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Priority Action 4: Infrastructure Priority Action 5: Governance & Financial Sustainability





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At the time of adoption of this document, Council is managing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This global event will inevitably have an impact on the manner in which the Council can deliver the objectives as outlined within this document, particularly in relation to the fast-tracking of Council's Long Term Financial Plan. Future reporting on Council's Strategic Directions will be reported upon in a manner that includes reference to the pandemic and the Council's response.



2 Mayor's Message



Brett Benbow

I am pleased to present the Strategic Directions for the Port Augusta City Council, as the overarching Plan to guide the future aspirations of our City. This document presents a fresh focus for the Council and Community. The Hub concept within this document highlights the significant role Port Augusta City Council has to play in service provision for the Upper Spencer Gulf and beyond.

Port Augusta continues to position itself to be the leader in renewable energy in South Australia and Australia with success shown through the multiple renewable projects that are already generating power, with many more to create or store energy in the planning approval or development phase.

With an increase in major projects, Port Augusta continues to prepare for the influx of Contractors and their families whilst the development occurs, particularly in accommodation and local procurement opportunities. Council will continue to build relationships with the Local Government Association and State and Commonwealth Governments to ensure the appropriate level of commitment, to promote our history and provide the facilities our residents and tourists expect.

Port Augusta City Council will also continue to review its operations to ensure they are functioning in an economical and sustainable way.

With strong leadership and good governance the Council will maintain a focus on achieving the Vision and Goals identified within this Plan.

I wish to thank those who took the time to provide input into this Plan. This is a great time for Port Augusta and the Upper Spencer Gulf to expose all that we have to offer, and our capability as a Community, City and Region. We will need to be positive, proactive and prepared for the change ahead.

"This document presents a fresh focus for the Council and Community."

3

Our Strategic Directions Aspirations for Port Augusta

Our **Strategic Directions 2019 – 2029** document notes that Port Augusta has a long history as a Regional Hub that is able to adapt and reinvent itself. Our aspiration is to build on history and become a model Regional Hub for Transport, Sustainable Industries, Mining and Defence Services, Tourism, Retail and Business, Government and non-Government Services, Education, and Recreation and Culture.

This Four Year Priority Action Plan 2019-2022 sets out the medium term actions we intend to take to build towards our longer term aspirations.

"Our aspiration is to build on history and become a model Regional Hub..."



4 Strategic Directions Themes

The Strategic Directions 2019 – 2029 document has four community focussed themes and one enabling, organisationally focussed theme. The themes and the goal for each are shown below.

Externally focussed themes and goals



Theme 1: Community

We are a welcoming and inclusive community that understands, represents and preserves our unique sense of purpose and place.



Theme 2: Economy

We capitalise on our unique regional hub attributes to pursue a thriving economy.



Theme 3: Environment

We value, respect and protect our natural and built environments.



Theme 4: Infrastructure

We provide and advocate for fit for purpose infrastructure that improves the economic, environmental and social wellbeing of our City.

Internally focussed theme and goal



Theme 5: Governance & Financial Sustainability

We conduct our Council business ethically and transparently and seek financial sustainability and legislative compliance to allow the Council to provide or enable the infrastructure and services required to achieve our 2029 aspirations.

5 Priority Actions

The priority actions planned for each theme over the period 2019 – 2022 are shown below. They have been developed to ensure progress towards our longer term aspirations while we also continue to improve the Council's long term financial sustainability.



Priority Action 1: Community

GOAL

WE ARE A WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY THAT UNDERSTANDS, REPRESENTS AND PRESERVES OUR UNIQUE SENSE OF PURPOSE AND PLACE.

5.1.1 Celebrate cultural diversity

Priority Action

Identify ways to celebrate the past, present and future cultural diversity of Port Augusta, ensuring this is informed by engagement with the local Aboriginal and other cultural communities.

Why?

