

Action Plan

Introduction

The *Better Pathways to Planning* Action Plan is our plan to improve the experiences of our community as they navigate our planning and development services. The plan is the result of extensive engagement with more than 200 customers.

Background

During community consultation on the draft Gympie Region Economic Development and Investment Strategy, Council received feedback regarding:

- the need for Council to be more welcoming of prospective businesses / investment; paying particular attention to timeliness in planning approvals
- the development of an 'enabling' culture for economic development across all departments
- the need for Council to provide the community with information, proactive engagement and feedback on planning and development initiatives.

Council wanted to more fully understand this feedback so it could improve the experiences of people navigating its planning and development services.

As a first step, and under the banner *Better Pathways to Planning*, Council employed the services of independent consultant, Articulous. It was important that Council used the services of an independent consultant because it wanted to ensure that members of the community felt comfortable to talk openly and freely about their experiences.

The consultant's mandate was to identify both the positive and negative aspects of stakeholders' experiences with the development process and to report on opportunities that could improve the customer experience of Council's planning and development services. Complementing this work, Council also worked internally to explore opportunities for change to its processes and systems.

The *Better Pathways to Planning* Action Plan is the outcome of all this work that, once implemented, will improve our services and our customers' experiences.

Our Approach

This plan is a living document. We will keep updating actions to achieve the best improvement outcomes. The timeframes for each action (please refer to the action table over page) are included in the plan and are as follows:

- Short term = by 30 June 2020
- Medium term = by 30 June 2021
- Longer term = by 30 June 2023

Articulous Report Reference No.	Refer Key Recommendations pp. 7-10 <u>Articulous report</u>
1.	1. Commit to an Action Plan – refer actions below
2.	2. Quick Wins/Short term actions

		Action	Timeframe	Responsibility
2.1, 7.2, 8.3	2.1	Enhance Pre-Application Meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate audio recording of pre-application meetings to enhance the written notes taken (current practice is that written minutes of the meeting are issued) • Investigate the feasibility to offer a site inspection/site meeting service and determine an appropriate fee • Develop a “how to” guideline for those preparing to attend a pre-application meeting including the minimum information required • Prior to a formal pre-application meeting, enable the option of a preliminary meeting with the Director Planning and Development for significant/major development proposals 	Short	Planning and Development, Marketing and Communications, Business Information and Technology Systems, Gympie Futures
7.3	2.2	Finalise the relocation of the Development Engineering team to ensure the team is situated in the same building as the other professionals critical to the development process (i.e. Building, Plumbing, Environmental Health, Environmental Planning).	Now	Planning and Development
-	2.3	Trial a duty roster for the Development Engineering team once it is relocated to the Planning and Development building.	Short	Planning and Development
1.4	2.4	Implement an agreement between Development and Compliance and the Water Business Unit (WBU) to ensure advice relating to water and sewer planning conditions and other relevant customer enquiries is provided in a timely manner.	Short	Planning and Development, Water Business Unit
-	2.5	The People and Organisational Development unit to source relevant training courses to refresh and update staff skills in customer engagement.	Short	People and Organisational Development

3. Current activities already being implemented

	Action	Timeframe	Responsibility
3.	3.1	Now	Planning and Development
	3.2		
	3.3		
	3.4		
	3.5		
	3.6		
	3.7		
	3.8		
	3.9		
	3.10		

3.11 A “how to” guideline to assist members of the public lodge a valid (properly made) submission to a Development Application is available and handed out from the Planning and Development front counter.

4. Communication and Engagement

	Action	Timeframe	Responsibility
3.2, 4.4, 4.5, 5.1, 5.3, 5.4, 8.3	4.1 Develop templates and guidance material to assist prospective applicants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review website material provided by other Queensland Councils with respect to forms/ templates and guidelines relevant to the development assessment process Develop a range of “How to lodge a DA” guidelines to be available on Council’s website as well as at all Council customer contact points Develop “how to” guidelines targeted at different types of applicants (i.e. “mum and dad”, developers, consultants) Develop “how to” guidelines for different types/scale of development including different levels of assessment. Consider including an estimated likely assessment time (time to process) for each development type and each level of assessment Investigate the benefits of an “Information pack” (helpful hints, suggestions, resources, case studies, etc.) 	Rolling program Short, medium and longer term	Planning and Development, Marketing and Communications
5.2, 7.3	4.2 Investigate the potential to provide a “plain English” version of the development permit including conditions of approval, to be issued with the statutory Development Permit in instances where the applicant is not a consultant or development professional.	Short	Planning and Development, Marketing and Communications
7.2	4.3 Provide training and awareness for the general public and potential applicants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate how other Councils are delivering training and awareness in planning practices Scope the design and content of a training program based on “navigating the planning process”, “how to lodge a Development Application” and “understanding the Planning Scheme” to be offered on an annual basis Commence delivery of the program 	Medium	Planning and Development, Marketing and Communications, Gympie Futures, People and Organisational Development
7.3	4.4 Investigate the potential to advise proponents/owners in a “plain English” document in instances where their consultants lodge an application that is not properly made or	Short	Planning and Development,

		requires further information to ensure they understand the application status and the information required.		Marketing and Communications
-	4.5	People and Organisational Development to source and deliver training to refresh and upskill staff in relation to customer engagement (see action 2.5).	Short	Planning and Development, People and Organisational Development
7.1, 9.1, 9.2	4.6	Continue to update the community on the status of initiatives implemented as part of this Action Plan by way of media releases, reports to Councillor Workshops, and Better Pathways to Planning program stakeholder updates and information sessions.	Quarterly / On-going	Planning and Development, Marketing and Communications
-	4.7	Educate the new 2020 Council in Planning laws and processes.	Short	Office of the CEO - Governance

