

Delivering Better Services

A Framework for providing best value services to the community





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About the Framework

Wingecarribee Shire Council delivers a variety of services to the community. This includes both *external* services, or those providing direct services to the community, as well as *internal* services such as People and Culture, and Finance.

Our aim is to ensure that all our services are effective, affordable, and meeting community needs. To achieve this, we need to ensure our services are well planned, appropriately resourced and able to adapt in changing times.

Planning and reviewing services in a systematic and considered way helps us to deliver better services. This includes talking to the community about acceptable, and affordable levels of service: in other words, what services will be provided and to what quality or standard.

Delivering Better Services: a framework for providing best-value services to the community, outlines Council's approach to both planning and reviewing our services.

Our Road Map for Continuous Improvement

In 2021 Our Road Map: Moving Forward as an Organisation was developed with a view to refocusing, reinvigorating and rebuilding the organisation.

The Road Map defines three horizons for the organisation to work towards. In the first instance, we want to get back to basics; creating strong foundations upon which to rebuild.

The principles guiding the Road Map helped to inform the *Delivering Better Services Framework*This includes embedding sustainability in our work and decision making; placing the community (customer) first; committing to continuous improvement; focussing on outcomes and making decisions that are supported by evidence.



The Service Challenge

Achieving the right balance between affordable and acceptable levels of service is a challenging task. This is because councils are restricted in regard to how they raise revenue.

At the same time, the community has certain expectations about the quality of services provided, how services are delivered and the impact of delivering these services on people and the natural world.

Rates are the Council's main source of income and are used to fund a multitude of services. In some cases, Council will charge fees for the use of services. The rate peg, which is set by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal of New South Wales (IPART), determines how much rates can increase each year. Increases are generally not enough to meet growing demand or cover the costs of delivering services to the community.





This means that local government needs to be more innovative and efficient; sometimes delivering more year on year, but with less.

Our Objectives

Best value services are, by definition; effective, accessible, efficient, and affordable.

For services to be sustainable into the future they should be:

- achieving positive outcomes for the community
- · supporting the strategic objectives of Council and the community
- relevant to the community and its needs
- working in harmony with the natural environment
- informed by genuine community engagement on levels of service
- making the most of limited resources
- meeting required standards (including legislated)
- adaptable to future community needs and methods of service delivery
- open to innovation and striving for best practice

How we achieve best-value

Council facilitates two, closely aligned activities that working together, help us to deliver better services to the community.

The first activity involves regular **service planning**, monitoring and reporting.

The second involves reviewing the services we deliver and making changes where needed.

Council also undertakes one-off business improvement activities to improve the customer experience and realise efficiencies.

Examples of specific business improvement activities include:

- redesigning inefficient processes
- streamlining workflow and
- · reducing waste





What is a Service?

Council delivers both external and internal facing services.

<u>External services</u> provide a direct customer service to the community, including people who are residing, visiting, working or studying in the Shire. Examples include sport and recreation facilities, road maintenance and waste collection.

<u>Internal services</u> are those that mostly support Council staff to carry out their day to day activities. Examples include finance, people and culture (human resources) and governance.

Some services are required under local government legislation (e.g., waste) while others are optional (e.g., aquatic centres). Most services are regulated in terms of how they are delivered and to what standard.

Services at Wingecarribee are grouped by Service Area and include Principal Activities.

Principal Activities include sub-services. For example; Resource Management and Waste (Service Area) includes Waste Services (a Principal Activity) which in turn includes Domestic Waste Collection (a sub-service).

When we plan for services we consider the full depth and breadth of the service and its activities. Service Reviews on the other hand may involve evaluating an entire Service Area or focusing on a particular Principal Activity or sub-service.

A full list of our Service Areas and Principal Activities can be found on page 18.

About Service Planning

Service Planning is the process of identifying both the strategic and operational activities a service needs to undertake to achieve its objectives; who is responsible and what resources are required.

Under this Framework all Council run Service Areas are required to carry out short (1 year), medium (4 year), and long term (10 year) planning to achieve the vision in the Community Strategic Plan and improve community (customer) satisfaction with service delivery.

Planning for the immediate term, while keeping an eye on the future, encourages service managers, coordinators and staff, to think critically and strategically about service provision and better manage risk.

It also builds an evidence base on which the service manager and the Council can make more informed decisions about levels of service and resource allocation.

When planning for services, relevant measures and targets are put in place to help us keep track of and evaluate our performance.

We review our approach to Service Planning every year to identify areas for improvement.

