

CEO UNIT

This Unit has principal responsibility for all aspects of community development and services including policy development, communications and media, Indigenous communities, access and disability services, events management, heritage, grant funding, economic development, research, community and corporate projects, and community support for disaster management.

Over the past weeks, the CEO Unit coordinated the development of the Corporate Plan. An extensive community consultation program was delivered, in accordance with the adopted Community Engagement Strategy, to ensure all members of the community had the ability to participate in the development of the Plan. A number of public workshops were held throughout the region along with targeted consultation with the Traditional Owners of the Shire.

Advertising of the consultation period and opportunities to comment on the Plan occurred in the Port Douglas & Mossman Gazette, The Cairns Post, on Council's website and Facebook page, Radio Port Douglas, Newsport, electronic networks, Council administration building, libraries and notice boards.

The draft themes, goals and actions were workshopped with Councillors prior to commencing public consultation and again on the 20 May. The final document will be presented to Council on the 3 June 2014.

Prior to the end of May, the Unit was involved with the delivery of and attendance at: National Sorry Day, the David Kempton Forum, Community Agency Network meeting, Douglas Homelessness meeting, Mossman Liquor Accord, coordination of the Council float in Carnivale and all associated in-kind services further to the Resource and Performance Agreement.

Staff have also begun preliminary discussions with relevant groups and state departments regarding a number of projects including but not limited to: Community Services Program – public spaces maintenance, Accessible Douglas Directory, Mossman Gorge – employment and training opportunities, NAIDOC week and promotion of Douglas as the venue for major sporting events.

We have commenced a review of Council's website, its format and ease of use. This has included removing out-dated or unnecessary information, adding new pages and reformatting existing pages. The website had approximately 15,000 page views in the past month from 3165 users.

Facebook has proven to be a very effective way of sharing information. We now have 1139 page 'likes' and in the past month reached an average of 594 users. Council has received 22 ratings with an average score of 4.5 out of 5 stars, with many positive comments.

Staff opened the Community Support funding program on 26 May followed by a community workshop held on 28 May to assist organisations to understand the guidelines and reporting requirements. The program will close on 20 June, allowing time for organisations to commence their projects early in the new financial year.

The first RADF program under the new Council closed on 9 May with the assessment held on 14 May. A report will be submitted to Council's Ordinary meeting on 3 June with the recommendations for the allocation of funding.

Staff have commenced reviewing the existing Resource and Performance Agreements and will present the Mossman & District Show Society Agreement for consideration on 3 June 2014. Staff are also assessing new proposals which, subject to the satisfaction of eligibility criteria, will be submitted to Council for approval. The Crocodile Trophy is a new proposal which has been workshopped with Council on 20 May and a report will be presented on the 3 June 2014.

CORPORATE SERVICES

Governance

The ongoing review of general policies transferred to Douglas as part of the de-amalgamation process is continuing and policies when reviewed are presented to Council for adoption. Policies recently adopted include:

- Community Support Program General Policy
- Douglas Shire Events General Policy and Strategy
- Enterprise Risk Management General Policy
- Councillor Code of Conduct General Policy
- Councillor/Staff Interaction Protocol General Policy
- Standing Orders for Council Meetings General Policy.

The Workplace Health and Safety Committee continues to conduct formal meetings on a monthly basis. The purpose of this Committee is to ensure all requirements of Council's obligations to Workplace Health and Safety are rolled out to the organisation and embedded in a culture of safe work practices.

The Internal Auditors engaged have completed their first audit which analysed current procedures undertaken with Council's payroll function. Their draft report has been received and is currently with the Management Team to provide responses to key recommendations back to the Internal Auditors. The final report will be presented to the inaugural meeting of Council's Audit Committee.

Expressions of Interest are currently being sought to engage the external member, who will also be the Chairperson, of the Audit Committee. At this stage it is anticipated that the first meeting of the Audit Committee will take place in July 2014.

One of the key components of Corporate Governance is to assist and co-ordinate all areas of the organisation to achieve and maintain legislative compliance within operations. Douglas has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) to utilise its Legislation Compliance Service which will:

- Map every applicable piece of state and federal legislation and regulations
- Clearly identify compliance demands and actions and allow for the allocation of responsibility
- Provide an easy to digest management 'dashboard' reporting tool for councils to monitor compliance matters.

