

Gloucester – 5 November 2019

Discussion summary

Council staff reported on how we plan to deliver the top five priorities from the Community Conversation held at Gloucester earlier in the year. Those present were invited to contribute suggestions on the detail of these projects to assist in our delivery.

Below are the top six priorities that were raised from the first round of community conversations and the commitment from Council.

Top six priorities identified in round one

1. Increase economic development opportunities

Council's Economic Development staff meet regularly with Chamber representatives to facilitate information transfer between Council and the business community around business opportunities and barriers. Staff have arranged and participated in presentations to business operators on Vibrant Spaces and have provided opportunities for business operators to network and mentor across town boundaries. Staff provide regular updates to the Chamber on water upgrades to the industrial estate. A member of the Economic Development Working Group is a Gloucester based business operator.

Capacity building workshops continue to be conducted in the region for businesses aimed at improving capacity to tender for Council work, develop digital marketing skills and develop new visitor product and experiences. The team are working collaboratively with event organisers to secure more events in the region.

Work is also being undertaken to prepare planning controls for the MidCoast area. The Draft Employment Zones Review examined the extent of business and industrial zones in Gloucester and the uses permitted in these zones. Consultation will be undertaken with the Gloucester community in early 2020.

Gloucester Caravan Park - The tenant has the right to manage the park up to the end of April 2020. Council's options for the park following April 2020 continue to be investigated.

Gloucester Machinery site - The vesting of land to the Crown is still in process. Until that process is finalised nothing can be done (in terms of understanding next steps towards purchase).

2. Improve water security

Council made a submission in September to the Natural Resources Commission regarding the need to revise the Water Sharing Plan for the Lower North Coast Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources (2009). This highlighted the need to address water security for both our rural and urban communities. We are not yet aware of the outcome or if the water sharing plan will be revised.

We have also committed to large investment over the next five to 10 years in our water infrastructure. This includes the construction of a new reservoir to improve water pressure for the industrial area, a water storage to provide security for the Gloucester supply into the

future. This would include a new water treatment plant. This is a multi-million-dollar investment into the future of Gloucester's water supplies.

3. Youth opportunities

The Youth Strategic Plan was adopted by Council on 24 July 2019. This all-of-community plan was developed in consultation with young people, parents and service providers across the local government area. The implementation of the plan relies on the development of an annual action plan in consultation with service providers and stakeholders. A meeting with stakeholders was held in Gloucester on 5 September to prioritise strategies to be addressed and develop actions. This meeting was attended by representatives from the Bucketts Way Neighbourhood Group, Catholic Care, Gloucester High, Community Health, MSS, MidCoast Connect and the Department of Communities and Justice. A follow-up meeting is planned to finalise the development of actions, which will feed into the all-of-Council action plan. A series of projects will be implemented once the action plan is finalised. This document will be a public document that will be provided to Councillors for information.

Council has also recently undertaken a recruitment program for up to 27 new trainees, apprentices and cadets. This will provide an invaluable source of employment for younger people and it will also provide an opportunity for them to gain a rewarding career without having to leave the area.

4. Advocacy for maintenance of the health precinct

Council has developed strong relationships with local Federal and State Government Members and Government agencies. This is key to ensuring advocacy for services into the local area is effective and timely. We will continue to take opportunities to advocate for local services and provide a voice for the local community into state and federal government.

5. Reduce rates, water and section 64 costs

The general rates paid by residents are subject to an annual increase determined by IPart. This is often referred to as the rate pegged amount. All Councils are subject to this increase as it allows them to keep up with increases in their costs for things such as labour, power and fuel.

We do have an active Special Rate Variation that is directly funding the borrowing Council has taken out to match the \$50M grant from the State Government. This innovative approach has allowed us to develop and implement the \$100M roads program, providing significant improvements on our major roads and bridges. For this financial year the residential sewerage access charges have not increased. This means that the real cost for sewer has decreased by the value of inflation over the year. The same thing happened last year, resulting in a net saving to customer over the last two years.

The water supply charges rose by 1.8% this year. This is also below the rate of inflation resulting in a saving to the community. We have commenced the revision of all our old S94 & S64 plans into new plans. This will result in significant revision of our forward works program particularly for recreation assets based on the outcomes of the new community plans and strategies. For water and sewer, we are looking to introduce greater flexibility for businesses in how they pay their contributions. This will include an option to defer payments via a higher usage charge. Businesses will be able to commence and establish for a lower upfront cost before having to pay contributions at a later time.

6. DA processing procedures/event applications

The Major Assessment and Compliance team will work with the Engagement, Communications and Education team to develop an education program that clearly explains

the development assessment process and how it affects economic development in Gloucester.

Event Applications - Events approval staff run capacity building workshops around the events approval process. Workshops conducted this year have covered off risk management and insurance needs. During November a series of Q&A Panels with experienced event operators will be facilitated by Council. One of the two workshops will be held at Gloucester. Attendance at these sessions will be open to all event operators and committees. Staff work closely with event organisers during the approval process and provide regular updates on required information and the reasons behind it. Community information sessions were held in Forster, Taree, Gloucester and Tea Gardens around the new event sponsorship process.