Port Augusta has a long history of cultural diversity from a meeting place for Aboriginal groups for thousands of years, to European settlement and to Afghan camel handlers, until the 1920s saw Port Augusta transform to a transport hub, where camels were replaced by rail and motor transport. More recently, Port Augusta became home to people from Italy, Germany and the Middle East who migrated to our City to reap the employment opportunities.

Port Augusta continues to be a gathering point for the Aboriginal population in the area. The Aboriginal community is growing and is currently around 18.3% (ABS Stats 2016) of the Port Augusta population and covers some 17-28 different language or family groups.

Port Augusta is an urban centre with a notable and growing Aboriginal resident constituency and operates as a service centre for an even larger Indigenous clientele beyond its boundary.

The significance of these Aboriginal numbers and cultural connections for urban planning is heightened by the town's social demography.

Port Augusta is proud of our multicultural inclusiveness and we want to celebrate our diversity for both personal and community growth.

How this priority action contributes to the theme goal:

The intended outcome is to build community strength by acknowledging, recognising and celebrating the cultural diversity of Port Augusta and its contribution to our unique sense of purpose and place.

Role and scope:

In identifying ways to celebrate cultural diversity the Council will be acting as a **Leader**. The actions that come from this priority action are likely to be a combination of **Enabler** (which should be the default role) and, potentially, some actions as **Provider**. Examples of approaches to celebrating cultural diversity include publishing material about it, including references to the influence of different cultures on what makes Port Augusta what it is today, and finding opportunities to showcase specific cultures.



5.1.2 Improved relationship with communities

Priority Action

Identify and implement ways to build better relationships with our communities.

Why?

While the word 'community' is often used to describe the people who live or work in a geographic area, the reality is that there are various communities around such aspects as age, location, cultural background, recreational and sporting interests. Together, they make up our 'community'.

The most important relationship for a Council is with its communities. We believe that the relationship with parts of our communities need to be improved and will work to achieve that over the coming years.

How this priority action contributes to the theme goal:

The intended outcome is to have a socially cohesive community that understands represents and preserves our unique sense of purpose and place.

Role and scope:

In identifying ways to improved relationships with communities the Council will be acting as a **Leader**. The actions that come from this priority action are likely to be a combination of **Enabler** (which should be the default role) and, potentially, some actions as **Provider**.

5.1.3 Improved communication

Priority Action

Identify and implement ways to build better two-way communication and engagement with our communities.

Why?

Communication between a Council and its community (and others) is important to build an understanding of community views on the one hand, and what is currently happening and why on the other. Good two-way communication and engagement is a feature of a healthy community and active democracy.

There is a sense that this two-way communication is currently limited and there is scope to improve.

How this priority action contributes to the theme goal:

The intended outcome is to recognise important issues and find common grounds for action that builds a sense of identity and participation in order to implement decisions.

Role and scope:

In identifying ways to build and measure two-way communication and engagement with our communities, Council will be acting as a **Leader**. The actions that come from this priority action are likely to be a combination of **Enabler** (which should be the default role) and, potentially, some actions as **Provider**.





Priority Action 2: Economy

GOAL

WE CAPITALISE ON OUR UNIQUE REGIONAL HUB ATTRIBUTES TO PURSUE A THRIVING ECONOMY.

5.2.1 Balance between attracting new economic developments and building on what we have

Priority Action

Identify and leverage off our natural, built and community assets for economic growth through advocacy for improved Government and investment co-ordination and local engagement to maximise positive benefits from the growth in mining, energy and defence activity.

Why?

Economic growth is important for the sustainability of our communities after a number of economic shocks in the form of closure of industries. In 1992 the federal government closed the Australian National Railways Workshops. In 2016 Port Augusta's coal-fired power stations permanently closed, this alone lead to job losses of approximately 450 people (including Leigh Creek). The announcement of the 'Aurora' concentrated solar thermal project not going ahead was another challenging time for the City.

The future is looking brighter with reason to be optimistic about new economic activity through mining, energy, tourism and transport; however, recent experiences show that circumstances beyond local and regional control can lead to disappointment and frustration at announced developments not proceeding.

