



COMMUNITY CONSULTATION FOR STRATEGIC COMMUNITY PLAN OUTCOMES REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

In 2009, the State Government embarked on a Local Government Reform Program to:

- Improve long term and strategic planning by local governments;
- Ensure the community is engaged in the development of long term planning for the community;
- Integrate strategic planning with long term financial planning and business planning initiatives; and
- Build organisational and resource capability to meet community needs:

In order to achieve these objectives, the Department of Local Government (DLG) introduced an Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework, which is intended to “reflect good local government integrated planning practice and to assist local governments to increase their own integrated planning capacity and long term sustainability”¹. The Framework would require every local government to develop a Strategic Community Plan, which clearly links the community’s aspirations with Council’s vision and long term strategy, as well as a Corporate Business Plan. The Framework would also see the introduction of a suite of informing and supporting strategies such as Asset Management Plans, Long Term Financial Plans and Workforce Plans. New amendments have been made to the Local Government Act 1995 which will make the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework a mandatory requirement for all local governments in Western Australia.

In April 2012, the Shire of Manjimup (herein referred to as Council) engaged Cardno to assist in the development of the Shire’s Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework, which the Council has received funding for, from the State Government’s Royalties for Regions program.

Consultation Approach

To develop the Framework, a multi-faceted community engagement process was planned and undertaken with the purpose of:

- Engaging the community;
- Providing a forum to exchange information and provide feedback on issues between the Council and the community; and
- Involving the community to obtain their views on the current performance of the Council, the status of the community, future direction and long term vision.

The outcomes of the community engagement process is intended to be used to identify the community’s long term vision and key priorities, for incorporation in the 10 Year Strategic Community Plan.

¹ Department of Local Government (2010) *Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework and Guidelines*, p. 21

Cardno, in consultation with Council designed and implemented a comprehensive community engagement strategy which involved the following activities.

Distribution of a Community Survey

A community survey / questionnaire was developed and distributed to all households within the Shire and to all ratepayers based outside of the Shire boundary. The survey comprised of a variety of questions that focussed on the current status of Council's performance, areas for improvement and long term vision for the community. Approximately 5,500 surveys were distributed and an electronic version of the survey was also made available on the internet.

Facilitation of Workshops with the Community

Four (4) workshops were held in the townships of Manjimup, Pemberton, Northcliffe and Walpole during the week commencing 30 July 2012. The workshops provided an overview of the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework, and prompted discussions with the community on the following topics:

- Where we are now?
- What will the Shire of Manjimup look like in 20 years' time?
- What are the actions that can be undertaken to achieve the vision?

In addition to the community workshops, a number of youth targeted activities were also carried out. This included facilitation of a workshop which was attended by a group of students from Manjimup Regional High School and a youth survey, which was distributed during the Youth Expo. The objective of these activities was to gain an understanding of the key issues and concerns faced by the younger demographics and focussed on the following topics:

- What do you love most about the Shire of Manjimup?
- What would encourage young people to stay in the Shire?

Facilitation of Workshops with Elected Representatives and Council Staff

Workshops were held with elected representatives and Council staff for the purpose of presenting an overview of the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework, outlining Council's role and responsibilities with respect to delivering the Framework; and identifying, from the perspective of the elected representatives and staff:

- The current issues and challenges facing the community;
- Any limitations faced by the Council with respect to the delivery of services and goals;
- Key areas and opportunities for improvement; and
- The long term vision for the community.

Separate workshops were held with Council's elected representatives, Senior Management Team and Council staff.

Key Findings from the Survey

Of the 5,500 surveys distributed, a total of 399 survey responses were received. The following presents a summary of the key findings following an assessment of all survey responses:

- The key attributes enjoyed by residents and ratepayers are:
 - The natural environment;
 - The rural nature and size of the community;
 - The green space; and
 - The community spirit and people.
- With regards to the Council's performance, the highest levels of satisfaction were in relation to the provision of the following services and/or facilities:
 - Waste management / recycling;
 - Emergency services;
 - Community facilities (like libraries, town hall and visitor centres);
 - Parks and gardens;
 - Sports and recreation facilities; and
 - Customer service and focus.
- When asked about the overall performance of Council in service delivery in various areas, it should be noted that even in the least well-performing areas (those with the most 'very dissatisfied' and 'somewhat dissatisfied' responses), the overall number of 'dissatisfied' responses never breached 50%. Only two areas (*Roads, footpath and drainage construction and maintenance* and *Economic development and tourism*) had an overall dissatisfaction response rate of over a proportional 40% (if each category was allocated an equal representative 20%).
- There were only four categories in which the proportion of respondents that were either 'somewhat dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied' outweighed the number of respondents that were 'somewhat satisfied' or 'very satisfied', being:
 - Roads, footpath and drainage construction and maintenance;
 - Economic development and tourism;
 - Town planning / development approvals; and
 - Youth services.
- The most important services provided by Council were considered to be:
 - Roads, footpath, drainage, construction and maintenance;
 - Aged, disabled, health related services;
 - Economic development and tourism; and
 - Fire management.

