



2025

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Part One - Situation Analysis & Strategies	
1.1. Central Highlands - Current state	4
1.2. Central Highlands - The future	5
1.3. Our 2025 – 2030 + Strategic Priorities	7
Structural	7
Financial Management	7
Strategic Assets	8
Community engagement and inclusion	10
Community Wellbeing	10
1.4. Strategy Management, Implementation and Evaluation	11
Part two - Council Business Model	
2.1. Introduction	12
2.2. Our Strategic Intent	12
2.3. Why these objectives	15
2.4. How Council will deliver the Strategic Intent	16
2.5. Council's Statement of Strategic Principles and Practice	19
2.6. Activating the Strategy as our Operating Plan	24
2.7. Operating Plan 2025-26 – Summary	26

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Introduction

The Local Government Act (1993) requires Council to prepare and review a Strategic Plan as the focus and reference point for the wide range of specific purpose plans & budgets which frame its activities. From consideration of the needs and aspirations of the community Council has identified key strategies to deliver the services, support, infrastructure and facilities associated with our role and responsibility to deliver the social, economic and environmental characteristics which have been identified as important to achieving Central Highlands preferred, sustainable future.

This strategy and the business model designed to implement, manage and as necessary adapt it in the face of change, identifies how Council will utilise current opportunities to generate community wide benefit. It is informed by the significant community and stakeholder engagement which has occurred over the past two years in response to a range of specific challenges and our schedule of community meetings.

It focuses on “where we are, major influences in play and from this, how Council will apply a mix of strategies to get to where we want to be.”

Part One clarifies where we are, major disruptions to Central Highlands and how our strategies can utilise this to develop increased population, better services and more opportunity.

Part Two details our business model we use to develop the strategy and how we translate it into our operational plan and other support plans such as our financial management plan, asset management plan.



Image courtesy of Central Highlands Council

Part One – Situation Analysis and Strategies

1.1. Central Highlands - Current state

Central Highlands is a natural environment haven, providing a unique mix of rural living, production and recreation for its permanent community and those who centre their leisure time on active and passive outdoors pursuits. Our population peaks from late Spring to Autumn when people focus on the fishing accessible from their holiday homes. Visitors use the long days to experience the diversity of experiences available and seasonal contractors and workers come to prepare for and harvest crops. This established pattern is experiencing a shock, - the acceleration and scale of new investment in further renewable energy construction and operations. This sets the scene for Council's strategic plan and our challenge of ensuring the flow of benefits from this investment into community resilience and wellbeing.

Central Highlands provides a permanent home to 2,585 people¹, of these 1,098 are in employment, 435 in primary industry, 153 in accommodation and food service and 71 in retail. This mirrors the economic profile, except for construction ranking as the second highest in output value. The Census measurement of resident population and output critically underestimates the Central Highlands effective population at any given time, masking the high levels of part-time residents, seasonal and construction workforces, visitors and excludes the value of power generated by Hydro Tasmania providing a diminished perspective of the local economy and its contribution to Tasmania.

Of our 601 families, 309 are couples with no children, 44 of these support dependent students and a further 12 single parent families support students. 170 children attend primary school, 106 secondary school, with 39 participating in vocational training and 26 in university or higher education.

The family structure is reflected in the age profile, the median age of 49 highlighting the 50% proportion of the population being over 50 years of age. With an older population, the relative level of community building from housing development, active sports etc declines and demand for integrated healthcare and supports increases. In the 2021 ABS Census, 959 people (38% of the population) identified as effected by a long-term health condition with 225 who indicated multiple conditions and 189 indicating need for assistance with daily living.

These factors also impact median income levels, with a median household income of \$1,013 per week, to some degree offset by lower weekly rents and/or monthly mortgage repayments. The aggregated result masks the income distributional disparity across Central Highlands, 231 households indicated an income of less than \$500 per week, while 187 households identified a weekly income of greater than \$2,000 per week.

The summary clarifies the hollowed out demographic structure of the Central Highlands community, a relatively lower proportion of 20-40yo population has implications,

- Loss of economic activity from residential investment and development activity,
- Reduced numbers of school age children, and
- Income leakage to other municipalities from “imported” employment

¹ ABS Census 2021

The averaged, historical statistics do not provide a full or balanced picture of the current state and trajectory of Central Highlands economic contribution, population, socio-economic wellbeing and its rural lifestyle and liveability. This strategy is futures-oriented, focusing on generating community benefits from opportunities.

1.2. Central Highlands - The future

Central Highlands is in the early to mid-phase of a major renewable energy development disruption driven by national, state and local responses to climate change. This has followed significant, structural shocks occurring over the past 70 years, including

- The post WW2 hydro power development to stimulate industrialisation across the State,
- The introduction of large-scale irrigation and ongoing diversification to cropping and intensive horticulture as the proportion and intensity of cold days declines, allowing their production at these altitudes,
- The increased capitalisation and digitisation of agriculture, and
- The less visible but emerging from its initial carbon farming base, recognition that land and aquatic ecosystems and biodiversity provide potential income and, for the Central Highlands, new forms of conservation and regeneration income and job potential, including experiential tourism.

The latest renewable energy phase is the most rapid, largest scale investment of these.



Image courtesy of Peter Downie

Despite these prior shocks, the characteristics of the key traditional settlements and overall permanent population level is little changed, with the average permanent resident age of 49, indicating Central Highlands is not capturing the growth and benefit from the planned construction and operations expansion. Residential growth has centred on settlements adjoining trout fishing lakes and, while attracting a small permanent population, are primarily holiday homes. The lack of housing and population places a major constraint on the community achieving sustainable benefit from this private investment.

Analysis indicates that by 2030, the committed multibillion dollar investment in renewable energy infrastructure will result in 237 permanent operations and maintenance jobs. Investment in intensive horticulture is estimated to deliver a further 75 permanent and up to 290 seasonal jobs.

Alongside these production changes, tourism jobs increased by some 20% during the most recent Census period, a clear indicator of increased demand.



Image courtesy of Tarraleah Estate

1.3. Our 2025 – 2030 + Strategic Priorities

These priorities are focused on how our community can capture opportunities arising from investment identified in renewable energy, more intensive agriculture and visitation. The strategy mix is designed to benefit the current permanent and part-time resident community and attract new residents and retain those who without opportunity, may leave.

The mix of strategies are designed to work together and be mutually supportive.