Improved government co-ordination and local engagement in relation to potential new developments can be expected to provide a positive environment and greater potential for projects to occur. It is important to continue to encourage new businesses and their investment and jobs to the region as well as supporting opportunities for economic growth through existing businesses.

How this priority action contributes to the theme goal:

There is potential to provide energy infrastructure for the development of identified renewable energy projects to strengthen the regional power network, as well as planned infrastructure corridors and improved capacity all-weather road and rail transport supply chain infrastructure to meet mining and energy sector demand.

Role and scope:

Council's roles in economic development vary. With responsibilities for land use planning and Development Approvals the Council is a **Leader** and, in the case of infrastructure, the Council may be the Asset Owner (e.g. of a Council road) but may also be an **Enabler** for infrastructure that is the responsibility of other bodies. In other areas such as business development the Council has a role as an **Enabler**, collaborating with service providers and bringing people and business together to maximise opportunities and to advocate for government support and investment.







Priority Action 3: Environment

GOAL
WE VALUE, RESPECT AND PROTECT OUR
NATURAL AND BUILT ENVIRONMENTS.

5.3.1 Waste management

Priority Action

Review waste management systems in the light of recent and further potential changes as a result of government and business decisions, including the Council of Australian Governments (COAGs) decision to ban the export of a range of waste including plastic, paper, glass and tyres. In undertaking this review, also identify the potential role of the State Government (including Green Industries SA), and the Local Government Association of South Australia in assisting Councils as well as the potential for business and industry investment in the 'circular economy' where recycled materials are processed and converted into useful products.

Why?

Significant changes in waste management and recycling have occurred over recent years and can be expected to continue as decisions are made by the SA Government, Australian Government and international governments (especially the governments of Asian countries in relation to the processing of recyclables). Businesses are and should be expected to continue to adjust their business models, services and costs in response and/or anticipation of changing circumstances.

Our waste collection system provides kerbside collection of domestic and business waste, general recyclables, and green organics and requires significant annual investment of Council funds. At 5.4% of total operating revenue, the expenditure is the third highest commitment behind road and footpath infrastructure, parks, gardens, reserves and ovals (open space and greenspace). It is important that service costs are contained and that the services meet the waste management objectives of the Council and its communities.

How this priority action contributes to the theme goal:

Effective waste management is an important element of respecting and protecting the environment. Opportunities from more on-shore processing of recyclables are also an important consideration for economic development.

Role and scope:

The Council has a well defined role as a **Provider** of domestic waste management services. Reviewing those services will need to recognise the volatility of the current situation where there is likely to be more on-shore processing of recyclables which would provide both opportunities and threats for Port Augusta. Planning about waste management will need to have a strong focus on risk management and be incremental with short-term actions that do not cut off future options. Given the cost significance to the Council, this is a crucial priority action.





5.3.2 Climate change adaptation

Priority Action

Undertake mapping to understand vulnerable areas (built environments – manage facilities, natural environments)

Why?

Increases in tides and temperatures will impact on the Council's operations and on the liveability of Port Augusta.

How this priority action contributes to the theme goal:

Adapting to climate change is a priority in protecting our natural and built environments.

Role and scope:

The Council will have a **Leadership** role in identifying areas of risk as a result of changes in climate. It also has a **Provider** role as Asset Owner in relation to its infrastructure and properties and as a Regulator of areas for development. The primary focus of this action is in relation to community impacts through the Council's operations, with an added benefit of providing a degree of guidance to people in the community about adapting to climate change.

5.3.3 Coastline protection

Priority Action

Educate the community on the impacts of rubbish to our coastline, the value and importance of biodiversity and encourage community involvement in caring for our natural environment.

Why?

Marine debris is a globally recognised environmental issue of increasing concern. Marine ecosystems are affected by human-made refuse, much of which is plastic. Marine debris comes from both land and sea-based sources and can travel immense distances. It injures and kills wildlife, has the potential to transport chemical contaminants, may pose a threat to human health and negatively affects tourism. Plastic production rates are intensifying, and the volume of refuse humans release into marine systems is growing at an exponential rate.