Typically, the annual Service Planning cycle involves identifying and documenting the following for **each Principal Activity** within a Service Area:





- Strategic priorities driving service delivery
- Issues impacting the service; both challenges and opportunities
- Priority actions to be undertaken that year, how they will be measured and who is responsible for delivering them
- Resources required and any resourcing gaps
- Risks attached to the service and how they will be mitigated

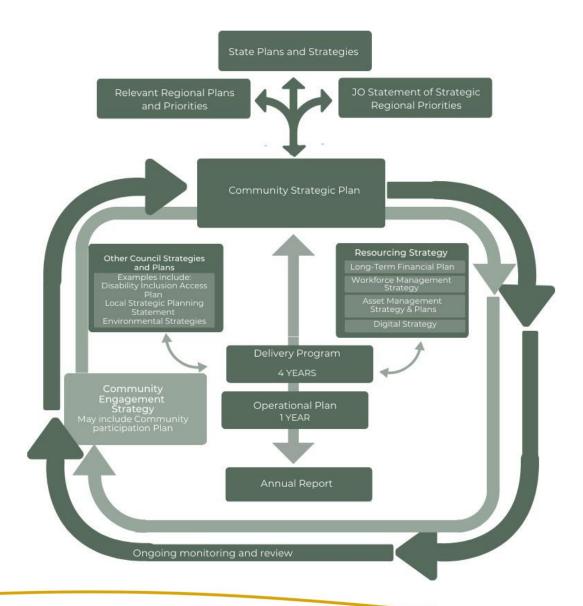
This information helps to build Council's annual Operational Plan and Budget.

Medium term and Long term Planning

At least every four years, the organisation embarks on a strategic planning process which considers the medium term (4 year) as well as the long term (10 year) horizon.

This process is aligned to the **Integrated Planning and Reporting** cycle, the local government elections and the review of the Community Strategic Plan.

This helps us to ensure services are reflecting current community needs and priorities while also planning for future communities and methods of service delivery.





About Service Reviews

All councils in NSW are required under legislation to undertake Service Reviews.

A Service Review is the process of considering the costs, quality and efficiency of a Council service and assessing the appropriateness of how the service is currently being delivered. The process also helps us to identify if the service is socially and environmentally responsible.

It is a process of data collection that enables Council to make better informed decisions about the services it delivers.

A Service Review may result in small adjustments or significant changes to a service.

The scope of a review is dependent on the objectives and may include reviewing an entire Service Area, a Principal Activity or a single sub-service.

When reviewing services under a best value framework we consider:

- Strategic objectives why the service exists and what it seeks to achieve
- Service delivery outcomes how well the service is being operated in order to achieve the strategic objectives
- Quality the quality of the services delivered, reflecting user experience
- Fair access ease and equality of access to services¹

Information captured in our Service Plans helps to inform our Service Reviews as it is here that we establish our baseline data.

In turn, the results of Service Reviews directly inform future service planning.



¹ The Principles of Best Value: Department of the Environment UK (1997)



Developing a Program of Service Reviews

Service Reviews take time. They require considered planning, project management and resourcing. It is important therefore that we have a methodology in place for prioritising and programming Service Reviews.

We consider the following criteria when prioritising reviews:

Importance – the level of importance placed by the community or organisation on the service

Satisfaction – the level of user satisfaction with the service

Value – the cost of the service and return on investment

Performance - results against agreed service measures, benchmarks and indicators **Impact** - of the service on the organisation, community, environment, and/or economy **Risk** - the severity, urgency and likelihood of issues impacting the service; for example, potential changes to legislation, funding arrangements or service delivery models **Legislation** - whether the service is required (or not) under local government legislation and any issues of non-compliance.

Council will call on a range of information when responding to the criteria, including but not limited to; the results of community surveys, risk assessments, financial performance, stakeholder input and environmental scans.

A program of service reviews will be developed every four years as part of Council's regular strategic planning cycle. The program will be published in Council's Delivery Program and reviewed each year to ensure it remains consistent with community and organisational priorities.

The Council may also use its discretion to undertake a review outside of the published schedule.

The program is subject to change and may be dependent on the capacity of the services to participate in a review and available resources.

Service Review Principles

In conducting Service Reviews, the Council will ensure that the:

- customer (community) needs are at the heart of decision making
- process, methodology and reasons for decision-making are transparent and easy to understand
- scope of a review is adequate and appropriate to the service
- purpose and outcomes of service reviews are clearly communicated to stakeholders
- service reviews and associated recommendations are not considered in isolation and any impacts (for example on another service) are considered <u>prior</u> to making a decision
- decisions support fairness and equity of service provision
- process helps to build staff capacity and capability, supporting a culture of continuous improvement
- opportunities such as revenue generating, cost savings, and business improvement initiatives are considered
- Council's financial goals are supported





Our Process

The process for undertaking a Service Review is supported by a set of Guidelines (page 14) which provides staff with information about the steps involved in carrying out a review, the type of information that needs to be considered, and at which point.