Currently this service is in the development stage and once completed by LGAQ, the Douglas Governance Section will implement a staged rollout of this tool to all areas of Council.

Finance and Information Technology

Special Purpose Separate Financial Statements detailing the final separation of assets and liabilities between Cairns Regional Council and Douglas were presented to Council on 29 April 2014. The closing cash balance contained within these financial statements was \$19.731M and after deduction of de-amalgamation costs and associated expenses it resulted in Douglas Shire Council having an opening cash balance of \$16.320M.

With the work of the Financial Due Diligence Working Group (FDDWG) now concluded, there is a significant body of work to be undertaken to reconcile the opening position of Douglas as at 1 January and to update Council's asset register. In this regard, Grant Thornton (the audit firm engaged by the Transfer Committee to review the Special Purpose Separate Financial Statements) has been engaged to assist Council to complete this work.

Formulation of the 2014/15 annual budget is well progressed and has been subject to a number of workshops with Councillors. This budget is being framed on the basis of delivering long term financial sustainability and the aim of achieving a balanced budget within 6 years. It is anticipated that the adoption of the 2014/15 annual budget will occur in June 2014, enabling rate notices to be issued in July 2014.

The Queensland Audit Office (QAO) has completed its interim audit of Council's financial operations for the 2013/14 financial year. An exit meeting was undertaken between QAO and senior management at the conclusion of the visit and the results of their audit to date are more than satisfactory. QAO will return in September to finalise the 2013/14 audit.

Library

During the month of April the Library has continued to consolidate its processes and procedures for the additional responsibilities now undertaken by library officers. These include inter-library loans, program development, overdue and reservation notices, promotion of library services, stock rotation and management and preparation of statistical reports for State Library of Queensland.

The Mossman and Port Douglas Libraries had 5283 visitors for April, 7211 loans, 640 reservations satisfied, 13 inter-library loans and 62 new members. Customers appreciate the new inter-library loan service which is offered by Douglas in partnership with Rural Libraries Queensland - the response time is excellent and the service is free to the users. Customers are also able to place "purchase suggestions" online, an initiative that is proving very popular with patrons and one that ensures that the Library is responsive to customers' needs.

Rural Libraries Queensland (RLQ) offer a "Tourist card" – "*join RLQ for free and read on the road*". Visitors can join on line via RLQ or visit Mossman or Port Douglas Libraries. This is a significant improvement in service level as it is free (compared with \$35 paid previously). Statistics are recorded by RLQ and response has been good.

The local branch of Australian Red Cross currently has a vibrant, informative display at the Library celebrating the centenary of Red Cross in Australia and the Douglas area. The display includes photos, uniforms, medals and other memorabilia. Other displays include ANZAC day, Mossman Then and Now to celebrate Heritage Week, and general book/item displays. The Library looks forward to celebrating National Simultaneous Storytime on 21 May at 11am.

Organisational Business Support Unit

The Organisational Business Support Unit (OBSU) was established within the interim structure to undertake allocated administrative duties across the organisation and accordingly create efficiencies through the centralisation of these functions.

Recruitment of staff into this unit has recently been finalised and consultation with all areas of Council has been undertaken to ascertain the administrative support required for the organisation. The transfer of these duties is in progress and it is expected that by the end of June 2014, the OBSU will be operating at full capacity.

A key focus for the OBSU, when fully functional, is to continually review business procedures to achieve greater efficiencies and effectiveness of operations based on lean management principles.

OPERATIONS

Development and Environment

Planning Scheme

Staff are continuing to review the documentation provided by Cairns Regional Council in readiness for the proposed review of the Douglas Planning Scheme. As noted previously Councillors will be briefed prior to the submission of a formal report to Council.

Planning Applications

A list of planning applications and links to the common material for each application is now on Council's website. The new format enables easy access for Councillors and the public. A summary list of applications will also be provided to Councillors on a quarterly basis.