How this priority action contributes to the theme goal:

The intended outcome is to value, respect and protect our natural and built environments.

Role and scope:

Council has a role as an **Enabler**, collaborating with service providers and bringing people and business together to maximise education opportunities. It also has a **Provider** role as Asset Owner in relation to its infrastructure and properties and as a Regulator of non-compliance of the disposal of rubbish.



Priority Action 4: Infrastructure

GOAL

WE PROVIDE AND ADVOCATE FOR FIT FOR PURPOSE INFRASTRUCTURE THAT IMPROVES THE ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL WELLBEING OF OUR CITY.

5.4.1 Improved appearance of the City

Priority Action

Develop a long-term program to improve the appearance of the City, with resources allocated to an early start on implementation (this program should be informed by an Asset Management Strategy and supporting Asset Management Plans for each asset class).

Why?

There is a desire to increase the attractiveness of Port Augusta as a place to live, work, invest and visit. An important part of this is to improve the appearance of the City in relation to infrastructure, streetscapes and other public spaces.

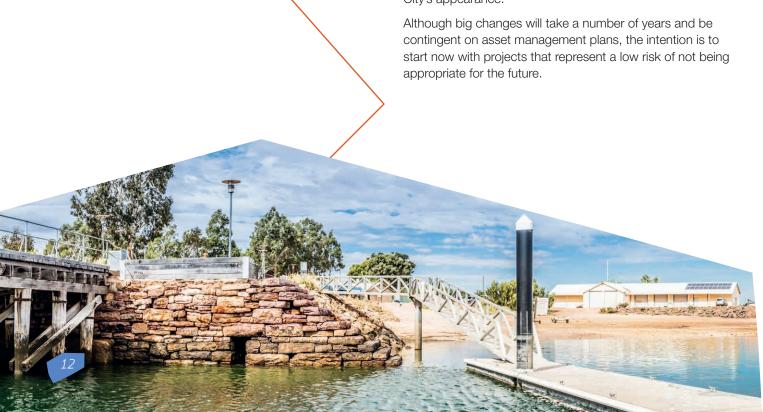
How this priority action contributes to the theme goal:

The action is intended to improve the economic, environmental and social wellbeing of the City.

Role and scope:

For its own infrastructure and properties, the Council's role is of **Provider** (Asset Owner) and for the infrastructure of other governments and bodies, the Council's roles are as a **Leader** and an **Enabler**.

Making significant improvements in the City's appearance with current resource levels will take many years to achieve. A complicating aspect of implementing this action will be the absence of an asset management strategy and suitable asset management plans. In the early days of implementation, it will be necessary to take a cautious approach to ensure that any actions are consistent with likely future directions for managing affected infrastructure and other assets. When the asset management strategy and plans are being developed (which will likely take several years with current resource levels) the planning and appearance improvement activities will run in parallel with on-ground actions to improve the City's appearance.



5.4.2 Aged Infrastructure

Priority Action

Update and enhance electronic records of infrastructure assets.

Why?

Port Augusta has a significant amount of infrastructure. Comprehensive capture of current asset condition is required to support informed decision making.

How this priority action contributes to the theme goal:

The community of Port Augusta has made a very large investment in the Council's infrastructure assets that is currently valued at \$362.8m. For the efficient and effective use of ratepayers' funds, and to have fit for purpose infrastructure, it is important to have reliable information on which to base decisions about maintenance levels, intervention points to extend the lives of assets, and asset renewals.

Role and scope:

The Council's role is of **Provider** (Asset Owner). Updating records of infrastructure assets is time consuming and will need to be resourced adequately to be undertaken over a reasonable period of time. A risk management approach is appropriate to ensure the highest priority areas are identified and addressed early.

5.4.3 Foreshore Infrastructure

Priority Action

Work with the community to identify a path forward in relation to foreshore infrastructure on Crown Land but currently under the Council's care and control.

Why?