In general, all service reviews will follow the steps demonstrated in Process Diagram 1.

Scope of Service Reviews

The scope of a Service Review will be dependent on the nature of the service and will take into consideration the size, complexity, cost and impact of the service.

The scope will also consider the quality, condition, function, utilisation, and capacity of the physical assets required to provide the service.

Where a service is dependent on a physical asset or multiple assets, technical requirements and levels of service will need to be considered alongside community feedback.

The Community's Role

The community plays an important role in in how we plan and review services. It is a key stakeholder in most of the services provided by the Council.

Council undertakes community satisfaction surveys on a regular basis to help inform service delivery and identify areas for improvement.

General engagement on levels of service will be carried out at least every four years to help inform our strategic service planning.

In the first instance, Council will use currently available community engagement data to inform a review.

Process Diagram 1

In cases whereby there is limited (current) data available about a service, or more information is needed, targeted customer engagement may be required.

Council has a Community Engagement Strategy which addresses when, how and why the Council will engage with the community including; residents, property owners, business owners, service customers, and other service providers including State and Federal government and neighbouring councils.





Any community engagement carried out to inform a Service Review, will be in line with our strategy and every Service Review Project Plan will include a stakeholder engagement plan.

Governance, roles and responsibilities

Service Reviews can be complex and all reviews, no matter their size and scope, will require resourcing. It is important therefore to have a sound governance structure in place to provide over-sight of the work and ensure resources are prioritised appropriately.

Who	Role
Council	Adopts a program of Service Reviews, provides approval for individual Service Reviews and considers the outcomes.
	Only the Council can approve the implementation of recommendations made as a result of a Service Review.
Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee	Provides expert advice and input towards the overall Service Review process as well as individual reviews.
Executive Team	Makes formal recommendations for the consideration of the Council. This includes which services should be prioritised for review.
	The Executive is also responsible for monitoring the implementation of service reviews ensuring compliance with the adopted Framework.
Directors	Sponsor relevant Service Reviews
Review Team	A Review Team will be established at the commencement of the process to develop the project plan and undertake the review. Membership will be determined by the Executive. Membership will vary depending on the service and scope of the review.
	The Team will be led by a Project Manager. The Project Sponsor (usually a Director) will be responsible for reporting progress to the Executive.
	In some instances, a service review may be undertaken by an external reviewer or team.
Service (Branch) Managers	Managers work with the Review Team to validate the data. They are also responsible for managing the implementation of recommendations stemming from a Review.
Service Coordinators	Coordinators work closely with the Service Manager and Review Team assisting in the identification and collation of accurate and timely data.





Evaluating the Framework

The *Delivering Better Services Framework* will be reviewed every four years, following the local government elections.

In reviewing the Framework, the new Council will consider:

- appropriateness of the Framework to the current service environment
- feedback from stakeholders on the effectiveness of the Framework
- community or customer satisfaction with service provision
- outcomes of the service review program



Service Plan Structure

Each **Principal Activity** within a Service Area will have a Service Plan which includes a statement about the services it provides to the community.

The Service Statement component will be available to the public via the annual Operational Plan and include key information about the current service e.g., description, levels of service and annual budget. This section is updated annually.

The Service Plan component is an internal document that includes information about the longer term service goals, issues that may impact the service in the future and actions to help achieve our goals and manage risks.²: This section is updated at least every 4 years.

Key actions from the Service Plans, including business improvement initiatives, are made available to the community in both the annual Operational Plan and four-year Delivery Program.

All service planning, must be:

- ensuring compliance with legislation and regulation applicable to the service
- o in alignment with the strategic objectives of Council and the community
- o evidence based, using reliable data
- o assessing performance against service benchmarks and targets
- identifying and mitigating risks
- o considering resource implications and impacts on Council's Long Term Financial Plan.

Typically, Service Plans³, will respond to the following four questions.

- 1. Where are we now?
- 2. Where do we want to be?
- 3. How will we get there?
- 4. How will we know when we have arrived?

² A Service Plan is a living document designed largely as a planning tool for staff.

³ At the time of developing the Framework this process was in its infancy with medium and long term planning scheduled to commence in late 2024.



Example Service Plan Structure

Part 1 - Where are we now?