Planning Appeals

Appeals with respect to 36 Murphy St and 27 Murphy St, Port Douglas are continuing. Those matters will be managed in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Environment Court.

Regulatory Services

Local Laws/Environmental Health

The dog register is now live and officers are working to vet and update data. Complaints regarding dogs continue to absorb a large amount of officer time.

The application for leave to appeal with respect to the 3 dangerous dogs still in the pound remains on foot and is proceeding according to directions issued by QCAT.

Officers have also arranged for the removal of more than 20 abandoned vehicles, mostly from Craiglie.

Environmental Health officers have been busy with applications for a variety of Carnivale related activities and a large number of prescribed activity permit applications.

Administration

Progress has been made in filling staff vacancies and it is hoped that the Branch will have a full complement of staff for the first time by the end of June.

Significant time has been spent in the review of fees and charges, and input into key planning documents such as the Budget and Corporate Plan.

WATER AND WASTE

Environmental Reports

The Water and Waste team members have reached another important milestone by successfully completing quarterly environmental reporting required by Department of Environment and Heritage. The reports were done in several formats such as QLD Waste Data System, Transitional Environmental Program report (Killaloe landfill) and capturing environmental and process wastewater data on a web data base (WATers). They successfully completed this function that was previously performed by the well-staffed, larger Cairns Regional Council environmental group, by diligently taking scheduled samples, analysing results and compiling reports.

Sewer infrastructure

The wastewater group experienced two major sinkholes in Mudlo Street (Port Douglas) and Alchera Drive (Mossman) after TC Ita. Although both were problematic, Mudlo Street presented added complications as the 300mm diameter main is located four meters under the buildings. The resort had no wastewater services for several hours and consideration was given to relocate residents to another resort. Fortunately through innovative thinking the wastewater team engineered the now famous "wheelie bin pump station" to restore services at the resort. With the help of experienced contractors, the wastewater team were able to repair this sewer main in the following week. Sinkholes are extremely expensive to repair and ongoing sewer re-lining programs will decrease the frequency of catastrophic sewer main failures.



Innovation after Cyclone Ita: the wheelie bin pump station

Drinking Water Quality Management Plan (DWQMP)

The Water Supply Regulator has granted Douglas an extension until 15 August for the submission of the new DWQMP in recognition of the workload imposed on a new Council. Three Water and Waste staff members attended a Water Supply Regulatory Reform workshop on 20 May in Cairns. Clarification was given on the KPIs we need to report on in October and December 2014.

Waste management

The steel crusher (One Steel) will be active at Killaloe and Newell waste transfer stations for the next six weeks. Scrap metal from Cow Bay and Daintree transfer stations will also be included in this recycling action.

After many months of perseverance, the Cleanaway Interface went live on 15 May 2014. All CRMs on kerbside collection and related issues can now be directed to Transpacific Cleanaway for action.

Programmable Logic Controller (PLC) software

The recent SCADA and telemetry audit revealed that licences for the Programmable Logic Controller (PLC) could not easily be transferred from Cairns Regional Council. Welcon Technologies, Douglas' SCADA service provider, successfully negotiated directly with Rockwell Automation to transfer the appropriate licences at no additional cost to Douglas.

Preventative maintenance programs

Electrical preventative maintenance programs were developed, implemented and successfully completed at water and wastewater electrical installations. Mechanical preventative maintenance programs will continue for the next month.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The Infrastructure Team continues to deal with the very extensive work required after Cyclone Ita, the associated rainfall and flooding. Council has welcomed the assistance offered from Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA) with the drafting and policy assessment of submissions, supporting a streamlined administration process. Council staff are in the process of addressing risk management, in particular financial risk, with QRA NDRRA stakeholders and external specialists.

The project management structure, additional resources and procurement processes for the QRA NDRRA work (Restoration of Essential Public Assets) will be finalised and presented to Councillors at a workshop in the near future.

Staff have provided input into the 2014/15 Corporate Plan and coordinated development of the next 12 month CAPEX budget for the Infrastructure Team.