Port Augusta has a significant amount of foreshore infrastructure, reflecting its history as a port. Much of the infrastructure, which is on Crown Land, is beyond its useful life and, in some cases, unsafe for use. The infrastructure was transferred by the SA Government to Council's care and control during the 1970's.

This infrastructure is seen as a community asset and its scale and condition mean that it would require significant investment to upgrade or replace. Previous approaches to hand care and control back to the SA Government have been unsuccessful, however there has been a renewed approach to this issue by all Coastal Councils supported by the Local Government Association of South Australia.

How this priority action contributes to the theme goal:

It is recognised that the foreshore infrastructure has a role in the economic, environmental and social wellbeing of Port Augusta but certainly cannot currently be described as fit for purpose.

Role and scope:

The primary role for the Council in relation to the foreshore infrastructure is as **Provider**, although it is located on Crown Land, it is currently under the Council's care and control. Engaging with the community about a path forward is a **Leadership** role. Working with the community will complement the approach by the Council and other coastal Councils in South Australia to find better solutions to dealing with foreshore infrastructure. It should also assist in identifying priority areas and actions that may meet the needs of different interest groups.







Priority Action 5: Governance & Financial Sustainability

GOAL

WE CONDUCT OUR COUNCIL BUSINESS ETHICALLY AND TRANSPARENTLY AND SEEK FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AND LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE TO ALLOW THE COUNCIL TO PROVIDE OR ENABLE THE INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES REQUIRED TO ACHIEVE OUR 2029 ASPIRATIONS.

5.5.1 Fastracked removal of financial operating deficit

Priority Action

Review the current timeframe for extinguishing the financial operating deficit with a view to fast-tracking a balanced budget.

Why?

The Council has had an annual financial operating deficit which is being reduced over a 10 year period from \$3.788m in 2018/19 to a target of zero by 2027/28. The budgeted deficit for 2019/20 is \$3.201m.

There are pressures on the Council's budget and some of the changes required to reduce the operating deficit have been implemented. However, further actions are required to either reduce expenditure or increase income, or a combination of both. This can be expected to involve making some difficult and potentially contentious or unpopular decisions.

The aspirations set out in the Strategic Directions 2019 – 2029 document are ambitious and will require funding to achieve them as well as some creative thinking and a change from being the service provider to a mix of enabler and provider. There is a short lead time in which planning for new investments will take place, following which there will need to be funds available.

It is a difficult position to be in but entering a period of potentially significant investments with a legacy financial operating deficit is dangerous and gives no room for other financial shocks as happened during the global financial crisis.

There is a small window to set things in train to reduce the financial operating deficit at a faster rate.

How this priority action contributes to the theme goal:

Financial sustainability is a key component of the theme goal.

Role and scope:

Implementing this action will require **Leadership** from the Council to make informed decisions.



5.5.2 Contingency approach to planning

Priority Action

Investigate and implement a contingency approach for planning for growth or decline.

Why?

The Port Augusta area is currently caught between economic and population decline and growth.

There has been a decrease in population over time which could continue or reverse. Planning by the Council to zone land for residential, industrial and commercial uses as well as decisions about providing new or upgraded infrastructure becomes more difficult with the uncertainty about the growth or decline scenarios.

How this priority action contributes to the theme goal:

Having an agreed approach to planning for growth or decline will assist in achieving financial sustainability through robust decision making about expenditure of funds for new or upgraded infrastructure.

Role and scope:

A contingency approach to planning is a **Leadership** role for the Council and decisions in relation to investments in infrastructure is a **Provider** role (Asset Owner). An area to be explored with this action is the use of triggers to activate decisions about investments in new or upgraded infrastructure. An example of a trigger would be a funded commitment by a business for a major development.

5.5.3 Change mix of council assets

Priority Action

Identify potential opportunities to change the mix of Council assets through conversion of properties that aren't central to the Council's operations or aspirations and reinvestment in other priority assets.

Why?

