



BUSINESS PAPER

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL

To be held on

Tuesday, 6 August 2024
4:00 PM

at

Armidale Council Chambers

Members

Councillor Sam Coupland (Mayor)
Councillor Todd Redwood (Deputy Mayor)
Councillor Paul Gaddes
Councillor Jon Galletly
Councillor Susan McMichael
Councillor Steven Mephram
Councillor Debra O'Brien
Councillor Margaret O'Connor
Councillor Paul Packham
Councillor Dorothy Robinson
Councillor Bradley Widders

AGENDA

INDEX

1	Civic Affirmation and Acknowledgement of Country	
2	Statement in relation to live streaming of Council Meeting	
3	Apologies and applications for leave of absence by Councillors	
4	Disclosures of Interests	
5	Mayoral Minute	
6	Reports - General Manager's Office	
6.1	Council's success in the National Awards for Local Government.....	5
7	Reports - Finance	
7.1	2023-24 Draft Financial Statements - Refer to Audit.....	9
7.2	2024-25 Operational Plan - Rollovers, Revotes, Additional Grants and Otherwise Approved	12
8	Reports - Planning and Activation	
8.1	Adoption of Brilliant Region Strategy (Post Public Exhibition)	18
8.2	Adoption of the Local Housing Strategy (Post Public Exhibition)	23
9	Reports - Corporate and Community	
10	Reports - Assets and Services	
11	Notices of Motion	
12	Committee Reports	
13	Questions for Which Notice Has Been Given	
14	Confidential Matters (Closed Session)	
14.1	Boundary Realignment and Splay Corner Rectification	
	<i>(General Manager's Note: The report considers advice concerning potential litigation against Council. and is deemed confidential under Section 10A(2)(g) of the Local Government Act 1993, as it deals with advice concerning litigation, or advice that would otherwise be privileged from production in legal proceedings on the ground of legal professional privilege).</i>	
15	Close of Ordinary Meeting	

Ethical Decision Making and Conflicts of Interest

A guiding checklist for Councillors, officers and community committees

Oath or Affirmation of Office

Councillors are reminded of the Oath or Affirmation taken of office, made under section 233A of the *Local Government Act 1993* when elected.

Ethical decision making

- Is the decision or conduct legal?
- Is it consistent with Government policy, Council's objectives and Code of Conduct?
- What will the outcome be for you, your colleagues, the Council, anyone else?
- Does it raise a conflict of interest?
- Do you stand to gain personally at public expense?
- Can the decision be justified in terms of public interest?
- Would it withstand public scrutiny?

Conflict of interest

A conflict of interest is a clash between private interest and public duty. There are two types of conflict:

- ***Pecuniary*** – regulated by the *Local Government Act 1993* and Office of Local Government
- ***Non-pecuniary*** – regulated by Codes of Conduct and policy. ICAC, Ombudsman, Office of Local Government (advice only). If declaring a Non-Pecuniary Conflict of Interest, Councillors can choose to either disclose and vote, disclose and not vote or leave the Chamber.

The test for conflict of interest

- Is it likely I could be influenced by personal interest in carrying out my public duty?
- Would a fair and reasonable person believe I could be so influenced?
- Conflict of interest is closely tied to the layperson's definition of 'corruption' – using public office for private gain.
- Important to consider public perceptions of whether you have a conflict of interest.

Identifying problems

1st Do I have private interests affected by a matter I am officially involved in?

2nd Is my official role one of influence or perceived influence over the matter?

3rd Do my private interests conflict with my official role?

Local Government Act 1993 and Model Code of Conduct

For more detailed definitions refer to the *Local Government Act 1993*, Chapter 14 Honesty and Disclosure of Interest and Model Code of Conduct.

Disclosure of pecuniary interests / non-pecuniary interests

Under the provisions of Section 440AAA(3) of the *Local Government Act 1993* (pecuniary interests) and the Model Code of Conduct it is necessary for you to disclose the nature of the

interest when making a disclosure of a pecuniary interest or a non-pecuniary conflict of interest at a meeting.

A Declaration form should be completed and handed to the General Manager as soon as practicable once the interest is identified. Declarations are made at Item 3 of the Agenda: Declarations - Pecuniary, Non-Pecuniary and Political Donation Disclosures, and prior to each Item being discussed: The Declaration Form can be downloaded at [Disclosures and Declarations of Interest at Meetings](#).

Item:	6.1	Ref: AINT/2024/49082
Title:	Council's success in the National Awards for Local Government	Container: ARC16/0001-8
Author:	Annie Harris, Executive Manager People & Culture	
Attachments:	Nil	

1. Purpose

To inform Council of the recent success in the National Awards for Local Government.

2. OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION:

That Council note

- a. That Armidale Regional Council won the Category Career Starter Category for the Girls in Civil Program, and
- b. Received a Honorable Mention in the Women in Local Government category for the Compass – Women in Leadership Program

3. Background

Armidale Regional Council (ARC) has undergone a significant transformation in recent years, driven by a commitment to fostering diversity and inclusion. ARC recognised the need for a cultural shift to better reflect the community it serves. One of the key initiatives was the launch a program of initiatives which would support the increase in diversity within our workforce, providing pathways to employment and leadership opportunities. These programs aimed to address the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles within the council and create a more inclusive workplace environment.

The impact of this cultural shift has been profound. The council has seen improvements in organisational performance, employee morale, and community engagement. Women in the council have reported feeling more empowered and valued, leading to higher job satisfaction and retention rates. Additionally, the council's commitment to diversity has resonated with the broader community, fostering a sense of trust and inclusivity. It has also provided an opportunity to inspire the next generation of female leaders, opening doors in non-traditional roles and empowering young women through hands-on learning and industry connections.

The success of these efforts was recognised with the prestigious National Local Government Award. This accolade highlights ARC's dedication to excellence in leadership and its proactive approach to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace. These awards serves as a testament to the positive changes that can occur when an organisation prioritises diversity and inclusion, setting a benchmark for other councils to follow.

4. Discussion

The National Awards for Local Government (National Awards) are an annual celebration of local government achievements in Australia. The National Awards highlight initiatives implemented by local governments that are innovative, make a difference to their local communities, display excellence, and have outcomes that are replicable across the country. The achievements of

councils from across Australia have been given national recognition at the 38th National Awards for Local Government gala-dinner event which was held in Canberra on 4 July 2024, with the awards presented by the Prime Minister, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP.

The Career-Starter Category

The 'Career Starter' category recognises outstanding career starter initiatives in local government which:

- support entry-level employment opportunities in local government through apprenticeships, traineeships or cadetships;
- help to improve the progress and representation of junior employees;
- support and encourage emerging leaders, including mentoring, networking and training opportunities; and/or
- demonstrate an outstanding apprentice, trainee or cadet who is making a difference to their community and workplace and that has been outstanding in all aspects of their training.

Successful initiatives in this award category benefit communities by:

- promoting greater roles for young people, new entrants and those seeking a career change;
- increasing workforce participation from people of all ages, and supporting succession planning and knowledge retention in the council and community; and/or
- creating new opportunities for members of the community to work and stay in their region while being able to reach their potential.

The Initiative

Armidale Regional Council was proud to announce the launch of their innovative Girls in Civil program, the first initiation of its kind aimed at empowering female high school students to explore opportunities in the traditionally male-dominated civil construction industry.

Developed in partnership with Training Services NSW through their Regional Industry Education Partnerships, the program addressed the need to provide greater opportunities for women to enter non-traditional roles and promote gender diversity within the industry.

The Girls in Civil program gave female students hands-on experience in civil construction through activities like site visits, equipment demonstrations, and discussions with industry professionals. The goal was to inspire and equip young women with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to pursue successful careers in the field.

The program demonstrates the Council's leadership role in developing gender diversity in the civil construction industry, making a significant step toward fostering inclusion and breaking down barriers for women in the workforce. The three-week program has been run twice since July 2023 and delivered a comprehensive overview of civil construction, including operating equipment, safety protocols, site visits, and conversations with various industry experts to the cohort of young women who participated.

Women in Local Government Category

The 'Women in Local Government' category recognises initiatives and female leaders in local government that:

- support local women to stand for elected roles to represent their communities;
- help to improve the progress and representation of women in leadership positions;
- establish programs to support and recognise women as current and emerging leaders, including mentoring, networking and training opportunities; and/or
- showcase an outstanding female leader who is making a positive difference to their local government and community.

Successful initiatives in this award category benefit communities by:

- promoting greater roles for women in leadership, both as elected representatives and officers;
- developing gender equality strategies and programs to support women of all ages to participate and become leaders in their workplace and community; and/or
- advocating for gender equality, women's rights and representation in the workplace.

The Initiative

The Compass Women in Leadership Program gives learning and development opportunities for women to drive positive change across the organisation. It is a transformational program that links women's ambition with their deepest sense of purpose and core values.

In January 2021, it was quickly realised that there were very few women in middle or senior leadership roles within Armidale Regional Council (ARC) and there was a need to correct this imbalance by developing ARC women for the opportunities that would inevitably present moving forward.

To address this, Council implemented the 'Compass – Women in Leadership' program, facilitated by Dattner Group, which was rolled out across the workforce to ensure personal and professional growth opportunities for female staff. This program aims to ultimately help to increase the number of women leaders in the organisation to occupy middle and senior leadership roles.