Officers have also been liaising with stakeholders regarding the Bloomfield River Crossing as Council has an interest in both the temporary causeway and the construction of the bridge. Following the cyclone Council engaged a suitably qualified engineer to assess damage to the causeway, with traffic subsequently restricted to a five tonne load limit. This reduced load limit will not impact on construction of either the Bloomfield Bridge or the Woobadda Bridge. The Department of Transport and Main Roads (DTMR) has confirmed that weather pending (including flooding), the Bloomfield Bridge, the road approaches and the removal of the Bloomfield River temporary causeway will be completed by 30 June 2014. DTMR will liaise with its contractor, TCS Civil and Building Construction, to fill depressions in the Bloomfield River temporary causeway cement slabs that were damaged by the cyclone.

Staff are liaising with stakeholders on the Woobadda Bridge, which, following de-amalgamation, became an asset of Douglas Shire Council. Construction is being undertaken by Cook Shire Council (CSC) and CSC contractors.

CSC has confirmed that construction has now recommenced after ceasing in December 2013 due to the approaching wet season, with completion scheduled for late August 2014.

To date cement footings have been installed in Woobadda Creek for the installation of the bridge and thirty-three link slabs have been fabricated off-site. Grant funding for the Woobadda Bridge is from the following sources: Roads and Transport Alliance (RTA) Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme (TIDS); Regional Safety and Development Program (RSDP); and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) TIDS.

Engineering

Council's project engineer completed and submitted a grant application to the Department of Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience. The Queensland Government has further streamlined the process to deliver disaster mitigation and resilience funding to help protect communities from the impact of future flooding and other natural disasters and Council is one of the eligible organisations that may apply for the 2014-15 joint application package for all disaster mitigation and resilience funding programs administered by the Queensland Government. Council is working to achieve flood mitigation with improvements made to four waterway crossings. Council's submissions are: Degarra Public Access causeway Flood Immunity Upgrade Project; Daintree Flood Gauge Automation, Mowbray Valley & Whyanbeel Causeway Upgrade Projects.

Council's engineer has also had input into operational works for development applications and has investigated solutions for stormwater drainage in Mossman, particularly where specific properties experienced stormwater flooding as a result of Cyclone Ita. Council's engineer has also contributed to the Queensland Flood Mapping Project for the Douglas Shire Local Government Area.

Civil Works

Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA) Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA).

The Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services has approved the activation of Douglas for the event "North East Qld Monsoonal Rainfall and Flooding, 7-9 February 2014". QRA representatives attended Douglas Council to work with staff to assess and collect data for submission. Submissions will be finalised over the next weeks.

Data collection for QRA NDRRA Cyclone Ita is ongoing as the team has been unable to access China Camp on the upper Bloomfield for assessment due to recent, ongoing, wet conditions in that area.

Staff continue to implement the DTMR Road Maintenance Performance Contract (RMPC).

Mossman Depot Workshop

The maintenance and repair of vehicles, plant and equipment is ongoing in the workshop.

Building facilities

The building facilities officer is managing the delivery of ongoing maintenance of the Douglas Council Building facilities and delivery of associated Capital Works such as the Old Office Old Port Road (Boral Site) in Port Douglas.

Parks and Public areas

The outdoor team has continued the clean-up of parks and public areas following Cyclone Ita and is providing the ongoing maintenance of parks and gardens.

CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE:

Council's operations are conducted as required by the Local Government Act 2009, and in accordance with all applicable policies and the Douglas Shire Council Operational Plan January 2014 – June 2014.

FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

Council's operations are conducted in accordance with the 2013-14 Budget adopted 24 January 2014.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS:

The new Council's operations have been subjected to an early risk assessment process, which will shortly be followed by the finalisation of the Risk Policy and a comprehensive Enterprise Risk Management Plan.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS:

SOCIAL: The diverse communities of Douglas are Council's clients. Council's operations, services and programs are designed and delivered to support the people of Douglas.

ECONOMIC: The twin pillars of financial and economic sustainability underpin all Council's operations.

ENVIRONMENTAL: Environmental management is a priority consideration in the delivery of all Council operations and services.

INTERNAL/EXTERNAL CONSULTATION: Council's General Managers and Branch Managers have been consulted and have contributed to the preparation of this report.

ATTACHMENTS:

Nil attached.