- When respondents were asked what they would like to see improved in the Shire, responses varied quite widely but significant number of responses were concerned with:
 - Road, foot path and bicycle path condition improvement;
 - Encouragement of economic opportunities (tourism, employment, industry);
 - Youth/Senior services;
 - Elected Representatives' engagement with, and representation of, local community interests and broader community participation/input in Council decision making; and
 - Animal control.
- Key services that respondents would like Council to focus on over the next ten years are:
 - More business, economic and tourism opportunities;
 - More focus on agricultural production and food tourism;
 - Improved condition of road, footpath and drainage assets;
 - More focus on youth services; and
 - More focus on environmental management and sustainability.

The survey and workshops also identified that there is a general perception that Council is not modern, innovative or sustainable but was community focused and working for the most part, on what is best for the community at large.

Key Findings from the Workshops

Several topics were discussed during the workshops with community members, elected representatives and Council staff. It was evident from the discussion that the Shire faced a number of issues and challenges, some of which were within the realms of local government control, and others which were outside of Council's role and responsibilities.

The key themes emerging from the workshops in which Council may have some influence can be categorised into five (5) key focus areas. These are outlined below:

Economic

- There is a concern that the area may stagnate economically. There was a general perception that the Shire:
 - Has limited employment, growth and investment opportunities;
 - Lacks development opportunities for most people, but particularly the younger generation; and
 - Lacks training opportunities for youth development.
- There is support to:
 - maintain the historical economic base of the Shire (i.e. agriculture and forestry), but to encourage, in a variety of ways, the development and diversification of regionally-based

industry (including low-impact, sustainable, "cottage" and/or niche industry and targeted export opportunities);

- promote innovation and new / emerging technologies, which may be a source of new business opportunity and growth, and allow the Shire to become known for sustainable and alternative solutions;
- continue promoting and encouraging tourism whilst still focusing on and identifying other opportunities to boost the local economy.

Environmental

- There is general support from within the community to:
 - Promote and encourage environmental sustainability in parallel with economic development; and
 - Balance development, lot size and the preservation of the unique amenity (e.g. Karri Forests) of the local area.

Social

- There are growing concerns within the community that:
 - drugs and alcohol abuse were highly visible in the community, and were believed to be contributing to a negative impact in the community;
 - there are insufficient health care services available within the Shire; and
 - there are a lack of tertiary education or training services for youth and/or unemployed people, which may potentially result in people leaving the Shire to pursue opportunities elsewhere.
- There was general support from the community to pursue alternative recreational activities to accommodate people who may not wish to or be able to participate in sports.
- There was support to retain the community spirit and develop a close-knit feel of the Shire and townships.

Governance/Civic Leadership

- There is general consensus for elected representatives to participate and engage in more community activities, and have greater face time with residents and ratepayers.
- There was a desire for greater transparency and open communication, particularly in relation to keeping the community informed of decisions and outcomes of meetings, as well as providing and utilising different avenues and mediums for communicating with the public.

Infrastructure

- Roads and footpaths were identified as in need of improvement, with particular focus on improving the roads located between townships. There was a desire to have more passing lanes constructed as many respondents felt this was a fundamental safety issue, but responsibility for the creation of overtaking lanes lie outside of Council's area of control.
- There was also a strong focus to provide infrastructure and facilities specifically catered to the youth and senior demographics.

Interpretation of Results

The results received from the survey and workshops were analysed and interpreted to formulate the following for consideration and future incorporation into the Strategic Community Plan:

- Proposed Community Vision Statements;
- Key Focus Area definitions; and
- Perceived Areas of Importance.

Proposed Community Vision Statement

Seven proposed vision statements have been drafted for consideration with the preferred option to be included in the Strategic Community Plan. These vision statements are intended to outline the status of the Shire in the next 10 years:

Option	Proposed Vision Statement
1	Our vision is for the Shire of Manjimup to be safe, healthy, prosperous and attractive, offering a diverse variety of services, facilities and infrastructure aimed to promote sustainability and resilience.
2	The Shire of Manjimup is a thriving, connected and resilient region full of proactive residents that have secured a prosperous future by promoting and protecting their two greatest natural assets – pristine forests and vibrant, inclusive communities.
3	In 2022, the Shire of Manjimup is a progressive, connected and resilient region that has thrived by being proactive, optimistic and open to opportunity, valuing its natural assets – pristine forest and friendly and inclusive community.
4	The Shire of Manjimup is a forward-looking, progressive and resilient region that prospers by being proactive, innovative and valuing and fostering its most valuable assets – its pristine forests and friendly, inclusive and safe communities.
5	The Shire of Manjimup is a confident, proactive and resilient Shire that recognises that its strength lies in its natural and human assets.
6	The Shire of Manjimup is a diverse, resilient and capable Shire filled with committed, passionate and engaged people, working together to build a future.
7	We are a thriving regional centre which is safe, liveable and welcoming. We value our quality of life and embrace our natural environment which affords us both economic and recreational pursuits. Our industries are recognised for their resilience, quality and innovation and for their contribution to the state of Western Australia. Our economic diversity provides business and employment opportunities for all.

Key Focus Areas

It was found that the outcomes of the workshops and survey identified the key concerns and aspirations, which could be categorised into five key focus areas. To place these focus areas into perspective, the following statements have been drafted to signify what each of these would mean to the community. These focus areas are suggested to guide Council when pursuing improvement opportunities across the Shire.

Key Focus Areas	What it means to us
Environment	We value, and work to nurture and enhance our natural environment and prioritise the protection of our natural resources and landscape in all our endeavours.
Economic Development	<p>We are a prosperous Shire that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ recognises the vital contribution of agriculture ▪ makes and provides opportunities for economic growth ▪ supports and fosters industry, initiative and innovation in seeking new opportunities to enhance our Shire's economic health ▪ will not pursue growth at any cost by balancing the need for economic development with all our other community key focus areas.
Social	We are a connected, friendly, industrious and diverse community that fosters inclusion, resilience and self-sufficiency, where people feel safe, capable and supported in their endeavours.
Infrastructure	We work together to advocate for the needs of our residents for improved levels of health, water, energy, communications and transport infrastructure to be provided by State Government, to meet increasing demand and to support our growth as a community.
Civic Leadership	Our Councillors and community leaders have vision, are accessible, act with transparency and integrity, and act in good faith on behalf of their constituents.

Perceived Key Areas of Importance as Identified by the Community

The results from the workshops and surveys also identified that the community perceives the following as the key areas of importance and areas which should be concentrated on and considered by Council when developing future programs and initiatives:

- Pursue sustainable and appropriate growth for the community;
- Provide a transparent and interactive governance and leadership;
- Develop a unified community identity, spirit and culture;
- Create a strong and prosperous shire; and
- Improve infrastructure and facilities planning.

Next Stage

The aim of this community consultation program was to gain an understanding of the community's views on a range of key issues and understand their priorities to inform the development of a Strategic Community Plan for the integrated Planning Framework as required by legislation.

Based on the outcomes received from the community engagement process, seven community vision statements have been drafted to identify how the Shire of Manjimup should be viewed within the next 10 years. In addition, five focus areas and perceived areas of importance have also been identified and it is intended that these will form the basis for the development of the Strategic Community Plan.

It is therefore recommended that Council:

- Report the findings of the community engagement process to the community;
- Identify and endorse a community vision statement from the seven options provided for incorporation into the Strategic Community Plan;
- Review and confirm the proposed key focus area statements;
- Review and confirm the perceived key areas of importance;
- Present to the community Council's resolution with respect to the preferred community vision statement, focus area statements and perceived key areas of importance;
- Commence development of the Strategic Community Plan which will address the requirements of the State Government and include the endorsed community vision statement, key focus areas and perceived areas of importance, as well as:
 - A set of strategic priorities and associated planning themes;
 - An outline of where we are now, where do we want to be, and an action plan to achieve the vision and priorities; and
 - A plan to assess how the Strategic Community Plan is succeeding; and
- On completion of the draft Strategic Community Plan, place it on public exhibition to provide the community with an opportunity to review and provide comment and feedback prior to finalisation and adoption.