The Compass program works on the premise that you have to know yourself before you can lead others. It is designed to bring out women's unique strengths and qualities in a supportive environment that fosters collaboration, ultimately increasing leadership capability at all levels.

An extension to the Compass – Women in Leadership program was introduced in 2022. The Compass Advance program provides another level of professional and personal development opportunities for women wanting to elevate and increase their influence within the council.

5. Implications

5.1. Strategic and Policy Implications

Nil

5.2. Risk

Nil

5.3. Sustainability

Nil.

5.4. Financial

Nil. The ongoing commitment to the Compass program is provided for within the Dattner Group procurement with the Girls in Civil Program being fully funded through Training Services NSW.

6. Consultation and Communication

Nil.

7. Conclusion

The recognition provided to Council through the prestigious National Local Government Award underscores ARC's commitment to leadership excellence and its proactive stance on fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace. This recognition serves as a powerful testament to the positive impact of prioritising diversity and inclusion, setting a high standard for other councils to emulate.

Item:	7.1	Ref: AINT/2024/49141
Title:	2023-24 Draft Financial Statements - Refer to Audit ARC17/1711	Container:
Author:	Cathryn McFarland, Financial Accountant	
Attachments:	1. Addressing Key Audit Issues	

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is for Council to endorse the Draft 2023-24 Financial Statements for referral to audit.

In accordance with S416 of the *Local Government Act 1993*, Council is required to pass a resolution to this effect along with the making of a number of other conformance statements.

2. OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION:

- A. Council endorse the 2023-24 draft financial statements as:
1. being prepared in accordance with:
 - the *Local Government Act 1993* (as amended) and the Regulations made there under;
 - the Australian Accounting Standards; and
 - the Local Government Code of Accounting Practice and Financial Reporting.
 2. presenting fairly the Council's operating result and financial position for the year; and
 3. being in accord with Council's accounting and other records.
- B. Council confirm it is not aware of any matter that would render the draft financial statements being prepared as being false or misleading in any way;
- C. Council endorse the Draft Financial Statements be referred to audit following completion of quality review by Council's Executive Leadership Team and Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee;
- D. Council delegate authority to the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, General Manager and Responsible Accounting Officer to sign the 'Statement by Council and Management' for inclusion within the draft financial report;
- E. Council delegate authority to the General Manager to finalise the date at which the auditor's report and financial statements are to be presented to the public;
- F. Council delegate authority to the General Manager to set the 'authorised for issue' date upon receipt of the auditor's report; and
- G. The Audited Financial Statements be presented to the November 2024 Ordinary Council meeting.

3. Background

Each year, Council is required to complete year-end financial statements in accordance with s413 (1) of the *Local Government Act 1993*. These reports are to be completed as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and must include a general-purpose financial report (Consolidated Fund), special

purpose financial reports for all of council's business activities (Water and Sewer Funds), special schedules and the prescribed councillor's statement.

Council has four months from the end of the financial year to prepare, adopt and have audited the financial reports in accordance with s416 (1) of the *Local Government Act 1993*.

At the time of preparing this report, the draft financial statements are being finalised. Council's quality review process includes review of the draft financial statements by Council's Executive Leadership Team and Council's Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee (ARIC). The Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee next meetings are on 4 September 2024 and 20 November 2024. This gives ARIC an opportunity to review the draft financial statements at this meeting. Audit work papers are due to be provided to the Audit Office by 9 September 2024, ready for the audit to commence on 16 September 2024.

4. Discussion

In order to continue to progress toward lodgement of the financial statements with the appropriate bodies and presentation of such to the general public, it is required that Council refer the draft Financial Statements to audit for finalisation and that it make a resolution in accordance with s413 (2c) of the *Local Government Act 1993*, that the statements are in accordance with:

- the *Local Government Act 1993* and the regulations made there under,
- the Australian Accounting Standards, and
- the Local Government Code of Accounting Practice and Financial Reporting,
- that the Statements present fairly the Council's operating result and financial position for the year,
- that the Council is not aware of any matter that would render this report false or misleading in any way, and
- the report accords with Council's accounting and other financial records.

Council is also required to delegate authority to the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, General Manager and Responsible Accounting Officer to sign the 'Statement by Council and Management' that forms part of the financial report in accordance with Clause 215 of the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2005*.

Given the timeframes within which the audited financial reports need to be lodged with the Office of Local Government and the timing for the auditor's report to be presented to the general public, it would also be prudent at this time to delegate authority to the General Manager to execute the following:

- Finalise the date at which the auditor's report and financial statements are to be presented to the public in compliance with s418 (1) of The Act.
- Set the authorised for issue date upon receipt of the auditor's report.