The Council has a significant property portfolio which potentially provides opportunities to convert some assets to other, more pressing infrastructure. This could involve selling some properties that are not central to the Council's operations or aspirations and using the funds to invest in other assets – the result of which is that the level of investment in assets is not diminished but the mix of assets and, potentially, asset types change.

How this priority action contributes to the theme goal:

Rationalisation of assets reduces the level of funding required for upgraded or new assets which contributes to improved financial sustainability.

Role and scope:

The Council's role is as **Provider** (Asset Owner). Implementing the action will require **Leadership** to make the case for changes in the mix of assets.



5.5.4 Role clarity - more focus on enabler rather than provider in delivery of projects and services and identify areas where the role of leader is required of the council. There may be lessons to learn from other councils.

Priority Action

Adopt clear definitions of Council roles, determine which role will apply to each activity, service or piece of infrastructure - and adhere to those roles. In determining the Council's roles, investigate the potential for the Council to shift the balance of its roles to **Enabler** rather than **Provider**. Compare approaches to meeting community needs with other Councils and benchmark performance.

Why?

The infrastructure, services and activities provided by Councils can be loosely categorised as being either mandatory, in that they are required by various pieces of legislation, or discretionary where a decision has been made for reasons other than compliance with legislation. In reality the number of mandatory requirements for infrastructure, services or activities is relatively low and a lot of what Councils provide falls into the category of discretionary.

The Council has been a provider of a range of discretionary services that aren't generally provided by other Councils.

Section 7 of the Local Government Act 1999 sets out the functions of a Council and potentially provides for a broad range of services and activities. The challenge is to choose the most appropriate approach to addressing those functions, in particular whether the Council chooses to be an Enabler to achieve results for the community or chooses the option of being the service or activity Provider.

A legitimate and valued role of a Council is to be a community builder to work with communities to help them become more resilient, to help in the development of community leaders and to assist community groups in sourcing funding and other resources. The role of community builder is more aligned with being an Enabler as compared to the Council being a Provider.

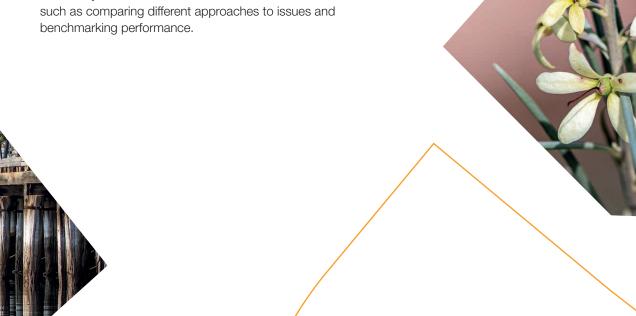
There may be lessons to learn from other Councils

How this priority action contributes to the theme goal:

A potential shift to the role of enabler has the potential to improve financial sustainability.

Role and scope:

This action will require a Leadership role of the Council to work with the community and other stakeholders on identifying the appropriate mix of Enabler, Provider and Leader roles. It is easier to make such decisions about new matters coming before the Council where all aspects are able to be considered in a structured way. Decisions about established services are generally more challenging and a key factor will be whether there are other bodies able to play a role in relation to such services.



5.5.5 Building internal and other relationships

Priority Action

Identify and build relationships internally and with external stakeholders including the Federal and State Government at the political and administrative (locally, regionally, and at head offices) levels, industry, other service providers, and investors.

Why?

Good working relationships internally and externally are important for a Council to succeed. Poor internal relationships can quickly lead to a focus on personality clashes rather than on doing the best possible for the community. Similarly, poor external relationships with other stakeholders including governments (at both the political and administrative levels), industry and other service providers, make it more difficult to achieve the best outcomes.

There are signs that both internal and external relationships can be improved and a planned approach to correcting this needs to be put in place.

How this priority action contributes to the theme goal:

Resolving issues and problems with relationships takes focus away from the Council carrying out its functions.

Role and scope:

This action requires **Leadership** of the Council. Building and maintaining relationships takes time and effort and a planned approach with reviews about how successful it has been is required.

5.5.6 Rating policy

Priority Action

Consider whether site value or capital value is the best method for calculating rates; also consider differential rates, fixed charge versus minimum rate etc.

Why?

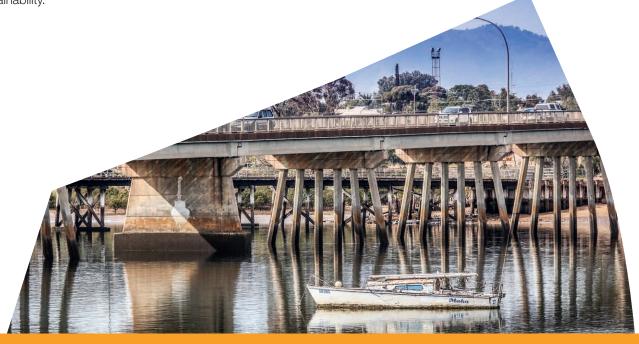
The City of Port Augusta is one of only a small number of Councils in South Australia that rates on the site value of land (the estimated value of the land without any improvements). Most Councils use Capital Value for rating. Council's current rating system is complex and is becoming inequitable due to constraints of legislation.

How this priority action contributes to the theme goal:

The method of rating does not, by itself, affect the quantum of rates levied but is concerned with the relative amounts paid by different ratepayers and thus has no impact on financial sustainability.

Role and scope:

Implementing this action will require **Leadership**. Previous work has been undertaken on reviewing whether the Council should shift to capital value rating which remains unresolved. There are other dimensions to rating such as the use of a minimum rate or a fixed charge, differential rates by location or land use, and use of separate rates for projects or activities that benefit particular areas.



5.5.7 Statutory requirements

Priority Action

Design and implement a strategy to develop a Building Asset Plan.

Why?

The preparation of a Building Asset Plan is another step in providing guidance to Council on improving its asset management systems and practices.

The current value of Council's Building Assets is \$158m. Generally, the Building Assets of Council are in satisfactory condition, with only a small percent of the asset class requiring intervention.

How this priority action contributes to the theme goal:

The Building Asset Plan is the element of the theme goal.

Role and scope:

The Council's role in this action is **Leadership**. A plan to develop and implement a Building Asset Plan to meet legislative compliance. The plan will provide a framework to detail and examine existing management practices for operational and community buildings to meet community service expectations and to form the basis of an improvement programme to progressively meet any identified deficiencies.



State of the City indicators for Port Augusta by SP theme

THEME	INDICATOR	DATA SOURCE
	1 Crime Statistics	SAPOL
	Safety - Community perception	Community Survey
	Sense of belonging	Community Survey
Theme 1: Community	Participation (volunteers)	ABS
We are a welcoming and inclusive community that understands,	5 Population	ABS
represents and preserves our unique sense of purpose and place.	Access to services, facilities, experiences	Community Survey
	Gross Regional Product	ABS
	8 Visitor nights	RDAFN
	Employment participation rate	ABS
Theme 2: Economy We capitalize an our unique	Employment unemployment rate	ABS
We capitalise on our unique regional hub attributes to pursue a thriving economy.	11 No. of local jobs	RDAFN
periode a mining economy.	Existing bachelor degree %	ABS
	Attending education & training %	ABS
	Future investment – value of Development Applications	ABS
(<u>(M)</u>)	Extent to which the 'Far North & Outback SA Climate Change Adaptation Plan' is being implemented.	RDAFN
	Remnant vegetation	DEW
Theme 3: Environment We value, respect and protect our natural and built environments.	Monitor renewable energy and battery use in Port Augusta	RDAFN
	18 Waste to landfill	DEW
	Perception of meeting needs	Community Survey
		Business Survey
	Perception of public spaces	Community Survey
Theme 4: Infrastructure We provide and advocate for fit for purpose infrastructure that improves the economic, environmental and social wellbeing of our City.	Plans for infrastructure in Port Augusta reflect efficient use of infrastructure and are being followed	RDAFN

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