Structural

In conjunction with our long-term strategies Central Highlands strategic priorities for the next 5-10 years are to:

1. **Transform most of the forecast permanent job growth from investment in renewables, increasingly intensive horticulture and recreation development opportunities into permanent resident growth.**
This is important in scale and the attraction of residents within the period of their lives where they are employed, establishing homes and businesses, educating their children locally use local facilities and engage in the community. This includes consideration of independent living units to free up larger housing stock and developing housing to match people's later life-cycle needs.
2. **Facilitate improvement in the scope and capacity of primary and community health, emergency response and children's and vocational education access** to support Central Highlands liveability, the safety of workforces associated with construction, seasonal and operational activities and visitation.
3. **Initiate changes to land use policy and zoning to support residential growth in Bothwell, Hamilton, Ouse and Ellendale which matches the rural living/village nature of our settlements**, to define specific purpose precincts such as tourism, intensive horticulture and renewable energy value-add to generate community benefit from this major investment phase.
4. **Consider how the need for construction, seasonal and tourism accommodation can be combined to deliver long term benefit** beyond their specific purpose and subject to this consideration potentially pursue external investment.
5. **Reflect the fact that across Central Highlands specific land uses/activities are not neatly quarantined in single use land packages, the whole place works as series of systemic natural and developed overlays** or adjacent activities where traditional activities and new opportunities combine to generate diversity and create resilience by determining a more strategic, dynamic approach to planning.

Financial Management

The above structural changes and challenges will have a major impact on Council's financial position. Council will pursue the changes in legislation to ensure Council receives rate income and /or payment in lieu of rates (PILOT) from Hydro Tasmania and renewable energy generators.

It will impact how Council applies funds independently as intergovernmental and private/public investment in recognition of how local infrastructure and facilities support statewide economic benefit

and provide the critical safety and emergency response capability to enable this major growth in construction and operations to occur, simultaneously improving community access to services.

Some of the strategies, such as the specific purpose precincts, will include investment in amenity and place making infrastructure across the municipality as a catalyst for private investment.

In conjunction with this development focus, recurrent expenditure on both strategic and local assets to maintain condition, implement minor upgrades to reflect changes to use, standards and expectations are essential.

Each new or upgraded asset brings with it an increase in maintenance obligations and cost. Prudent management requires careful consideration of the return to the community from both new investment and existing program costs. Council will utilise a benefit-cost approach to consider community benefit from specific investment opportunities and retention of specific asset and facilities. This "best return" focus flows through into recurrent activities and an active focus on improving productivity through innovation, use of technology and potential further resource sharing.

The potential capital investment program will consider and optimise grant, reserve and loan fund sources based on return and sustainable debt ratios and prudent margins of safety.

Councils' financial management plan and strategies will be updated annually to reflect these strategies, approaches and changes.



Image courtesy of Central Highlands Council

Strategic Assets

Council owns and maintains a diverse range of assets, roads, buildings, parks, recreation and public facilities, waste transfer stations, a cemetery and undeveloped land which has been acquired at various times for specific purposes which have not eventuated. Similarly, some assets are underutilised because they are no longer fit for current purpose or reflect the needs of a prior period.

Councils' road network is complementary to the state road network. State roads cross the municipality providing higher use, heavier transport connections to other parts of the state, with local roads providing

lower use local connections. Both are important and work together to provide economic and social connections and emergency service access. They bring with them the need for associated stormwater management and access continuity in the face of emergency events. Council will work with State agencies and seek additional budget allocation to works across the whole network.

Local parks, sports grounds, buildings and facilities make a strategic contribution to liveability and wellbeing by creating amenity and facilitating wellbeing and liveability from their use, provision of local service hubs and the social connections which they facilitate. Other facilities, such as the cemetery, pool and caravan parks, while based on user-pays models require subsidy for their operations. Council will seek specific purpose grant funding to complement its investment in ensuring recreational facilities and other assets are meeting contemporary use and are fit for purpose.

Council's asset management plan has a focus on our road network, informing our maintenance and capital works budget and work plans. Although buildings are recorded in the asset register, there is a need to assess their condition, gaps in their ability to conform to standard and on a benefit-cost basis consider options ranging from basic maintenance, upgrade and disposal.

Council aims to balance its portfolio of assets to ensure they actively and sustainably contribute to the community.



Image courtesy of Tourism Tasmania - Curringa Farm

Community engagement and inclusion

Council is a formal instrument of community engagement and inclusion in governance, with locals making local decisions and representing local views and priorities. Council recognises that many other groups and individuals contribute to the community, its liveability and wellbeing by volunteering, providing services and employing people, sharing interests and organising events and activities. Council supports a wide range of these activities where a clear community benefit is demonstrated.

Council is a filter, gathering issues, concerns and ideas from individuals, organisations and communities and combining this with other information, knowledge in our statutory consideration processes to make informed decisions.

As has been consistently demonstrated, Council is committed to engaging with the community, seeking input and testing our responses to matters impacting the future of our community. Council will continue to schedule sessions with local communities and organisations, consult on specific issues and jointly work with and support organisations making a strong contribution to our community.

This provides the information to support Council's ongoing engagement and lobbying with a focus on State and Federal Government members, key agencies, regional and statewide organisations such as LGAT, NRM, Tourism South.



Image courtesy of Central Highlands Council

Community Wellbeing

Much of the sense of wellbeing that enables people and communities to flourish and fulfil their potential is founded on people's experience of place, where and how people participate in society. While individual values, life stage capabilities and goals vary, the strategies identified above are focused on improving community wellbeing by delivering and facilitating the foundation bundle of recognised beneficial determinants, including

- Access to housing, employment, education and health/care services,
- Physical, digital and social connection,
- Social and civic participation,
- Natural and built environment/amenity, and
- Community informed and focused decision making.

Continuity of our rural, outdoor culture and identity is a key dimension of wellbeing, and our sense of identity is central to much of our economy, recreation and lifestyle. It provides much of our connection between people and place and contributor to wellbeing as an overlay to the above determinants.

Passive and active engagement with the natural environment and outdoors is a further key wellbeing contributor to permanent residents and a driver for part-time residents and visitation. It can be viewed as Central Highland's competitive advantage, one to be enjoyed and promoted, as a culture and heritage based on the natural environment and people interconnection.

Council's strategic focus continues to place a high priority on,

- **Monitoring environmental quality, ensuring protection of water quality and critical ecosystems and supporting conservation and regeneration** through our compliance responsibilities and cooperation with State Agencies, NRM South and local groups. This includes evaluation of the impact of climate change and development of an adaptation strategy to manage identified risk arising from changing weather patterns,
- **Promoting our visitor attractions and advantages** by working with local operators and engaging with Destination Southern Tasmania and the Derwent Valley and Central Highlands Tourism Association in addition to our provision of local facilities and consideration of how we enhance our tourism precincts,
- **Supporting key events that actively promote our culture and increase visitation** to the Central Highlands, including "Bushfest" and the Hamilton Show, and
- **Focus on lobbying State & Federal Governments.**

1.4. Strategy Management, Implementation and Evaluation

The above strategies highlight the interconnected nature of how the community works and the necessity of a strategy mix which utilises all the tools available to Council and the community to ensure Central Highlands is the place Council and the community want it to be.