Following the completion of the processes above, a report will be presented to Council containing the final audited Financial Report for analysis and information.

5. Implications

5.1. Strategic and Policy Implications

- *Local Government Act 1993;*
- *Local Government Regulations (General) 2021;*
- *Australian Accounting Standards;*
- *Local Government Code of Accounting Practice and Financial Reporting.*

5.2. Risk

Nil

5.3. Sustainability

Results for key macro financial indicators will be provided in the report to Council along with the Audited Financial Report once completed.

5.4. Financial

Budget Area:	FINANCE						
Funding Source:	General Fund, Water Fund, Sewer Fund, Trust Fund						
Budget Ref: (PN)	Description	Approved Budget	Actual	Committed	Proposed	Total Forecast Expenditure	Remaining Budget
210815	Audit Expenses The Overall Finance Team Budget includes employment costs associated with preparation of financial statements.	\$170,000	\$Nil	\$Nil	Nil	\$170,000	\$170,000

6. Consultation and Communication

Once finalised the financial statements are to be publicly exhibited in accordance with the Local Government Act, including advertising of the key results in the local print press and on Councils website.

Council's external auditor is also required to present their reports to Council's Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee Meeting in November, following the completion and audit of the statements. A presentation will also be made to Council.

7. Conclusion

The purpose of this report is for Council to endorse the Draft 2023-24 Financial Statements for referral to audit.

Item:	7.2	Ref: AINT/2024/49187
Title:	2024-25 Operational Plan - Rollovers, Revotes, Additional Grants and Otherwise Approved	Container: ARC17/1711
Author:	Ann Newsome, Chief Financial Officer	
Attachments:	1. 2024-25 Operational Projects Rollovers Revotes & Other 2. 2024-25 Capital Projects Rollovers, Revotes & Other	

1. Purpose

This report brings 2024-25 Operational Plan - Rollovers, Revotes, Additional Grants and Otherwise Approved projects to Councillors for their adoption and /or their notation as required.

2. OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION:

That Council:

- a. Note the expenditure to be rolled over from 2023-24;
- b. Adopt the expenditure to be revoted from 2023-24;
- c. Adopt the additional revenue and expenditure from additional grants; and
- d. Note the additional revenue and expenditure from otherwise approved projects.

3. Background

Budgets & Revotes are covered in the Local Government (General) Regulation 2021 (clause 211):

Clause 211 - Authorisation of expenditure

(1) A council, or a person purporting to act on behalf of a council, must not incur a liability for the expenditure of money unless the council at the annual meeting held in accordance with subclause (2) or at a later ordinary meeting:

- (a) has approved the expenditure, and
- (b) has voted the money necessary to meet the expenditure.

(2) A council must each year hold a meeting for the purpose of approving expenditure and voting money.

(3) All such approvals and votes lapse at the end of a council's financial year. However, this subclause does not apply to approvals and votes relating to:

- (a) work carried out or started, or contracted to be carried out, for the council, or
- (b) any service provided, or contracted to be provided, for the council, or
- (c) goods or materials provided, or contracted to be provided, for the council, or
- (d) facilities provided or started, or contracted to be provided, for the council,

before the end of the year concerned, or to the payment of remuneration to members of the council's staff.

Clause 211 does not make any differentiation between Capital & Operating expenditure – which means that all “Revotes & Carry Forwards” expenditure should be treated the same way irrespective of whether they are for Capital or Operating expenditure.

This effectively leaves:

- (ii) started (works, services, goods, materials & facilities) &
- (iii) contracted (works, services, goods, materials & facilities) as at YE

as the two types of budgets from the prior year that if unutilised can be carried forward without the need to seek Council approval.

Budgeted expenditure (both operational expenditure &/or capital expenditure) can be carried forward to the next year automatically without reference to Council or adoption by Council where:

- (a) there are unspent budget amounts relating to the expenditure &
- (b) the expenditure was (i) started or (ii) contracted to be carried out / provided before year end.

This means that if (b) above Does not hold...then any Last Year (LY) unspent expenditure budgets need to go up to Council for formal adoption if they are to make it into next year’s budget (ie. into Council’s YE 24/25 budget)

Terminology is important here & unfortunately LG finance professionals use “Carry Forwards” & “Revotes” in the same breath & interchangeably when in fact They are both different:

Carry Forward/s = are Unspent Budget amounts from last year that can be carried forward to the new year’s budget with no need to go to Council ie. the remaining last year budget (up to the value of the remaining Budget) can automatically be part of the new financial year budget.

vs.

Revote/s = are Unspent Budget amounts from last year that need to be re-approved by Council before they can be part of the new year’s budget ie. the remaining last year budget cannot automatically be part of the new financial year budget...but instead these have to be reported to Council for formal budget approval!

