



Service Planning Policy

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PURPOSE

This Policy sets out the Council's commitment to ongoing service planning and strategic review to ensure that each service is aligned to council's vision for the community, council plan and relevant strategic documents.

CONTEXT

Service delivery planning and review are vital processes to ensure local government services are:

appropriate – that is, services meet current community needs and wants, and can be adapted to meet future needs and wants

effective – that is, councils deliver targeted, better quality services in new ways

efficient – that is, councils improve resource use (people, materials, plant and equipment, infrastructure, buildings) and redirect savings to finance new or improved services.

Mitchell Shire Council need to demonstrate that we are providing value for money for services that our community consider important. Financial performance and sustainability of councils is reported in both our Annual Report and on www.knowyourcouncil.vic.org.au and it is important within this context that service best practice and value for money can be demonstrated.

Environmental sustainability in a global climate change context also sees the need to reduce the footprint that service delivery leaves behind. This will also be a focus of any strategic review.

The most appropriate way to address the above outcomes is through policy development and a consistent framework.

SCOPE

This policy will apply to Council and Council staff.

POLICY

When making a service delivery related decision, Council and its officers will have regard to the principles documented in this policy.

Objectives of Service Planning

- To ensure services are planned and determined in accordance with defined and validated community need.
- To develop a clear understanding and agreement on the purpose, standard and desired outcomes of the service.
- To clearly articulate whether services are provided as a statutory requirement or at the discretion of Council, and therefore could potentially be withdrawn from.
- To develop an accurate forecast of the likely future costs associated with the delivery of individual services, to support long-term financial planning, including:
 - > new and upgrade capital works planning
 - > renewal demand
 - > assets and the resources required to support Council's service provision.
- To support Council decision making regarding:
 - > The range of services Council will provide
 - > The link between these services and Mitchell's Vision and Council Plan, including the Long-Term Financial Plan, the funding approach and implications
 - > The strategic intent of the service, service model and level of service
- To explore a range of funding options to support service delivery.
- To confirm the true cost and benefits of delivering services.
- To identify service provision demand trends, and changes and the implications these may have for the service now and into the future.
- To establish a process for the regular review of the service delivery approach.
- To inform asset management plans.
- To foster a culture of continuous improvement.

Service Planning Principles

- Services will reflect the Council's Community Vision and Council Plan.
- Services will be planned using evidence of community need and what works.
- Council will regularly review the service model and levels of service to ensure that they are effective, efficient, and are appropriately resourced. Council shall commit to providing appropriate resourcing for the adopted levels of service.

- Emphasis will be placed on providing effective services, and in order to use Council's resources for the largest benefit possible for the community, services will also be delivered in an efficient manner, be socially equitable and both financially and environmentally sustainable.
- Council will plan to be sustainable in the short and long term. Where possible, Council will consider long term implications of any service change, or lack of change, such as negative social, environmental or financial sustainability impacts on Council or the community.
- Service planning will drive responsible decisions regarding the renewal, upgrade or the construction of new assets. Decisions about assets are first driven by service delivery.
- Services must use resources efficiently and effectively and care must be taken to not duplicate services already provided for by others. Council must focus on services that create the best outcomes for the community within resources available.
- Service Planning is undertaken through the lens of continuous improvement.
- Services will be delivered in accordance with relevant legislation and regulations, and in accordance funding agency requirements.
- Council will consider all of the above principles when considering introducing new services.

Outcomes of Service Reviews and Planning

The key outcomes are expected to be:

- a more engaged and empowered community,
- increased levels of community satisfaction,
- defined and documented service levels,
- alignment of service levels, community need, and financial capacity,
- more engaged and empowered Council staff,
- partnerships and networks with other local governments and service providers,
- a more systematic, whole of Council approach to service delivery,
- a set of measures to monitor Service performance.

Internal stakeholder management

The impacts on staff will be closely monitored via appropriate organisational and Human Resources policy and practices.

Strategic Service Review Prioritisation

The council will undertake strategic reviews on a rolling program basis. The priority of the reviews will be recommended to Council in a report that has regard to:

- any withdrawal of government grants or funding for the service
- customer / community feedback
- easily achievable opportunities
- legislative changes
- innovative opportunities
- changes in the Council Plan

Definitions

Asset: A physical item that is owned or controlled by Council and supports the provision of services to the community.

Service: A group of programs and projects primarily focused on external recipients, which collectively provide support or guidance to the community in order to achieve the objectives of Mitchell's Vision and the Council Plan. A combination of tangible and intangible benefits that can be produced and consumed.

Service Plan: A process by which you can assess, review and set the strategic direction for a service. It takes the longer-term strategic direction and converts it into a plan for the short to medium-term.

Strategic Review: A formal process that considers the cost, quality and efficiency of a council service, and assesses whether the current mode of delivery is appropriate. A Strategic Review may be necessary if:

- The service is under financial pressure
- There is evidence of changing community needs
- The service needs to be re-aligned with Council's direction
- There are major legislative changes anticipated
- The Service is due for a major contract renewal.

Continuous Improvement: The ongoing improvement of products, services or processes through incremental and breakthrough improvements. These efforts can seek “incremental” improvement over time or “breakthrough” improvement all at once. Among the most widely used tools for the continuous improvement model is a four-step quality assurance method – the PDCA cycle:

- Plan: Identify an opportunity and plan for change
- Do: Implement the change on a small scale
- Check: Use data to analyse the results of the change and determine whether it made a difference
- Act: If the change was successful, implement it on a wider scale and continuously assess your results. If the change did not work, begin the cycle again

Related Documents

- *Local Government Act 1989*
- Mitchell Shire Council Plan 2017 - 2021
- Essential Services guidelines and publications
- Mitchell Shire Council Values
- Victorian Auditor General’s Office independent assurance report to Parliament 2018-19: Delivering Local Government Services, September 2018
- Australian Centre for Excellence in Local Government, Service Delivery Review Manual, Second Edition 2015