5. Learn from Others

		Action	Timeframe	Responsibility
6.1, 6.2	5.1	Review how other Councils are delivering Planning and Development services, and adapt relevant approaches <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a program of visits to nearby and similar size Councils Review website material provided by other Queensland Councils with respect to forms/ templates and guidelines relevant to the development assessment process 	Rolling Program Short and Medium	Planning and Development, Business Information and Technology Systems
6.1, 6.2	5.2	Investigate the systems/software used by other Councils to provide on-line lodgement of Development Applications and the processes used to manage the associated records.	Short	Planning and Development, Business Information and Technology Systems
6.1, 6.2	5.3	Research standard conditions of approval used by other Councils with the intention of developing a "plain English" version for first time/non-consultant applicants.	Medium	Planning and Development
-	5.4	Establish and facilitate an evaluation of customers' service experience after the delivery of planning and development services. Profile success stories and lessons learnt through Better Pathways implementation updates and public Council workshops etc.	Medium	Gympie Futures, Marketing and Communications

-	5.5	Provide regular updates to Council on DA processing statistics.	Medium	Planning and Development
6. Process and Systems				
		Action	Timeframe	Responsibility
-	6.1	Upgrade manual systems, including information management, within Planning and Development to enable a more efficient process and therefore service to applicants and submitters.	Short and Medium	Planning and Development, Business Information and Technology Systems
8.1	6.2	Develop and implement the system upgrade to enable on-line lodgement of Development Applications (see action 5.2).	Medium	Planning & Development, Business Information and Technology Systems
4.1	6.3	Business plans or Individual Development Plans (IDPs) produced by business units that act as an internal referral agency for the development assessment process (i.e. Building, Plumbing, Water Business Unit, Design, Development Engineering, Property, Environmental Planning, Gympie Futures) include allocating the necessary priority and level of service (e.g. response timeframes) to Development Application referrals.	Short	Relevant Business Units, People and Organisational Development
3.2, 4.1	6.4	Relevant business units within Corporate and Community Services review their existing processes to ensure that their templates/application forms/external training programs include consideration of the development assessment process, the Planning Scheme and whether a Development Application may be required.	Short	Corporate and Community Services
4.2, 4.3, 4.7, 8.2, 8.4	6.5	The Continuous Improvement (CI) team map the development process to determine any potential efficiencies beyond the parts of the process controlled by legislation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider including within the process the requirement for internal specialists to meet and reach consensus on the major issues relevant to the application and requiring further information, prior to advising or meeting with the applicant 	On-going rolling program Short and Medium	People and Organisational Development, Planning and Development, Corporate and Community

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise and include compliance with Council's Customer Service Charter in relation to meeting response timeframes for acknowledging DA correspondence from applicants and submitters Map application processes and track timeframes to identify efficiency opportunities and establish likely approval timeframes (short term) Determine the types, size and level of significance of Development Applications that will be referred to Economic Development for comment 		Services, Business Information and Technology Systems
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-	6.6	Undertake Continuous Improvement (CI) refresher training.	Short	People and Organisational Development
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7. Collaboration

		Action	Timeframe	Responsibility
3.1, 7.3	7.1	Continue the organisational Learning and Development program to assist internal business units/internal specialists to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> understand the planning process and Council's Planning Scheme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide training for business units/internal specialists in how to write their advice in a common, useful format based on addressing the requirements of the Planning Scheme Provide training for business units that act as internal referral agencies in how to write appropriate Development Application conditions Understand the economic development strategy and voice of the investors/enquirers interested in developing within the region 	On-going rolling program Short and Medium	People and Organisational Development, Planning and Development, Corporate and Community Services
4.1	7.2	In collaboration with Economic Development, Development and Compliance determine the types, size and level of significance of Development Applications that will be referred to Economic Development for comment (refer action 6.5), and the role and responsibilities they will have in relation to delivering the planning and development service.	Short	Planning and Development, CI Team
7.3	7.3	Relevant business units within Corporate and Community Services (i.e. Community Partnerships/Property/Events/Community Projects) commit to attending the monthly meeting convened by Development and Compliance to discuss any potential planning issues with internal Council or community group projects currently in the early development stage.	Now	Relevant Business Units

-	7.4	Investigate the appointment of a senior planning professional to provide a permanent full time "duty planning" service to the Planning and Development front counter.	Short	Planning and Development
-	7.5	Economic Development to provide a "concierge" service to potential investors/ significant business operators to support these proponents through the development/expansion process.	Short	Corporate and Community Services
7.3, 8.5	7.6	Pursue the appointment of a senior planning professional within Development and Compliance to take on the role of Senior Client Manager for major employment generating and otherwise significant Development Applications.	Short	Planning and Development
-	7.7	Establish commitment for all relevant Planning and Development Business Units to attend DAT and Pre-application meetings, and to ensure timely processing of referrals through MagiQ (Document Management System).	Short	Planning and Development

8. Policy

		Action	Timeframe	Responsibility
7.3	8.1	Publicise Council's adopted policy outlining the role and permitted interventions by each party (applicants, submitters, Councillors and staff) during the planning process.	Short	Planning and Development, Marketing and Communications
4.6	8.2	Include a link to Council's policy (protocol) on Council's website as part of the acknowledgement issued to each DA applicant and/or submitter.	Short	Planning and Development
-	8.3	Continue to review and update Council's Planning Scheme by way of major amendment packages.	Short and medium	Planning and Development
-	8.4	Commence work on the development of a new Planning Scheme.	Short and Medium	Planning and Development