With regards to (legitimate) “Carry Forwards” – these can automatically be incorporated into and be part of each Council’s new 24/25 budget without a formal report to Council or deliberations by Council. However, in the preparation of the 2024-25 operational plan an estimate of these, both from an operational and capital prospective, was made to enable Councillors to make a more informed decision.

Revotes:

All other unspent budget items/amounts that do not fall within Clause 211 (ie. unspent budgets that have not started &/or not been contracted out at YE) will need to be put up via a Report to a Council meeting and formally “Revoted” into the new 24/25 budget – otherwise they cannot form part of the new budget & the expenditure cannot be undertaken using prior year funds.

This report should include any funding sources that relate to the carried forward budget expenses (Income, Grants, Reserve Utilisation) so as to show the net budget requirements.

4. Discussion

The 2024-25 operational plan and budget was developed in the period November 2023 to March 2024.

The proposed 2024-25 operational plan passed by Council in June 2024 included estimates of rollovers to enable Councillors to make a more informed decision.

In the period from April 2024 to July 2024 future information has come to light.

This includes:

- New grants have been received
- Projects both capital and operational have been approved by council
- There is some clarity on amounts to be rolled over and revoted

As Council continues to receive invoices relation to the prior financial year the remaining balance of some of the rollover projects may change, however this meeting is the final opportunity to present this information in this council term.

The attached schedules detail the amounts for both operational and capital items. These schedules indicate if the changes are by council approval, a rollover or a revote or if new funding has been received or identified, or a combination of these factors.

In summary

Operational plan:

	Increase in Revenue	Increase in Expenditure	Net increase / (decrease) in position
General Fund	\$2,059,352	\$1,948,816	\$110,535
Water Fund	\$195,000	\$405,774	(\$210,774)
Sewer Fund	-	-	-
Consolidated	\$2,254,352	\$2,354,590	(\$100,239)

This change in position reflects additional grant funding received, predominantly Block Grant, Roads to Recovery and REFFR.

The attach schedule detail the amounts for operational items. This schedule indicates if the changes are by council approval, a rollover or a revote or if new funding has been received or identified, or a combination of these factors.

Capital Expenditure:

	Increase in Expenditure	Total Revised Capital Expenditure	Draw from Reserves or Own Source	Grant Funding
General Fund	\$14,252,695	\$28,950,624	\$2,516,318	\$26,434,306
Water Fund	\$6,624,642	\$7,381,173	\$4,599,676	\$2,781,498
Sewer Fund	\$1,423,248	\$1,527,253	\$1,345,001	\$182,252
Consolidated	\$22,300,405	\$37,859,050	\$8,460,995	\$29,398,056

This change in position reflects additional grant funding received, predominantly Block Grant, Roads to Recovery and REFFR. As well as changes in timing for Fixing Country Roads and Fixing Country Bridges.

The attached schedule details the amounts for capital items. This schedule indicates if the changes are by council approval, a rollover or a revote or if new funding has been received or identified, or a combination of these factors.

5. Implications

5.1. Strategic and Policy Implications

This operational plan review process contributes to:

- Council's Delivery Program 2022-2026 theme category of "Restore and Thrive" and related strategy of "Manage public resources responsibly and efficiently for the benefit of the community."
- Council's Delivery Program 2022-2026 includes initiatives S2.3.2 "Maintain financial sustainability by meeting Performance Ratios and Fit for the Future Benchmarks, while ensuring sustainable cash reserves to support service levels and assets" and S2.3.5 "Manage our assets responsibly to ensure greater lifespan and usability and to reduce financial burden".
- Council's Operational Plan 2024-2025: Asset Management, Finance and Procurement, Governance, Strategy and Risk.

Link to the Community Strategic Plan and Delivery Program

Community Strategic Plan – Strong Region

S2.1 Provide a strong, transparent, sustainable, and responsive governance for our region

S2.1.1 Satisfy the Office of Local Government Compliance and Reporting Requirements.

S2.2 Ensure that strategic directions are informed by, and with, the community and are delivered in consideration of available resources.

S2.2.1 Implement the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework in compliance with legislation.

S2.3 Manage public resources responsibly and efficiently for the benefit of the community.

S2.3.1 Provide high quality, targeted and sustainable services to the community that remain affordable.

S2.3.2 Maintain financial sustainability by meeting Performance Ratios and Fit for the Future Benchmarks, while ensuring sustainable cash reserves to support service levels and assets.

S2.3.3 Deliver a Financial Improvement Program that determines the future efficiencies and revenue sources required to fund current and future service levels.

S2.3.4 Explore the need with the community to secure additional funding through changes to the rating system to provide the quality of services and facilities expected by our community.