The business model and methodologies are designed to systemically connect Council's "why, what and how" we deliver our roles and responsibilities to provide the services, support, infrastructure and facilities to achieve these strategies and to adapt as necessary to changing circumstances.

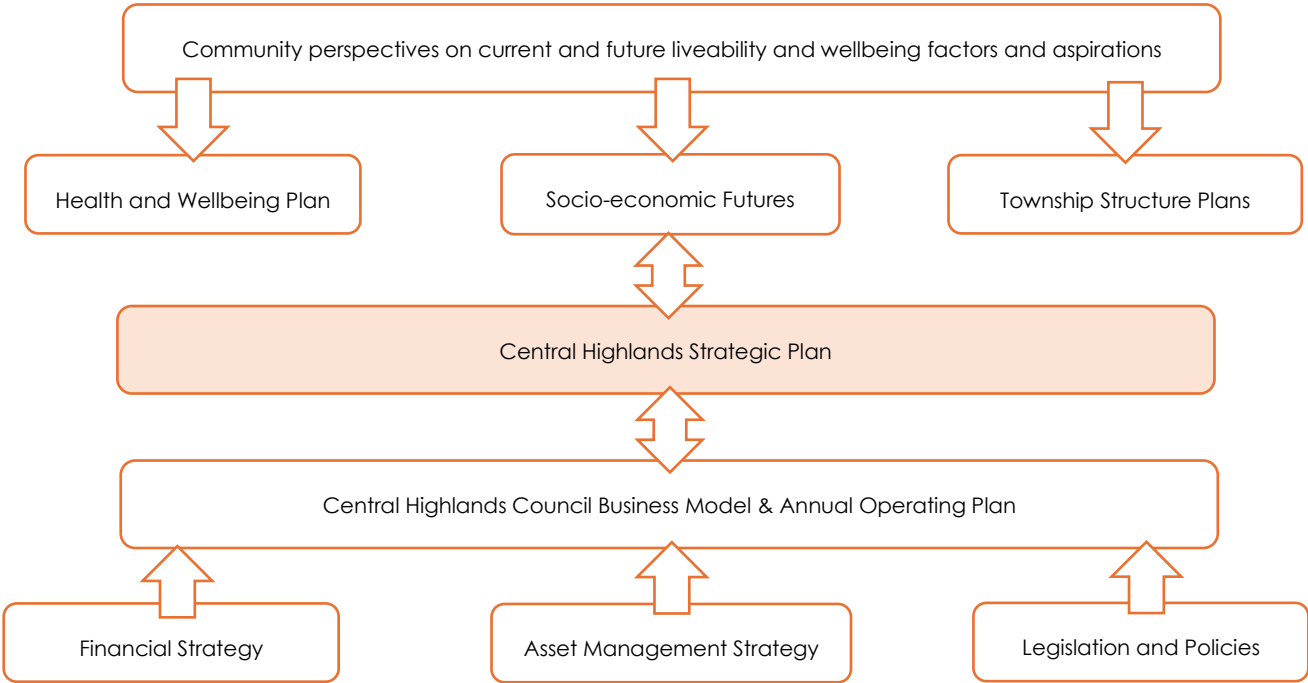
Designed on this model, Council's annual operating plan is included in summary form, allocating key governance and operational responsibilities and associated key performance indicators (KPIs).

Part Two – Council Business Model

2.1. Introduction

Councils 2025 Strategic Plan describes how we will work to contribute to the future liveability, prosperity and resilience of the Central Highlands community.

The Strategic Plan provides the overarching direction for and response to, specific purpose plans such as our financial, economic development, health and wellbeing, strategic land use planning and asset management strategies, and how these are actioned in our annual operating plan and budget.



Councils' business model connects strategic intent and focus with our strategic and operational decision making and activation. This combines our responsibilities under the Local Government Act (1993) and the community priorities identified in the extensive consultation conducted through the development of the Township Structure Plans in association with the Regional Land Use Strategy Review, the Future of Local Government Review process over the past couple of years, from other recent community consultation sessions across the municipality.

While plans are prepared for specific periods, Council recognises that conditions and circumstances change and as necessary, we very likely need to adapt within a shorter timeframe. The business model and our current strategies provide the reference point on which such decisions will be made, ensuring ongoing relevance. As a result, we have adopted a more structured, dynamic approach to strategy designed to better integrate our strategy with annual operations planning, activation and the management of resources to achieve them. This is a contingency and continuous improvement approach based on our development of clear key performance indicators and their measurement.

As a community you've told us many things, and we've drawn them into our governance and business processes in two dimensions

1. Strategic Intent, our purpose, key objectives and strategies, and
2. Our operations and the levers we can adjust to deliver the strategies with a focus on the contribution of the community, performance and productivity.

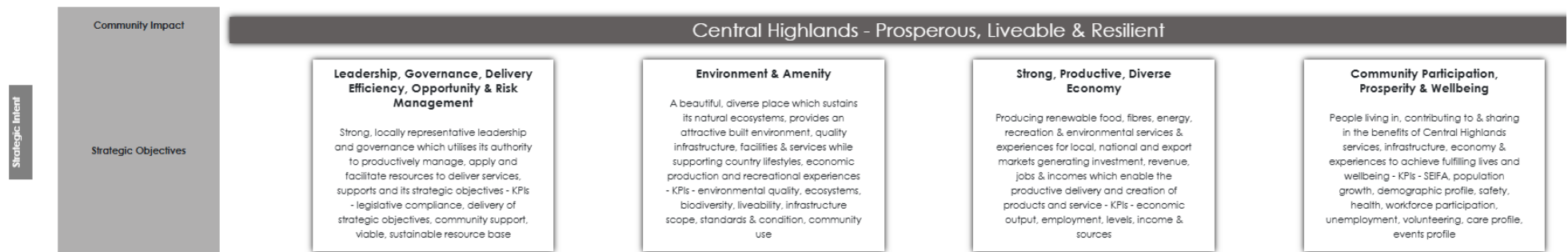
2.2. Our Strategic Intent

In essence, people want to experience, enjoy, share in and contribute to, a liveable, prosperous and resilient place. One which is a good place to live, caters to diverse interests through people's life stages, provides the opportunity to participate socially and economically and to enable us to handle and shape our lives in the face of change. As with any business model, it requires a clear articulation of purpose, why we do what we do, so people can connect to it and we can measure it.

Our strategic objectives and long-term impact we target provide the compass point for each decision made across our roles and responsibilities. Our approach to delivering this impact is focused on four key, interdependent objectives,

1. Strong community leadership and governance
2. Natural and built environment and amenity
3. A strong, productive and diverse economy
4. Community participation, prosperity and wellbeing

The diagram below highlights how these objectives work together to deliver the impact we aim for. If one (or more is not working) it impacts the others. Strong results in one can stimulate improvement in the others. All four are important.