Further feedback on top six priorities

<p>Increase economic development opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declaration of funding for events for each community at the start of each financial year • Build capacity for small businesses – provide training opportunities in Gloucester as many cannot reach the TAFE in Taree and TAFE is unavailable here • Barrington Bridge • No ability to have a “common” voice to Council that is equal • Business Chamber can’t be all focused on retail business – we need to include services and agribusiness • Investigate the Caravan Park options now – don’t wait until April 2020 • Decrease economic drain – larger income is derived by those that don’t live here • Sustainable industries – ie solar / water / hydro • Dedicated growth program to be funded by grants to attract new residents and businesses • Capacity building business skills to attract more economic drivers • Economic development through the Caravan Park – why not invest as it seems like an economically viable option
<p>Improve water security</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrictions 1 – 4 too quickly – why not increase in steps • Why are water rates payable in less time than council rates? • Upgrade water treatment plant • Upgrade industrial area reservoir • Need more public information updates on water project

<p>Youth opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth have a focus of jobs in the area • Jobs that have greater wages • Target more grant funding • How soon can a youth centre be set up! • Youth space • Youth Space – Who is going to run this and what programs are going to be run? • Supervised youth space • More youth employee traineeships • Lower youth wages = unable to afford living away from home and therefore Gloucester kids are unable to afford to apply for jobs out of the area • Create a youth council to have a voice • Youth space in Gloucester
<p>Advocacy for maintenance of the health precinct</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get a good service from the State that is preventative • Local services provided by locals
<p>Reduce rates, water and section 64 costs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rates CPI • Local Government Cost Index

Q & A session

Q: What is the status of the Gloucester grandstand project?

A: We are currently working through a modification to the development application for the site include the grandstand and this will be submitted by the end of November. Further to this we have a design brief that has been submitted to community representatives for their approval and are awaiting their response.

Q: What is the status of the footbridge in Gloucester Park?

A: All materials are available to complete the repairs - we are waiting for the ability of bridge crew to facilitate the works. The timeframe has been impacted by the current fire situation across the MidCoast. Information will be shared with the community when work begins.

Q: We desperately need a modern Visitor Information Centre for our tourism industry.

A: We acknowledge it is needed and have been looking for potential spaces for a new visitor centre and are currently looking at some options.

Q: Why can't we retain the current Barrington Bridge?

A: It is an RMS asset and therefore an RMS decision. We are having discussions with RMS on how we could potentially salvage parts of the bridge, given its historical significance

Q: When is the Ravenshaw Street road upgrade planned to occur?

A: This project will feature heavily in the capital works program for the next five years however currently the focus of funding in Gloucester is for the rehabilitation road upgrade for Queen Street.

Q: What is the budget for the Queen Street road upgrade project?

A: \$2 million excluding the roundabout construction.

Q: What is the depth of road construction for the Queen Street road upgrade project?

A: The depth varies along the length of the project. 520mm of (unsuitable) pavement material will be removed and replaced with suitable road construction material.

The maximum change in surface level is 750mm at the deepest point ie change of current existing surface to the proposed finished surface level (FSL). This means essentially that we would cut down to FSL then remove and additional 520mm of unsuitable material and rebuild that 520mm with suitable material to get the FSL. The depth of construction is deeper on the southern side (west bound traffic lane) on the northern side there is a maximum change in surface level 130mm so again the depth of maximum cut would be 650mm. This is between Church and Barrington Street. The intersection with Barrington Street has a deeper pavement 590mm (before roundabout inclusion which may change with advice from geotech) the pavement depth from Barrington to Ravenshaw is 520mm but the surface level is not changing.

Q: Plants were taken out in the park nearly 15 months ago and were planned to be replaced by 150 trees or shrubs – when will they be planted?

A: Council has suspended all planting given the current dry conditions. We will resume planting when conditions allow. An environment group has planted 100 trees recently however due to the extreme weather conditions currently being faced there is no immediate plan to continue planting until the conditions ease.

Q: Can we have more trees planted surrounding the pathway in the Gloucester Park for more shade in the summer?

A: A strategy for the entire park area is required and will be investigated.

Q: Can we have more advice on what we can and can't do as applicants for DA processing?

A: Currently Council is working on a strategy to communicate the process with more clarity to the community. There are very specific regulations around how DA applications are assessed and what advice can be given by certain staff. We will actively work on our processes to clarify the process for both staff and the community.

Q: Why can't the Australia Day committee for Gloucester have guaranteed funding every year?

A: Councillors and the entire management team within Council are committed to ensure an Australia Day event occurs every year moving forward. With regards to funding, a decision for funding will be assessed every year, however the group has been allocated \$3,000 to run the event next year, which is a significant investment by Council. A single official MidCoast Council event for Australia Day citizenship will be held each year with the 2020 event to be in Forster.

Q: Why didn't the harmonisation take place during the three-year merger period?

A: Due to State Government legislation – rate harmonisation could not occur during the administration period.

Q: Where are the proposed sites for the Gloucester water towers?

A: Currently looking at the multiple options with a cost benefit analysis currently underway.

Q: Why did we jump from 1-3 water restrictions so quickly?

A: You don't really see much of a change in water usage between level 1 and level 2 for water restrictions. The scale has been established for the entire north coast and it does apply to some other areas due to the size of their water storages. The benefit for our Council is that when the rain does come we will retreat out of the restrictions much quicker than other council areas.

Q: Can we be using and promoting the recycling of sink and shower water.

A: This method is supported completely and we encourage the community to reuse sink and shower water whenever is possible.

Q: How is the dam proposed for Gloucester going to increase the water safety for the town? When will you be able to pump from the river and what will be the capacity of the dam?

A: It will provide storage for the town to pump water from the river and store it in the dry seasons. From there we can pump the water from the dam into the treatment plant for consumption. Pumping from the river will only be available during high flow periods to store in the dam. The size of the dam has yet to be determined and relies on a number of factors including State Government licensing.

Q: Where are the investigations into the improvements for water and power to the industrial area currently at?

A: Investigations into the power supply to the industrial area showed there is no issue as previously identified. The water supply is currently in the initial stages of investigations with multiple sites and options under consideration. The community will be informed as the project moves forward.