5.2. Risk

Budget reviews provide the opportunity to review the actual position against the adopted budget, providing transparency and highlighting potential financial risks.

It is notable that the economic risks associated with the financial position and cash reserves for the future is highly dependent on:

- 1) Effective budget management and;
- 2) The continuation of monitoring services at existing levels to remain within the funding available.
- 3) Developing a system to accurately record movements in reserves throughout the year.

Other risk areas include: Water income is highly dependent on weather conditions, completion of major capital projects are dependent on supply chain and weather conditions and approval of funding where the projects are funded from external income (i.e. grants). Interest income is dependent on economic conditions.

5.3. Sustainability

This budget review report presented for endorsement and noting has considered the Principles of Sound Financial Management as outlined under Section 8B of the *Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)*.

Section 8B of the Act provides that Council spending should be responsible and sustainable, aligning general revenue and expenses.

5.4. Financial

Budget Area:	2024-2025 Draft Budget						
Funding Source:	General Fund, Water Fund, Sewerage Fund						
Fund:	Description	Approved Budget	Actual	Committed	Proposed Budget	Total Forecast	Change to Original Budget
General	Operating Result	Nil			(\$4,334,203)	(\$4,223,668)	\$110,535
Water					\$1,560,500	\$1,349,726	(\$210,774)
Sewerage					\$3,665,369	\$3,665,369	\$NIL
Consolidated					\$891,666	\$791,427	(\$100,239)

6. Consultation and Communication

This operational plan review entailed an extensive review of budgets at project level analysing data based on the prior year revenue and expenditure.

Managers were provided with the opportunity to convey budgetary implications and risk areas that would need to be considered and reported to Council.

Council resolutions adopted since the formation of the 2024-25 operational plan were reviewed.

7. Conclusion

The 2024-25 operational plan and budget was developed in the period November 2023 to March 2024.

The proposed 2024-25 operational plan passed by Council in June 2024 included estimates of rollovers to enable Councillors to make a more informed decision.

In the period from April 2024 to July 2024 future information has come to light.

This includes:

- New grants have been received
- Projects both capital and operational have been approved by council
- There is now some clarity on amounts to be rolled over and revoted.

The attached schedules detail the amounts for both operational and capital items.

These schedules indicate if the changes are by council approval, a rollover or a revote or if new funding has been received or identified, or a combination of these factors.

This report brings 2024-25 Operational Plan - Rollovers, Revotes, Additional Grants and Otherwise Approved projects to Councillors for their adoption and /or their notation as required.

Item:	8.1	Ref: AINT/2024/49026
Title:	Adoption of Brilliant Region Strategy (Post Public Exhibition)	Container: ARC23/6199
Responsible Officer	Chief Officer Planning and Activation	
Author:	Lilian Colmanetti, Strategic Planner	
Attachments:	1. Brilliant Region Strategy 2. BRS submission 3. BRS survey responses	

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to have Council adopt the Draft Brilliant Region Strategy following the public exhibition period.

2. OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION:

That Council:

- a. Receive and note any submissions received on the Draft Brilliant Region Strategy;
- b. Adopt the Draft Brilliant Region Strategy.

3. Background

In January 2022 the newly elected Armidale Regional Council (**ARC**) resolved to set an aspirational target to grow jobs in our region by 4,000 by 2040 (increasing our regional population by 10,000) and to identify the region building infrastructure and catalyst job growth projects that will maximise the region's potential. This clear direction from the newly elected Council culminated in the adoption of the *Local Strategy Planning Statement (LSPS) Advancing our region: Toward 50,000 (Toward 50,000)*.

A Brilliant Region Strategy (**Strategy**) is a key pillar of Toward 50,000. Leveraging digital technology is a contemporary way of effectively addressing our challenges and opportunities. Sustaining the path, we are embarking on to attract new jobs and population while maintaining our quality of life and sustainably managing our environment and climate is a complex task. Over the long-term Council needs consistent and continuous access to deep insights about community life, assets, infrastructure, and our environment. These insights need to be reliable and available on demand as strategic decisions are made. This is where digital technology innovation has a critical role to play. Relevant technologies embedded into the physical environment can generate data and information which gives Council a finger on the pulse of our region and provide an empirical method of monitoring our progress. These insights can be shared with key community stakeholders to enable them to make better decisions, and to support collaboration which creates a vibrant and sustainable region for everyone.

4. Discussion

This Strategy (**Attachment 1**) has been collaboratively developed with leading industry experts, engaging a broad range of Council representatives and has been prepared to be a public facing

document. It also considers extensive community engagement conducted during the development of our Advancing Our Region Community Plan and the LSPS Toward 50,000.