(By Principal Activity)

- a. Name of the Principal Activity (PA)
- b. Service or Branch Area
- c. Responsible Officer
- d. Service Description
- e. Sub-services within the PA
- f. Strategies guiding the Service
- g. Core activities
- h. Policies and legislation
- i. Assets e.g., buildings, plant supporting the Service and associated arrangements
- j. Leases, licences and contracts
- k. Key stakeholders (including community/customers of the Service)
- I. Current levels of service
- m. Annual Budget

Part 2 - Where do we want to be?

- Issues both challenges and opportunities, impacting the Service in the short, medium and long term
- b. Service Goals in the short, medium and long term
- c. Strategies to achieve our Goals

Part 3 - How will we get there?

- a. Managing our Service Risk
- b. Resource Planning
- c. Stakeholder Engagement (includes community)
- d. Marketing Plans (for commercial activities)
- e. Business Improvement initiatives
- f. Annual Action Plan (Operational Plan actions, improvement initiatives, measures and targets against actions)

Part 4 - How will we know we have arrived?

- a. Performance measures and indicators (including benchmarks if relevant)
- b. Baseline data
- c. Targets





How we develop the Service Review Program

The Service Review Program is developed every 4 years and reviewed annually. The program may change and is dependent on available resources, emerging issues or new priorities.

Council may also use its discretion to undertake a Service Review outside of the published schedule.

Please note that 'stakeholders' is a broad term used throughout this document to include anyone, including members of the community, who may be impacted by or has an interest in the service. Stakeholders will vary and who is engaged in the process will be dependent on the type of service and the scope of the review.





Service Review Guidelines

The following is a guide for undertaking Service Reviews. It applies to all stages in the Service Review process. Additional activities and information may be required depending on the scope and size of the review. For example, commercial activities will require more comprehensive financial information such as profit and loss statements, progress towards long and short term revenue targets and information about market activity.

Activity	Description	Responsibility
1. Scope the review	Determine the extent of the review and what is both in, and out, of scope based on agreed objectives. For example, does the review consider the full Service Area, a Principal Activity of the Service or a range of functions/sub-services? Who needs be engaged as part of the process? The scope will be guided by the objectives and must be endorsed by the Executive and minuted.	Executive Team
2. Prepare a project plan	The Plan should include	Project Manager and Review Team
3. Collect information	Information to be reviewed will include data from Service Plans as these establish a baseline and capture some of the information below. Where possible, services should complete or update their Service Plans prior to a Review. Information may include: • Legislative requirements • Strategy guiding the Service • Service Risks • Current Levels of Service versus agreed Levels of Service • Technical Levels of Service – quality, condition, utilisation and capacity • Resourcing - workforce, technology, operating costs, assets • Community or customer satisfaction • Service Performance – against agreed measures, indicators and targets • Benchmarking i.e., against similar services	Review Team. Relevant Service Manager and Coordinators





Activity	Description	Responsibility
4. Conduct the Review (Analysis, Scenarios and Options)	 Identify the key drivers of change (issues) affecting the service along with the potential or realised impacts Investigate options for addressing the issues Investigate funding scenarios Draft recommendations 	Review Team
5. Engage Service Stakeholders*	Implement the stakeholder engagement plan as developed in Step 1. This might include workshopping options or draft recommendations with key stakeholders including the Executive, and the Audit Risk and Improvement Committee. *Stakeholder is a broad term which refers to anyone who has interest or concern in the Service. This includes members of the community that utilise or are impacted by the Service.	Project Sponsor and Project Manager
6. Report Recommendations	Develop a Service Review report which includes: • An executive summary inclusive of key recommendations • Introduction to the Review • Rationale for the Review • Methodology • Results of stakeholder engagement • Issues identified • Options • Recommendations	Review Team
7. Implement, monitor and evaluate	Once the Service Review recommendations have been adopted, the outcomes and next steps must be communicated to relevant stakeholders. An Implementation Plan will need to be developed and approved. Evaluate the actual review process. Consider the overall effectiveness of the process and what can be improved for next time. Report the findings to the Executive to help inform future service reviews. The outcomes of the Service Review should be communicated to Council within 18 months of the review (or at the discretion of the Council). The evaluation should consider: 1. What we did 2. How well we did and 3. Is anyone or anything better off as a result TM TM Results Based Accountability	Council Executive Project Manager and Review Team Service Manager



Service Review Report – Structure Guide

The below is a guide only. Service Review Reports will generally follow the structure below.