2.3. Why these objectives?

The strategic focus on liveability, prosperity and resilience, and the associated four strategic objectives define our purpose and is based on the following conclusions,

Leadership and governance, delivery efficiency, opportunity and risk management – Leadership occurs across societies and communities as well as within our governance mechanisms. People take formal and informal leadership roles, often within community organisations and by demonstrating as “first movers” reflecting “what is possible”. Council is committed to supporting and complementing this leadership as part of our formal governance role, particularly by supporting groups, bringing opportunities and risks to the table for consideration, and by taking a lead in pursuing best beneficial practice and by bringing the community's interests and needs to the attention of other levels of government. We will measure our performance in ensuring we comply with legislation and regulations, how we're contributing to the four strategic objectives, community respect and support and the sustainability of the civic resource base and management.

Environment and amenity – This focus is on our footprint on the place, how our built environment, infrastructure and land use patterns frame our experience of place, what the place is like to live in and how it passes into future hands. This requires management of our natural environment, its landforms, seasons, differing ecologies, our settlements, their attractiveness and liveability, the stock of land available for building and importantly their infrastructure and the services which make them attractive, connects them up, keeps them in order, deals with waste and protects from hazards. We will measure our performance through the condition and changes to water quality, natural ecosystems and biodiversity and the balanced approach to retaining/developing key landscapes and townscapes that characterise Central Highlands.

Strong, productive, diverse economy – Our economy has always produced renewable, natural products, much for export markets. Its trend towards increased diversity and production intensity is working to reduce the periodic peak and trough cycle. Investment and climate trajectories are combining to strengthen the economy further and deliver new and more fulltime and seasonal job opportunities. Our objective is to support economic development, increase our resident population and to improve the profile of education, health and community risk management activity and services to improve liveability and to also underpin our capacity for increased economic development – a virtuous circle.

Community participation, prosperity and wellbeing – Central highlands is a diverse community with specific and often overlapping interests and values which influence where and how people choose to live and the focus of their time. As lifecycles evolve, so do priorities. The link between local economic operations, employment and resident population is important. As people age, the place also needs to accommodate their needs if people are to remain as residents. This connects liveability and our individual and collective capabilities to wellbeing and the role that the mix of services and facilities play at various lifecycle stages and in the transition from one stage to another, e.g. childcare through school and employment/training. Similarly with social interaction, health and residential care through to multi-generation residential liveability and wellbeing.

2.4. How Council will deliver the Strategic Intent

Councils operate under powers legislated in the Local Government Act (1993) and with complementary roles defined under specific-purpose State legislation. Within this context, and as a level of representative government, councils and councillors communicate and represent the interests of community members both within Council and to other levels of government and industry.

Councils' roles and responsibilities are summarised in the diagram below. They are the tools we have available to deliver and add value across the community and contribute to the objectives identified above.



It is important to consider how we apply these tools in a manner which is technically professional and reflects an approach and behaviours which mirror community values and expectations. In summary, this is identified as being active in working with the Central Highlands community to deliver sustainable benefits.

The following table maps and describes how Council applies our roles and responsibilities defined in the Local Government Act to deliver on our four objectives and their key performance indicators.

The table indicates why we do what we do and how we will measure our performance. At different times or in varied circumstances Council will apply additional effort to specific roles, as identified in 1.3 above.

			Strategic Objectives			
			Leadership, Governance, Delivery Efficiency, Opportunity & Risk Management	Environment & Amenities	Strong, Productive, Diverse Economy	Community Participation, Prosperity & Wellbeing
		Key Performance Indicators	Legislative compliance, delivery of strategic objectives, community support, viable, sustainable resource base	Environmental quality - ecosystems, biodiversity, pollutant levels Amenity - liveability, infrastructure scope, standards & condition, community use	Economic output, diversity, employment, levels, income & sources	Socio-economic indices (SEIFA), Pop growth, demographics, safety, health, workforce participation, unemployment, volunteering, care profile, events profile
Council Roles, Value Chain	Legislative & standards compliance, policy change	Compliance, use of policy & standards to progress opportunities & manage risks	Scanning of changes to identify new opportunities. Financial and operations auditing. Operations systems support, HR development & compliance	Monitoring the natural & developed environments to ensure quality & identify any compliance factors Awareness and utilisation of new policies and standards & opportunities to protect & improve	Awareness and utilisation of new policies, standards & opportunities to protect & improve economy & its benefits	Awareness and utilisation of new policies and standards & opportunities to protect & improve flow-on impact
	Community communication, representation & engagement	Community participation in process, feedback, satisfaction	Provide opportunities for participation, listening to and positively engaging with community to resolve issues and identify opportunities. Marketing & promoting CH, representing its interests to government & investors	Support & work with community organisations to actively contribute to conservation & rehabilitation	Committee structure to support & facilitate economic development	Structured, ongoing communication Actively engaging with a wide spectrum of community organisations. Awareness of their roles and inclusion in key initiatives, events
	Strategy, Policy & Operational Planning	Systemic, organisation wide plans, clear focus, awareness of external factors Achievement of objectives, delivery efficiency. Community alignment	Environmental scanning, analysis and integrated strategic and operational alignment. Integrate across state, local & community responsibilities	Integrate climate change & environment protection, risk mitigation, adaptation & resilience factors into local context	Use CH socio-economic futures strategy to support development & value adding	Use CH Health & Wellbeing Plan to frame, deliver and facilitate services Facilitate service and social infrastructure to optimise use & benefits
	Revenue generation & financial management	Revenue level, sources, equity Budget compliance, productivity, Investment capability	Actively develop & utilise the mix of available revenue sources to productively deliver priority services and infrastructure profile	Evaluate the benefit-cost link between investment in physical assets, environment and social & economic wellbeing	Advance renewables rating model, PILOR & social acceptability support to deliver a mix of strategic & community investment	Co-investment from government, industry & community, grants to complement CH expenditure & investment
	Land use planning & development approval	Development profile, number of applications, appeals, average determination time & time utilisation, compliance	Ensure land use planning identifies and facilitates beneficial use and development whilst managing risks and hazards to protect the community & sustainability. Buildings and their use compliant	Complete local structure planning for all communities, taking into account community values to appropriately protect the environment and improve liveability & amenity.	Identify and facilitate development that leverages our key economic advantages, capabilities and promote sustainable downstream value-add and synergy.	Ensure land use planning improves the attraction and cohesion of our towns and rural communities, encourages employment opportunities for all and steadily increases the standard of living across generations.

			Strategic Objectives			
			Leadership, Governance, Delivery Efficiency, Opportunity & Risk Management	Environment & Amenities	Strong, Productive, Diverse Economy	Community Participation, Prosperity & Wellbeing
			Key Performance Indicators	Legislative compliance, delivery of strategic objectives, community support, viable, sustainable resource base	Environmental quality - ecosystems, biodiversity, pollutant levels Amenity - liveability, infrastructure scope, standards & condition, community use	Economic output, diversity, employment, levels, income & sources Socio-economic indices (SEIFA), Pop growth, demographics, safety, health, workforce participation, unemployment, volunteering, care profile, events profile
Council Roles, Value Chain	Organisational, intergovernmental & business relations, advocacy & facilitation	Profile of supportive, meaningful relationships. Joint investment, & service profile & outcome results	Support the community to contribute to CH liveability, wellbeing and future. Improved service levels, coordination & co-investment to achieve best community result	Vertical integration of action & investment between Federal, State, Local Community to ensure a sustainable, value adding profile	VET in schools, reflects local opportunities, business experience. Post school VET locally through existing school campuses	VET in schools, integration of State, Provider & Local Community capabilities and funds to enhance health & wellbeing care services & supports
	Recurrent operations & services	Key asset condition, service quality, fit for purpose, accidents, incidents, operations productivity. Infrastructure which supports development	Assess quality & condition of assets and services to ensure they productively meet standards, needs and balanced within the scope & scale of Councils financial capability	Road, bridge, path, solid waste & drainage systems operations & maintenance which supports all season, safe mobility & activity, protect resources and mitigate risks. Public buildings and grounds, streetscapes, lighting, public conveniences, urban design which promote connectivity & activity	Improve connections with local suppliers to create opportunities to provide services to community & council	Facilitation of and access to high quality care, medical & support services which meet acute needs, life stage & emergency challenges and needs, supporting independence. Accessible, safe, fit for purpose public amenities, buildings, grounds & facilities with high utilisation rates
	Capital investment & leverage	% of asset value in updating assets. Jointly investing in assets with other entities to achieve standards, community benefit & future value/return	Optimise the portfolio of new technology, plant & asset investment, maintenance & upgrades mix to meet compliance standards, use, user experience & lifecycle cost Specific purpose grants, JV	Ensuring risk detection & operational assets and community infrastructure protects and enhances environmental and amenity values	Develop activity precincts to promote use and development, All season access infrastructure, Visitor facilities to promote year-round activity.	Scope of recreational, health & emergency services infrastructure & standards enable social & recreational inclusion, participation & voluntary services.
	Commercial activities	Cost recovery, Return on investment, Community benefit-cost ratio	Carefully identify & critically analyse gaps in assets and specialist services which deliver foundational community benefit or leverage further development & community returns		Visitor facilities which create amenity and also flow-on economic benefit to the community - caravan park, camping (potential seasonal accommodation)	Local facilities identified as important by the community operated with a level of cost recovery - Independent Living units, cemetery, pool etc
	Monitoring, reporting & evaluation	Ability to monitor performance, and positively adapt to circumstances	Recurrent and specific purpose reporting & analysis to monitor performance & support continuous improvement	Utilise asset condition register in conjunction with risk and use patterns to optimise cost & benefit	Ongoing economic profiling & analysis to identify & explore community opportunities	Utilise facilities condition register in conjunction with use patterns to optimise cost & benefit With community partners evaluate service profile match o needs
	Working with our community to deliver sustainable benefits	Council and community combine ideas and effort to deliver valued results	Structure engagement with organisations across the community, recognising its diverse locations, interests & contributions	Focus on our environment, settlements and development	Focus on our economy, its development & local employment, business participation	Focus on the critical services that support integrated health, education, events, interests combining to deliver lifestage liveability & wellbeing

2.5. Councils Statement of Strategic Principles and Practice

2.4 above provided a summary of what we focus on and why. This section outlines how Council will approach and action these key roles and responsibilities.

Working with our community to deliver sustainable benefit

This is an underlying principle which will be applied to all our roles and functions. The principle of including and partnering with our community to develop joint understanding of issues, opportunities and challenges and working to achieve benefits is mirrored in seeking community focused, mutually beneficial relationships with other levels of government, agencies and industry. Our focus is on ensuring joined-up activity which leads to mutual, community wide benefits.

Legislative and Standards Compliance – Policy change

Council's authority comes from the Tasmanian Government Local Government Act 1993 and other legislation focused on specific governmental functions. Compliance with the Act is non-negotiable. To ensure this Council's focus is to:

- Promote continuous improvement and self-assessment to ensure compliance and standards are achieved to deliver performance and sustainability.
- Encourage ongoing compliance by raising awareness of the obligations under the legislation. Inherent in this is a focus on consequences of non-compliance.
- Increase accountability and transparency of our performance.

Also inherent in this is awareness of how changes in policy creates new opportunities for the Central Highlands to pursue specific development initiatives and associated funding.

Community inclusion, representation and engagement

The Central Highlands community is widely dispersed, with diverse needs and changing life stage and circumstantial priorities. Understanding the factors which impact Central Highlands liveability and wellbeing is important if we are to attract and retain population and visitors, to support our socio-economic viability.

In addition to elected community representation on Council, wider community and specific purpose participation from people, the organisations and the businesses that have a stake in the future of the Central Highlands and are likely impacted by Council decisions is a requirement and guiding principle of effective Local Government.

Council recognises and respects the voluntary leadership and community contribution people make through organisations and as individuals. This is critically important in a smaller LGA where public resources are limited.

Council will ensure a program of engagement at the Council, Community Development Committees and Officer level with communities, community organisations and stakeholders to inform our decision making and support community interests and benefits to ensure our focus is aligned to changing needs.

Strategy, Policy and Operational Planning

Council's strategic plan identifies how we will meet our responsibilities under the Local Government Act, outlining the strategies and operational approaches needed to develop the long-term physical, social and financial sustainability necessary for our community to meet community need, priorities and aspirations.

It provides context, purpose and focus for our financial, asset management and annual operating plans. Also, and importantly, our future focused economic and health and wellbeing plans ensuring they are all connected and jointly contributing in an effective, productive way.

The strategic plan is Council's reference point for challenges which emerge, providing a tool to frame our decision making.

Revenue and financial management

Financial management focuses on using revenue for productive, valued service delivery, risk and opportunity management while creating surpluses to provide a buffer for unforeseen shocks. It also focuses on ensuring an acceptable return on investment, or benefit-cost relationship, and from a capital investment perspective, a strong community benefit-cost relationship for programs and capital works. The scope of this work includes financial plans, setting up financial controls, and strategic/daily financial decision making.

The financial plan is aligned to Council's Strategic Plan, designed to sustainably fund operations to achieve its defined objectives by precisely identifying and quantifying Council's available and potential resources. This enables annual and specific purpose budgets as the primary mechanism to allocate finances and other resources towards achieving its goals. This includes monitoring operational financing items like expenditure, revenues, cash flow, and accounts receivable and payable.

From a longer-term perspective, financial management also considers the lifecycle management of assets, their acquisition and disposal in line with Council strategy.

The development of bundled investment is important and will continue as a priority. This includes, for example, the investment in a facility which has multiple, complementary roles and joint venture investment combining, federal, state and local government funding and potentially, private funding.

In a period of rapid and largescale economic transition, some of the established methods of raising revenue for investment in shared community benefit, no longer delivers an equitable community outcome compared with the private or statewide benefit which accrues from use of the common wealth resources of the Central Highlands community. Renewable energy development is the major change in Central Highlands economic output. To address this, Council will continue to progress the ability for Council to apply equitable rating of wind farms, solar farms and battery storages by pursuing these matters with the developers, State and Federal Governments and other stakeholders.

Land use planning and development approval

Council operates as a land use planning authority under the Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993. Development application assessment and subsequent refusal or approval is its independent statutory planning role.

Council also has a strategic land use planning role, identifying what land use is desirable, where to encourage and facilitate desirable development which is aligned to its strategies and the identified environmental and socio-economic benefit. The land use zoning initiatives proposed by Council at this level are subject to Tasmanian Planning Commission approval.

Council uses strategic land use planning tools such as the "Structure Plan" to align zoning to our preferred future and other non-statutory tools such as special purpose precincts to guide our development focus and to ensure these locations are investment ready for both government grants and private investment.

Council's focus is to ensure the Southern Tasmania Regional Land Use Strategy (STRLUS) Review delivers the necessary planning tools to ensure development is achieved in Bothwell, Ouse, Hamilton, Miena and across smaller settlements and rural areas, while also supporting sustainable development from renewable energy access and in conjunction with traditional land uses and value adding.

Organisational, intergovernmental and business relations advocacy and facilitation

Communities work as systems, connecting people, governing mechanisms, businesses, community organisations, services and facilities. The way these combine, interact with and shape the built and natural environment they're located within, determines their liveability, wellbeing and resilience.

Council sits at the centre of this, playing a role in representing interests, making sense of differing views and ensuring the views, needs and priorities of community are expressed to other levels of government, with the result of "joined up", effective services and support to meet current community needs and support its sustainability.

Council's objective is to strengthen sustained dialogue and influence with the State and Federal Government and key industry sectors to progress the needs and aspirations of the Community and deliver mutual benefit.

Recurrent operations and services

Much of Council's resources are applied to meeting our day-to-day operational responsibilities associated with statutory roles, the provision of road and stormwater infrastructure, public buildings and conveniences, recreation facilities, parks and public facilities. We have a significant focus on ensuring that there is a foundation of key community medical, housing, care and emergency management/response capability to ensure both the wellbeing of the community and its safety. Council recognises the importance of these, along with education as necessary to translate the employment growth opportunities over the next decade into resident population.

Capital investment and leverage

Council utilises funds to maintain and upgrade the local road network which connects properties and provides interconnections between the State Road network to provide all season access. Within townships and settlements, this street infrastructure is complemented with open spaces and pathways to enable access to services, retail and hospitality and recreational facilities. Solid waste disposal services are provided to match the population density of towns.

Capital for new facilities or major reconstruction is periodically important to ensure the Council's asset profile matches contemporary needs. This investment is guided by benefit-cost analysis framed by Council's strategic plan.

Plant and equipment forms part of Council's asset base. It is important to day-to-day operations, private works contracts and as part of the response to major events and emergencies. The use levels, cost of ownership and emergency access play a part in own/hire decisions.

Council seeks to leverage best value for our expenditure and investment, actively targeting grant programs and seeking contributions where there is mutual benefit for both the community and key business interests to offset costs and to delivery additional community benefit. Similarly working with and supporting community groups and volunteers plays an important role in creating community capital.

Commercial Activities

Council operates a range of facilities and services which are designed to provide a direct and flow-on benefit to residents and business. Some, such a private works contracts return a profit, others are designed to break even, while others, such as the swimming pool, are based on a fee structure which reflects value to the community and therefore delivers only a proportion of full cost recovery. The principle which underpins provision of these facilities and services is based on the consideration of the socio-economic benefit which directly flows or will flow over time to the community compared with the cost. This includes social and economic perspectives in addition to the single financial return perspectives.

Monitoring, reporting and evaluation

To plan and program without performance measurement is a job part done. While the budget and annual report provide specific financial results and an overview of achievement, Council is committed to a journey of strong performance in meeting our strategic objectives, providing services and assets which are fit for purpose and productively delivered. The data to support this is in place, it is now a matter of using it in a more active way to support our operational and strategic decision-making processes and provide transparency to and confidence in, our operations and strategy.

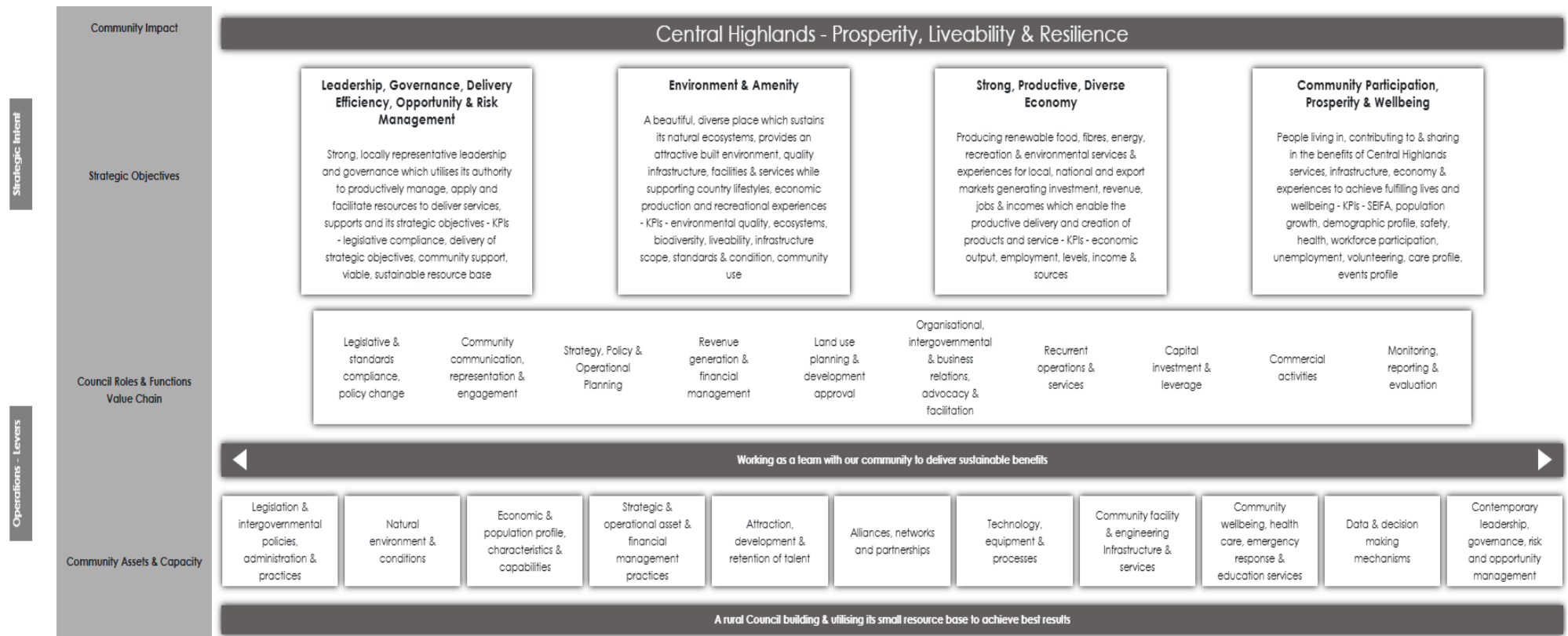
While this has a management and statutory role, it is considered part of our ongoing connection with the community.