The intent of this Strategy is to complement existing plans by providing Council with a guide to strategically leverage relevant digital capabilities. Its ultimate purpose is to create a positive socio-economic and environmental impact on the community while delivering operational and financial benefits for Council. It is integral to the services we provide and the programs and projects we implement, augmenting the execution of the Advancing Our Region Plan and the LSPS.

Council is committed to leverage every available opportunity to achieve our vision for the future. Over the past decade, technological advancements have introduced digital capabilities that have the potential to accelerate our recovery and amplify the positive impacts of the initiatives identified in our strategies.

Limited financial resources can be a barrier to the implementation of digital infrastructure and technologies, which often have significant foundational costs. However, investment in smart technologies offers long-term cost and resource efficiencies.

5. Implications

5.1. Strategic and Policy Implications

Supporting the utilisation of our access to the high-speed data and advancing technology to increase connectivity across the region has been identified as a priority under the “Connected Region” pillar within the Advancing our Region Community Plan 2022-2032, and this strategy will help provide a better connected and brilliant community.

The strategy has also been identified as high priority under our newly adopted Advancing our region - Toward 50,000 - Local Strategic Planning Statement.

5.2. Risk

Some potential risks that could impact the successful implementation of the projects included in the Brilliant Region Strategy are:

Organisational Change & Process Development:

- Changes in processes take longer than expected, delaying the realisation of benefits
- Resistance to digital transformation persists, leading to underutilised technology

Digital Skills and Capability (Internal):

- Challenges in enhancing skills within key functional areas where skill levels are limited
- Inability to fully leverage technology for more advanced use cases

Program Management Capability and Capacity

- Complex technology implementation combined with significant change scope poses program management challenges, resulting in delays
- Delayed benefits may limit the overall impact

Cross-sector Requirements & Cooperation

- Lack of key third-party resources and data assets affects use case deliverables

- Insufficient cooperation and standardisation across participating organisations hinder meeting use case requirements

Third-Party/External Acceptance and Interface

- Delayed acceptance affects technology deployment timelines
- Lack of adoption by external users undermines use case benefits

Digital Skills and Capability (External)

- Delays in deliverables due to overburdened Council resources
- Ineffectual execution of use cases impacts broader program benefits
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Technology Maturity

- Unexpected delays due to technology maturation issues
- Platform and hardware not meeting expected functionality or interoperability, compromising use cases

Integration

- Complex technology integration leads to cost and schedule overruns
- Failure to integrate systems as required affects desired benefits

Data Quality, Accessibility and Completeness

- Delays caused by data curation and preparation impact project schedules
- Inadequate data quality results in failed use cases or inappropriate decision-making

Data Security, Privacy and Ethics

- Data security, privacy or ethics concerns and unclear requirements or policy results in delay in accessing or releasing data
- Use cases with third party interaction are compromised due to concerns or limitations on data sharing

Supplier Capability and Response

- Commercial arrangements with key suppliers may not meet cost and time expectations
- Impaired ability to execute identified use cases

Third-Party Data Cost

- High costs lead to delays in acquiring third-party data
- Third party data cost invalidates commercial feasibility of some use cases

Whilst there are potential risks associated with the delivery of projects included in this Strategy, increasing the use of technology delivers many benefits to the community.

5.3. Sustainability

Council aims to enhance the quality of life, economic prosperity, and sustainability for our community. We achieve this by leveraging digital capabilities and data insights to optimize processes, proactively address challenges, build intelligence, enhance productivity, and foster collaboration among all stakeholders.

Our Strategy recognises various ways to create value. Over time, we blend and combine capabilities, building cumulative value where each layer builds upon previous efforts. As we achieve new levels of value, the impact extends across departments, services, locations, assets, and infrastructure. Ultimately, this combined capability positively impacts our region, promoting social cohesion, economic development, and sustainability.

Examples of how smart initiatives can improve sustainability are outlined below:

Smart Public Lighting

- Supports Council's goal of making a region of the future by ensuring long-term sustainability through reduced electrical use and fewer maintenance vehicle operating hours
- Lowers electricity costs and maintenance expenses 60+% freeing funds for other investments
- Lowers carbon emissions (street lighting can be the most significant carbon impost for a Council)
- Improved lighting can yield a 20% reduction in crime, and facilitate activation of night-time economy, especially related to tourism

Smart Waste Management

- Lowers cost of waste management through collection-point consolidation and reduced fleet size
- Research shows a reduction in collection costs by 30%
- Provides a convenient amenity to visitors, businesses and community
- Reduces hazardous waste situations and threats to health
- Mitigates the probability of unsightly waste overflow in high visitation areas especially where food waste is prevalent
- Contributes to greater urban cleanliness and creates a point of distinction by mirroring solutions embraced by sustainability leaders

Asset & Infrastructure Monitoring

- Reduce costs by providing proactive real-time data which negates manual inspections and prevents expensive and potentially hazardous failure
- Allows Council to maximise the performance and structural health of assets and infrastructure that underpin the delivery of key services
- Promotes better planning and design
- Optimises sustainability outcomes by ensuring assets and infrastructure investments are based on actual data about how they perform and are used

5.4. Financial

In order to help ARC initiate in this journey, Telstra has allocated \$25,000 from their Technology Fund towards the development this strategy in line with our community goals.