1. Executive Summary

- o Overview of methodology and results
- o Key Recommendations

2. Introduction

- Drivers of the Review (rationale)
- o Objectives
- Scope
- o Overview of methodology and process
- o Approach to Stakeholder Engagement including
 - i. Purpose of engagement
 - ii. Stakeholder map who, both internally and externally, is to be engaged and why (level of impact on the outcome)
 - iii. Methodology including key activities and timelines

3. About the Service

- Service description
- Service goals
- Principal Activities (and Sub-Services)
- Strategy guiding the Service
- o Resources e.g., workforce, budget, systems, assets
- Current levels of service (e.g., quality, frequency, accessibility, fitness for purpose, capacity, utilisation)
- Legislation and regulation
- o Performance Measures

4. Service Analysis

- Issues impacting the Service (consider both challenges and opportunities)
 Examples include
- o community or customer satisfaction with the service
- o changes to the external or internal operating environment
- o changes to legislation
- o performance against sector benchmarks
- o performance against internal performance measures
- o risk assessment
- o other social, technological, environmental, economic or political issues or trends impacting the service or predicted to impact the service

5. Financials

- How the Service is funded
- o Financial Performance
- Long term funding options
- 6. Results of stakeholder engagement
- 7. Other supporting information
- 8. Key Findings and Options
- 9. Draft Recommendations and Next Steps



Service Areas and Principal Activities

The list below is a guide only. There are numerous sub-services within a Principal Activity (not listed here) and service planning will take all of these sub-services into consideration. Service Reviews on the other hand, will factor in all those sub-services relevant to the objectives of the review. Please refer to page 5 for more information.



Civic Leadership

General Manager's Office and Executive Leadership Civic Functions and Councillor Support



Assets

Buildings Roads and Drainage Water and Wastewater Assets Recreation and Open Space Cemeteries Public Art



Business and Property

Animal Shelter Southern Regional Livestock Exchange Property Services Outside School Hours Care Tourism and Events



Community Life and Libraries

Community Development Place Management Library Services Arts and Cultural Communication and Engagement



Environment and Sustainability

Natural Resources Projects Sustainability Services Bushlands and Biosecurity



Development Assessment and Regulation

Development Engineering Services Development Assessment Compliance and Regulation



Project Delivery

Project Delivery (Capital Works)



Resource Management and Waste

Waste Operations

Waste Services



Shire Presentation

Aquatic Services, Building Maintenance and Tree Management Open Space Roads Infrastructure Construction and Maintenance Fleet

Customer Service and Business Support



Strategic Outcomes

Strategic Policy Strategy and Place Economic Development



Water Services

Depot Operations Sewage Treatment Wastewater Network Operations Water Network Operations Potable Water Treatment



Governance and Corporate Performance

Governance Integrated Risk Management Strategy and Business Improvement



Financial Services

Financial Services Procurement and Contracts Grant Programs and Funding



Information and Customer Service

Corporate Information Customer Experience Facility Booking +355 Committees Information and Communication Technology – Systems

Information and Communication Technology - Infrastructure



People and Culture

Human Resources Policy, Strategy and Organisational Development





Glossary

Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee	A committee of experts that provides independent oversight, advice and assurance to Council on matters including governance, risk, performance and compliance.
Best Value	A term used in government policy to describe the overall value of a service, not just in financial terms, but in value to the community. It considers service effectiveness and efficiencies and how services are achieving continuous improvement.
Business Improvement	Activities aimed at improving the service and customer experience e.g., achieving efficiencies by reducing wasteful activities and streamlining processes.
Continuous Improvement	An ongoing approach to making incremental improvements to how we work.
Executive Team	The organisation's core leadership team. Comprises the General Manager and Directors.
Governance	The term applied to the rules, structures, actions and decision making processes that are used to ensure accountability, transparency and compliance.
Levels of Service	Are the standards or levels of service provision a customer can expect to receive from a service. There are also technical levels of service which relate to physical assets e.g., the condition of buildings. We engage the community to determine what is both an affordable and acceptable level of service given that resources are finite.
Principal Activity	A core activity within a Service Area. A principal activity may be supported by sub-services.
Principle	A value (or rule) that guides how we work, behave and make decisions
Service	Activities that serve a customer. A service can be internal, supporting the day to day operations of the organisation or they can be external, providing a service to a member of the public.
Service Area	A grouping of services within the organisational structure.
Stakeholder	An individual or group that is impacted, interested or has a concern in the Service. This is a broad term which can include community, members of the service staff, union delegates, other levels of government, Councillors and service delivery partners etc.





Acknowledgements

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- Australian Centre for Excellence for Local Government, Service Delivery Review: A how to manual for local government, June 2015
- Australian Centre of Excellence in Local Government, University of Technology Sydney: Centre for Local Government, and SAI Global, *Implementing the Australian Business Excellence Framework*, June 2011.
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