As a component of this practice, Council will -

- Regularly report to the Community through media releases, The Highland Digest and Council newsletter(s) with the progress that has been made on the matters of greatest interest to our residents and ratepayers,
- Hold regular workshops in all areas of the Municipality to report on progress on matters of Community interest and develop new strategies to ensure progress is for the betterment of the Municipality.

2.6. Activating the Strategy in our Operating Plan

Council's strategy outlines its diverse roles, responsibilities, and areas of focus, with the business model showing how these will be activated to achieve the four strategic objectives. The diagram below illustrates the vital connection between strategy and operations, highlighting the community assets and capability foundations that underpin local activity, prosperity & wellbeing. It is through our day-to-day operations and commitment to these foundations that the strategy comes to life. For Council, this focuses on ensuring the community has the public assets, risk management capacity, and opportunity development systems needed to support both individual and collective efforts. Together, these elements enable the Central Highlands to grow as a prosperous, liveable, and resilient region.



The Local Government Act (1993) requires Council to prepare an annual operating plan and budget, what will be expended, where, when and why during the year. This tool activates our strategy, by allocating budget to essential administrative and recurrent operations and specific initiatives designed to implement the strategy. It is a key planning and management tool.

The annual plan for 2025/26 is summarised in the following table. It highlights the interrelationships between Council's roles and the performance and development of our community assets, utilising and maintaining them and as beneficial, improving their capacity. The assets of a community go beyond the physical assets such as roads, buildings and bridges, it includes our funds and the capabilities of our organisations, community organisations and industry.

Collectively a community develops, utilises and generally expands and further improves its public and private asset base over time and in response to opportunities and challenges. Prosperity, liveability and resilience require public and private assets to work together. As highlighted in the model above, community assets extend beyond physical infrastructure to include,

- Legislation, regulation, policy and administrative practice provide the rules relating to how public funds are raised and allocated and how private/public development occurs to generate opportunity while not negatively impacting other assets
- The natural environment and its natural and developed productive capacity which provides the foundation of the central Highlands economy and attractiveness
- Our population, its demographic profile, skills base, health and wellbeing which allows people to pursue their livelihoods and lifestyles across different life stages. The ability to attract and retain population is critical.
- People create communities through alliances, networks and partnerships across many differing perspectives, combining to achieve mutual benefits. Council is part of this interconnection across the community and between the community and other levels of government, regional and specific purpose entities
- Access to and use of technology and equipment enabling improved access, performance and productivity
- Local (and State) Government invests funds in the development and maintenance of the local road networks, the management of stormwater run-off, solid waste collection and disposal, recreations grounds and other facilities used by the community and visitors. These play an important role in our economy, social fabric and management of our environment
- Ensuring population safety, health, wellbeing and capability is central to our prosperity and liveability. The facilities and services which support this are key assets

- The governance models which exist across community organisations, within Council and which frame how intergovernmental relations work, how government to community/business relations work are central to how public and private efforts and investment work together to deliver wide community benefits.

The business model enables integration of the strategic plan and its "nested" operational plan, identifying how Council is committed to utilising and working with our community capacity and further building on our community assets.

The Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are the measures we will use to measure results and progress. They will be refined and form a part of our reporting.

2.7. Operating Plan 2025-26 – Delivery Pathways Summary

Councils' activity footprint is significant. While it is natural to think about it as specific functions, e.g. road maintenance, preparing the financial management plan, lobbying for services, the reality is that they all fit together and support each other. While we organise our work summarised below in columns and rows to achieve operational efficiency, we also must be able to step out of the silos to consider how the whole system is working together to deliver our strategy.

While some people will spend 95% of their time focused on their specific activity silo, the 5% taken to consider how it is impacted by (or impacts) other factors is important. Council & its executive staff have a broader view of how the whole system is working and while a specific challenge might be an issue to resolve, does it have a less obvious root cause or wider implications?

To support these 2 thinking dimensions and connecting them up, Council's Operating Plan is summarised below as our delivery pathway activity for this year. This identifies the mix of activities essential in meeting our ongoing responsibilities and implementing the strategy. It maps our footprint and effort by identifying the key activities associated with our role, how they will make a difference to the management, delivery and improvement of services, support and our community's assets, and how we will measure performance.

It is designed as an overview, behind this summary are the specific purpose plans and budgets.