The Brilliant Region Strategy will provide the primary driver for Council to seek funding from the Federal and NSW State Governments to plan and deliver solutions and projects across the region.

Budget Area:	Planning and Activation – Land Use Planning						
Funding Source:	Telstra Tech Fund (\$25,000) and ARC (\$31,980)						
Budget Ref: (PN)	Description	Approved Budget	Actual	Committed	Proposed	Total Forecast Expenditure	Remaining Budget
900081	Brilliant Regions Strategy	\$56,980 inc GST	\$56,980	\$56,980		\$56,980	\$0

6. Consultation and Communication

The Strategy has been placed on public exhibition for 42 days and one submission has been received. The submission was related to the Star Gazing event in Ben Lomond, and given its relevance to tourism and the activation of spaces, it has been forwarded to the Activation and Precincts team within Council for review.

In addition, as part of the exhibition period, Council posted a survey on our Your Say page. Only four responses to the survey have been received. While this limited participation restricts our ability to conduct extensive analyses, we value and will consider the feedback provided by these respondents.

7. Conclusion

This report recommends that Council notes the submission and surveys received during the public exhibition period and adopts the Brilliant Region Strategy as submitted.

Item:	8.2	Ref: AINT/2024/49235
Title:	Adoption of the Local Housing Strategy (Post Public Exhibition)	Container: ARC23/6411
Responsible Officer	Chief Officer Planning and Activation	
Author:	John Goodall, Manager Land Use Planning	
Attachments:	1. Draft Local Housing Strategy 2. LHS Public Submissions 3. LHS NSW Government Agency Submissions	

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is for Council to consider the submissions from State agencies and the public and determine whether to adopt the Local Housing Strategy.

2. OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION:

That Council:

- a. Receive and note the submissions contained in the report on the Draft Local Housing Strategy;
- b. Delegate authority to the General Manager to make the amendments to Draft Local Housing Strategy outlined in this report or resulting from further NSW Government agency feedback;
- c. Adopt the amended Local Housing Strategy;
- d. Forward a copy to the amended Local Housing Strategy to the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure.

3. Background

Armidale Regional Council (**ARC**) recently considered and adopted a new Local Strategic Planning Statement (**LSPS**) at its OCM on 24 April 2024. One of the Actions in the 2024 LSPS is to prepare a Local Housing Strategy (**LHS**).

4. Discussion

The Draft LHS (Attachment 1) was publicly exhibited and referred to NSW Government agencies between Thursday 27 June - Wednesday 24 July 2024. A summary of the public submissions and recommended actions are included as Attachment 2 and a summary of the NSW Government agency submissions and recommended actions are included as Attachment 3.

5. Implications

5.1. Strategic and Policy Implications

The Draft LHS follows the recent adoption of the LSPS in April 2024 and will sit alongside the LSPS to provide direction and shape how development will evolve in the region over time to meet the community's aspirations.

5.2. Risk

Without an adopted LHS, Council will find it increasingly difficult to substantiate the progression of Planning Proposals through the Gateway process with DPPI.

Additionally, and in line with Council's signed funding agreement with DPPI it is committed to the submission of the LHS to the Department, relevant state agencies and the public exhibition of the strategy by 31 August 2024.

5.3. Sustainability

Sustainability and resilience have been considered during the preparation and development of the Draft LHS.

5.4. Financial

Budget Area:	Strategic Natural Resources & Land Use Planning						
Funding Source:	Grant and Operational						
Budget Ref: (PN)	Description	Approved Budget	Actual	Committed	Proposed	Total Forecast Expenditure	Remaining Budget
250203	Local Housing Strategy	200,000	200,000	0	0	200,000	0

6. Consultation and Communication

There have been a number of workshops undertaken with Councillor's to inform and seek their direction in the preparation of the LSPS and Draft LHS. Starting in November 2022 and continuing in April, July and September 2023.

The Draft LHS (Attachment 1) was publicly exhibited and referred to NSW Government agencies between Thursday 27 June - Wednesday 24 July 2024.

7. Conclusion

This report recommends that Council notes the submissions received, amends and updates the Draft LHS as recommended and adopts the LHS. Following adoption, the LHS will be forwarded to the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure.