

3.1 INTEGRATED PLANS

(RG:)

Responsible Senior Officer: Danny Wain, Chief Financial Officer

RECOMMENDATION

That Council adopts the Community Vision, Council Plan, Asset Plan and Financial Plan.

INTRODUCTION

A Community Vision, Council Plan, Asset Plan and Financial Plan (the 'Plans') have been prepared following community engagement between March and September, including a deliberative engagement process.

The draft Plans were endorsed for community feedback by Council on 28 August 2021 and, with that feedback incorporated, the final Plans, are now presented to Council for adoption.

BACKGROUND

The four Plans are presented for Council endorsement alongside an introductory document with each described below.

Context document

A common introduction to the four Plans has been compiled - a 'Context document' – that explains the relationship between the Plans, the engagement process and contextual information about Monash and Council. The individual Plans therefore do not repeat this contextual information.

Community Vision

The Community Vision has a long term view of what is important to Monash and how our City will look in 20 years, setting out a Vision Statement, six Themes and principles to guide Council and the wider Monash community on our aspirations for the future.

The Vision Statement and principles were developed by the Imagine Monash Panel as key deliverables from the deliberative engagement process. The six Themes emerged from the community responses to the Imagine Monash survey and were tested and refined through discussion with Council's Advisory Committees and the Imagine Monash Panel.

Council Plan

The Council Plan has a four-year horizon reflecting Council's term, and sets out four Strategic Objectives, with each having explanatory text and five Strategies for

their implementation. Each Strategic Objective also has proposed Priority projects and Strategic Indicators.

Financial Plan

The Financial Plan has a ten-year horizon and sets out six 10 year financial statements as well as Financial Performance Indicators and the assumptions behind these.

Asset Plan

The Asset Plan has a ten-year horizon and outlines Monash's approach to asset management, the future challenges and opportunities for managing our assets, as well as the funding requirements to maintain our assets and ensure we are able to continue to deliver our current services.

DISCUSSION

Strategic Direction

The genesis of the four Plans started through internal discussions about the proposed Local Government Bill through 2019 and the expectations for a more strategic and integrated approach to Council's planning, monitoring and reporting. Early thinking about the relevance of the requirements for Monash were shared with those Council Departments with more strategic responsibility for Council's planning, as well as engagement with Monash's Audit & Risk Committee and Councillors.

Following the election of Council a presentation was given to Councillors (November 2019) setting out the requirements in the Local Government Act and seeking support for Monash's approach to integrated planning. Councillors undertook a strategic discussion to inform the Plans as part of the induction process (January). Further Councillor input occurred indirectly through the 2021/22 Annual Planning Process (from January to March) and then directly through updates at Councillor Strategy meetings (from April to August).

Alongside the Project Control Group, officers were engaged through separate workshops with Managers and Coordinators (May & June) that discussed emerging themes and strategic opportunities for Monash.

Integrated Planning, Monitoring & Reporting

The new requirements of the Local Government Act 2020 have provided Monash an opportunity to bring together our financial, asset management and service planning, with our strategies and plans as well as our Annual Planning Process (APP).

As the Integrated Plans are implemented there will be a stronger focus on more clearly presenting how the initiatives and Capital Works proposed in the APP will deliver on Council's strategic priorities and direction. This focus will carry over into strengthening the monitoring and reporting on achievement of the Annual Plan and Council Plan.

Updating of Plans

The four Plans will be required to undergo review and / or redevelopment again in four years as part of the planning cycle following a general Council election.

Minor changes to the Financial Plan & Asset Plan, typically refreshing the values in the financial statements, will be undertaken annually as part of the adoption of Council's Budget.

Where there was consideration of a significant change in Council's strategic direction, and consequently in the Council, Asset or Financial Plans, Council would go back out for community consultation to amend the Plans.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The four Plans, once adopted, will set Council's strategic direction for the next four years, will inform the prioritisation of new initiatives and capital works in each Annual Budget as well as the development of Council's other plans and strategies.

The four Plans have been developed to comply with the relevant sections of the Local Government Act 2020:

- Community Vision S88
- Strategic planning principles S89
- Council Plan S90
- Financial Plan S91
- Asset Plan S92

The four Plans must be developed through a deliberative engagement process. Additionally, Section 89 requires the Plans to be part of "an integrated approach to planning, monitoring and performance reporting".