Council Roles & Functions Value Chain	Community Assets & Capacity												
	Legislation & intergovernmental policies, administration & practices	Natural environment & conditions	Economic & population profile, characteristics & capabilities	Strategic & operational asset & financial management practices	Attraction, development & retention of talent	Alliances, networks and partnerships	Technology, equipment & processes	Community facility & engineering infrastructure & services	Community wellbeing, health care, emergency response & education services	Data & decision making mechanisms	Contemporary leadership, governance, risk and opportunity management	Key Performance Indicators	
	Legislative & standards compliance, policy change	Compliance management & updating, influencing change	Assessment of water quality, Derwent Catchment Project, NRM measures	Identify opportunities from policy changes	Benefit-cost approach to asset ownership, retention & development	promote and provide access to professional development training	LGAT & regional engagement		Asset condition re-assessment, prepare 10 year investment & management plan	Awareness of policy changes and implications	Reporting standards requirements compliance	Active participation in governance of LGAT, regional & industry organisations - focus on future environmental, economic & social conditions, opportunities & risk	Compliance, use of policy & standards to progress opportunities & manage risks
	Community communication, representation & engagement	Community engagement Council administration & support	Liaise with community organisations & land managers	Advocate for the community in service, & facility development to meet liveability requirements Plan work with local tourism, regional & promotion groups	External/grant funding to support volunteer & emergency services	Awareness leading to people volunteering and engaging positively as a community	Renewable energy PILOR allocation group formed & working Government agency links achieving results	Use of social media to connect Council to community	Gain insight into priorities to help consider right facility and infrastructure profile	Community organisation & event support Structured communications to gain insight into priorities	Extend community data profiles with local information	Regular attendance at community meetings Benefit - cost of key potential initiatives	Community participation in process, feedback, satisfaction
	Strategy, Policy & Operational Planning	Annual plan implementation management Strategic issue scanning & Identification for inclusion	Assess climate risk impact - mitigation, transition impacts & funding opportunities Work with STR Waste Authority	Plan for growth & investment in line with CH socio-economic futures strategy	Forward financial plan update	HR Plan & professional development program for councilors & employees. Potential extension to community committees Actively assess resource sharing opportunities	Engage key interests across CH	Equipment replacement program & schedule - efficiency gains focus	Develop 10 year asset management plan Maintenance program & schedule management	Community & youth engagement & partnership program Implement CH Health & Wellbeing Plan & Emergency Management Plan	Monitoring activity progress & budget compliance	Translating key opportunities & risks into policy & strategy Review and ensure continued relevance	Systemic, organisation wide plans, clear focus, awareness of external factors Achievement of objectives, delivery efficiency. Community alignment
	Revenue generation & financial management	Review financial plan, policies, update strategies		Manage community, activity grants	Work with Renewable Energy sector to develop balanced strategic & community interest funding model, Active grant seeking		Resource sharing, collaboration with community organisations Community grants program	Ensure technology & systems are productive	Own - hire equipment reassessment - productivity focus	Actively advocate & lobby for PILOR investment in services & facilities Actively pursue grant applications which add value	Develop asset condition index for all asset classes Assess benefit-cost to frame funding allocations	Best use of reserves & revenue in view of investment & recurrent operations	Revenue level, sources, equity Budget compliance, productivity, investment capability
	Land use planning & development approval	Assess & administer applications, Compliance	Sensitive, important location, ecosystem & waterway/quality protection	Support establishment of sustainable policy New Special Purpose Zone approval Residential precinct development, Rural living promotion		Resource sharing across Councils			Remove site & precinct upfront barriers to development			Promote interests to SLUP Consider & respond to development profile	Development profile, number of applications, appeals, average determination time & time utilisation, compliance
	Organisational, intergovernmental & business relations, advocacy & facilitation	Structured and specific issue engagement plan & schedule within CH and outside organisations	Work with land managers to control weeds, prepare emergency management plan, Work with Southern Tas Regional Waste Authority	Implement Socio-economic Futures Strategy Advocate to business and government	Federal precinct grant program application	Bringing key players to table,	Purposeful joint consideration & activity structuring		Lobby for support, Link to Activity precincts	Advocate for improved scale of community & emergency response services & access Implement Health & Wellbeing Plan		Working with major developers, active progress CH community & economic development to support and lobby to government in matters of community interest	Profile of supportive, meaningful relationships. joint investment, & service profile & outcome results

		Community Assets & Capacity											Key Performance Indicators
		Legislation & intergovernmental policies, administration & practices	Natural environment & conditions	Economic & population profile, characteristics & capabilities	Strategic & operational asset & financial management practices	Attraction, development & retention of talent	Alliances, networks and partnerships	Technology, equipment & processes	Community facility & engineering infrastructure & services	Community wellbeing, health care, emergency response & education services	Data & decision making mechanisms	Contemporary leadership, governance, risk and opportunity management	
Councils Roles & Functions Value Chain	Recurrent operations & services	Implementation, quality & budget compliance, productivity improvement	Roadside weed control, Waste management, collection, transfer, minimisation, re-use, circular	Develop supplier panel	Review plant asset management plan	Own vs hire evaluation for assets			Manage annual road, bridge, building, facilities and grounds maintenance, minor upgrade program & incidents arising	Foster & support activities, events & access Support for provision & extension of medical services, immunisation & on-site effluent disposal	Program cost review Unit rate cost benchmarks	Ensure transparency re the link & contribution to CH Strategic plan, health & wellbeing, socio-economic futures plans	Key asset condition, service quality, fit for purpose, accidents, incidents, operations productivity. Infrastructure which supports development % of asset value in updating assets. Jointly investing in assets with other entities to achieve standards, community benefit & future value/return
	Capital investment & leverage	Implementation, quality & budget compliance, impact evaluation		Invest in precinct development			Grants to leverage council funding	Support fire communications & alerts infrastructure	Manage annual road, bridge, building facilities and grounds capital works program	Advise on upgrading spaces to contemporary standards & encouraging use	Asset condition profile, use patterns and benefit-cost analysis	Ensure transparency re the link & contribution to CH Strategic plan, health & wellbeing, socio-economic futures plans	
	Commercial activities	Utilisation, returns & cost recovery management		Link community & business benefits			Activate Economic Development special committee		Perform private works contracts	Advise on & support funding strategy linking Department of Health, industry & Council resourcing to provide essential medical care & response services Progress & budget compliance reporting		Review operations of community facilities, their benefit & cost as the basis of viability decisions	Cost recovery, Return on investment, Community benefit-cost ratio
	Monitoring, reporting & evaluation	Specific project reports, operations reporting, Annual Report	Environmental monitoring Emergency fire alerts					System support to decision making analysis	Progress & budget compliance reporting Variations and issues arising reporting	Variations and issues arising reporting Health condition of food premises, public places and recreational waterways	Data capture & analysis	Ensure progress to plan & budget Ensure timely actions	Ability to monitor performance, and positively adapt to circumstances
	Working as a team with our community to deliver sustainable benefits	Satisfaction analysis, willingness to engage, Agreed objectives	Ongoing engagement with Derwent Catchment Project, STR Waste Authority & land managers and the community to ensure a strategic, effective approach environmental quality & sustainability	Actively implementing the socio-economic futures strategy by engaging with local business, developers and industry organisations	Ensuring Councils financial assets and practices are transparent	Demonstrating openness & professionalism which provides community confidence to engage with Council	Developing and supporting strong alliances to achieve, alignment, synergy and mutually beneficial results	Consideration of key information requirements & flow	Working to match infrastructure and services with local needs	Working to match facilities and services with local needs by combining the resources of government, the community and industry	Use of plan structures to make sense of signals we are receiving	Make decisions and present as a cohesive Council and community	
	Necessary capabilities	Outcome and equity focused policies guiding & linking strategy & operations	Ecosystem protection, enhancement Potential for environmental services Climate change adaptation, utilisation	Increased population & workforce, younger profile	Broaden and grow income across economy & Council	Increased technical proportion within labour force	Stronger, more aligned partnerships and their contribution	Productive use of technology & equipment	Productive delivery of safe, all-season capacity	Highly utilised, fit for purpose and cost effective	Evidence based, collaborative, evaluated		