CONSULTATION

Community engagement for the Integrated Plans was approached as a multi-layered activity to ensure broad, as well as in-depth, community input. Contributions from each step informed the next activity. The initial engagement focused more on the community's aspirations and vision, progressing on to consider what was important in how Council would implement this and finally seeking feedback on the draft Plans.

Initial community views were sought through a brief survey with 800 responses through Council's Annual Community Satisfaction Survey and a further 245 responses through an online survey.

Emerging themes from the survey were presented to Monash's seven Advisory Committees through May and June 2021:

- Environmental Advisory Committee

- LGBTIQA+ Advisory Committee
- Gender Equity Advisory Committee
- Youth Committee
- Multicultural Advisory Committee
- Disability Advisory Committee
- Positive Ageing Reference Group

A panel of community members was established to enable a deliberative engagement process. Twenty three people, representing the diverse Monash community, met four times through June and July to consider the emerging themes as well as the key issues and opportunities facing Monash, and through discussion proposed Vision Statements and principles to be incorporated into the Community Vision and Council Plan.

Finally, the draft Plans were made available to the community from 1-26 September 2021 for online feedback. The consultation included promotion through Council's website and social media, as well as to the Imagine Monash Panel and Advisory Committee members.

A total of 192 people visited the online site to view the four Plans with 13 contributors by the end of the consultation period. In summary the feedback included:

- Broad support for the Community Vision Principles, aside from –
 - one respondent who disapproved of the notion of the Monash community as a 'thought leader', instead suggesting we should be 'creative and ambitious'.
 - one respondent who disagreed with the mention of 'blockchain' due to the environmental impact of this technology.
- Broad support for the Council Plan Strategic Objectives and Strategies, with general feedback on priorities including:
 - addressing climate change and sustainability
 - improving sustainable transport options
 - increased / improved open space, street trees and tree canopy
 - continuing to be more inclusive
- One respondent (Financial Plan) suggested with low interest rates Council consider borrowing to increase the number of projects it delivers, and that support for property owners who are pensioners be through deferred rates rather than a rebate.
- One respondent questioned the relatively higher expenditure priority on roads and car parks compared to pathways.

As this feedback supports the strategic direction of the four Plans, no specific changes are recommended as the views will be actioned through each Annual Plan Planning Process.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The community engagement processes elicited responses from many community members stating an interest in increased participatory decision-making. Improving the community's understanding of the competing demands on council funding assists with their deliberation around priorities.

Social implications that resonated with our community were reflected across the six themes of the Community Vision, and the four strategic objectives of the Council Plan.

This included the social benefits of trees and green spaces - enhancing neighbourhood aesthetics and providing shade and lowering ambient temperature that can help combat extremes of temperatures. The importance of inclusive services and decision making around service provision rates highly. Enhanced public places and spaces also contribute highly to the social benefits of our community.

HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

The four Plans, and the community engagement process undertaken, contributes to the Monash community "taking part in public life", one of the 20 rights considered in the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006. The development process and the resultant plans provide the broader community the opportunity to shape the municipality they live in and participate in its governance.

GENDER EQUITY ASSESSMENT

A Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) was undertaken to inform the planning of the Imagine Monash in 2040 project. Gender is a fundamental consideration to the four Plans, as they:

- set out Council's strategic direction,
- will influence the development of other strategies and plans and the review of Council services, and
- will help prioritise initiatives and capital works in future Council Budgets.

The GIA informed the planning of the consultation process, particularly the need to use multiple approaches to ensure a wide range of contributions as well as testing that the emerging themes reflected the broader needs of the community.

A strong theme through the consultation was to ensure Council services and the City were inclusive of the broader community.

Lastly, the GIA also found that a key requirement of Monash's future integrated planning and reporting was the need to identify, monitor and report on how Council's capital works, initiatives and services were contributing to achieving our strategic objectives including addressing gender equity.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Financial Plan sets out Monash City Council's long term financial position including the 10 year expected income and expenditure, financial indicators and the assumptions underpinning these. The Financial Plan confirms that Council can continue to deliver current services and maintain our assets. It is expected though that the Plan will need to be revised as the internal and external environment changes.

CONCLUSION

The Community Vision, Council Plan, Asset Plan and Financial Plan were developed following extensive community engagement over seven months, between March and September, including a deliberative engagement process.

The Plans were endorsed by Council for community feedback in August and with that feedback now incorporated, it is recommended that Council adopt the final Plans.