



Organisational Sustainability Review and Improvement Plan

Narrandera Shire Council

April 2023



Document status

Job #	Version	Written	Reviewed	Approved	Report Date
7686	1 - Draft	M Drummond	G Smith	G Smith	March 2023
	2 - Final	M Drummond	G Smith	G Smith	May 2023

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1 Introduction

Narrandera Shire Council ('Council') has undertaken an organisational sustainability review to identify financial and operational opportunities that can guide Council through an improvement plan outlining productivity gains, cost savings, increased income and/or additional resource needs for long-term operational sustainability. This sustainability review may also be used to form one of the key elements to support a potential special variation (SV) application to be implemented from 1 July 2024.

Council has identified a funding gap going forward that places Council's financial sustainability at risk unless action is taken. Council has been on an improvement journey and remains committed to continuing with efficiency improvements and saving initiatives as part of a whole-of-organisation improvement plan. This organisational review and productivity improvement plan seek to focus on cost containment strategies and productivity improvements that have been utilised by Council in the past and present, as well as opportunities for improvement in the future.

The objectives of an organisational review and undertaking an improvement journey are:

- Long-term financial sustainability and viability across the organisation with a collaborative approach to solutions.
- Utilising the combined knowledge of the organisation to create a range of productivity improvements.
- Providing an improvement plan for future decision-making that embeds 'sustainability' principles in decisions at all levels.
- Enable engagement with the community on the alternative options and choices to an SV.
- Demonstrate to IPART that Council has considered and consulted on a range of improvements prior to making any application.
- Demonstrate to IPART and the Office of Local Government (OLG) that Council has a prioritised program of ongoing service reviews aimed at continuous improvement and optimisation of its services.
- Cost savings, revenue increase and productivity improvements as a means of reducing the amount of any SV.

This improvement plan summarises the outcomes of the review and improvement journey process that has been undertaken, what is proposed as part of an SV application and identification of potential future improvements.

2 Methodology for organisational sustainability review and improvement plan

This project covers two elements:

- A high-level, but focused, organisation-wide review aimed at identifying improvements to Council's financial position, operational productivity or efficiencies and/or resource needs.
- Creating an improvement plan or program for community information as part of the sustainability journey and a potential SV application for community engagement and an application to IPART.

The following diagram outlines the process Council followed for this organisational service review.

Figure 1 Process for organisational service and activity review



3 Background

3.1 Sustainability review

There are several components for achieving a sustainable organisation. Financial sustainability is not the only component to provide organisational sustainability. For an organisation to be sustainable, its strategy, services, capability, capacity and resources must integrate to guide sustainable decision-making. The Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) framework aims to guide the pathway to organisational sustainability, instead of ad hoc decisions, made in isolation, which may threaten an organisation's sustainability.

3.2 Elements of organisational sustainability

Financial and operational sustainability can only be achieved if the organisation itself is aligned to be sustainable. This includes the following main elements:

- planned strategic direction
- clear direction for services
- Council assets are maintained and renewed appropriately
- Council is able to retain and attract a quality workforce
- long-term financial sustainability and capacity
- integrated resourcing strategy – adequate resources
- review/develop/align policies, strategies, systems and processes to support and improve sustainability
- consistency of decision-making.

Figure 2 Organisational sustainability: the relationship between long term plans and sustainable decisions

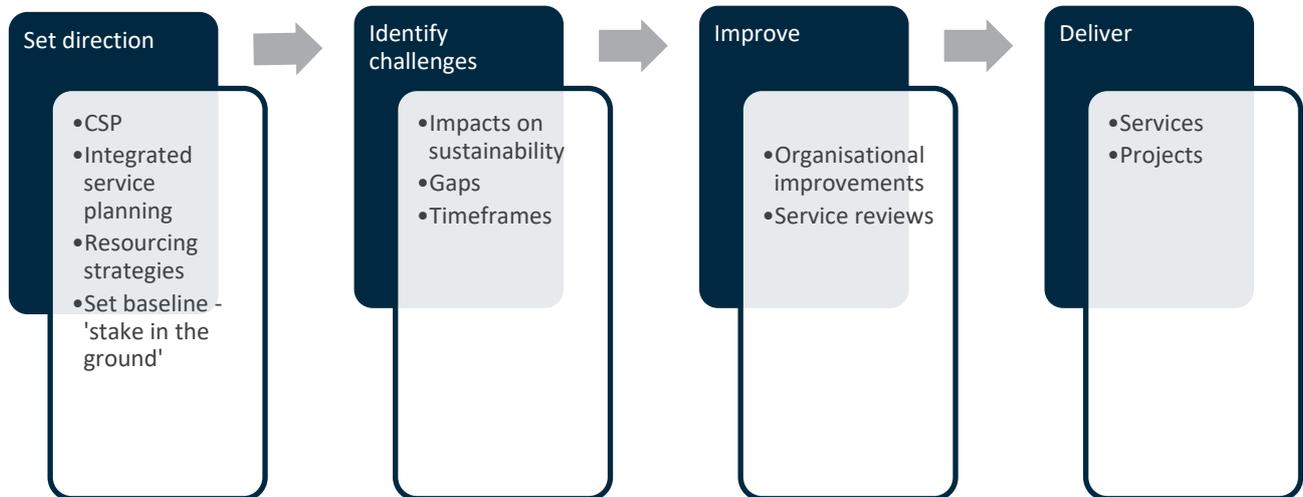


3.3 Long-term improvement and sustainable decision making

For prolonged sustainability, Council is taking a longer-term direction, so it can plan how to get there. One of the challenges for local government is that service planning may take a short-term view, leading to temporary solutions that try to solve specific problems. These may not be sustainable over the longer term, or appropriate when integrated with other organisational priorities.

Council is ensuring that this improvement journey will support Council’s strategic direction on the long term goals of its service planning to enhance its organisational sustainability. The following high-level diagram outlines the steps in this sustainability and improvement journey.

Figure 3 Improvement journey steps



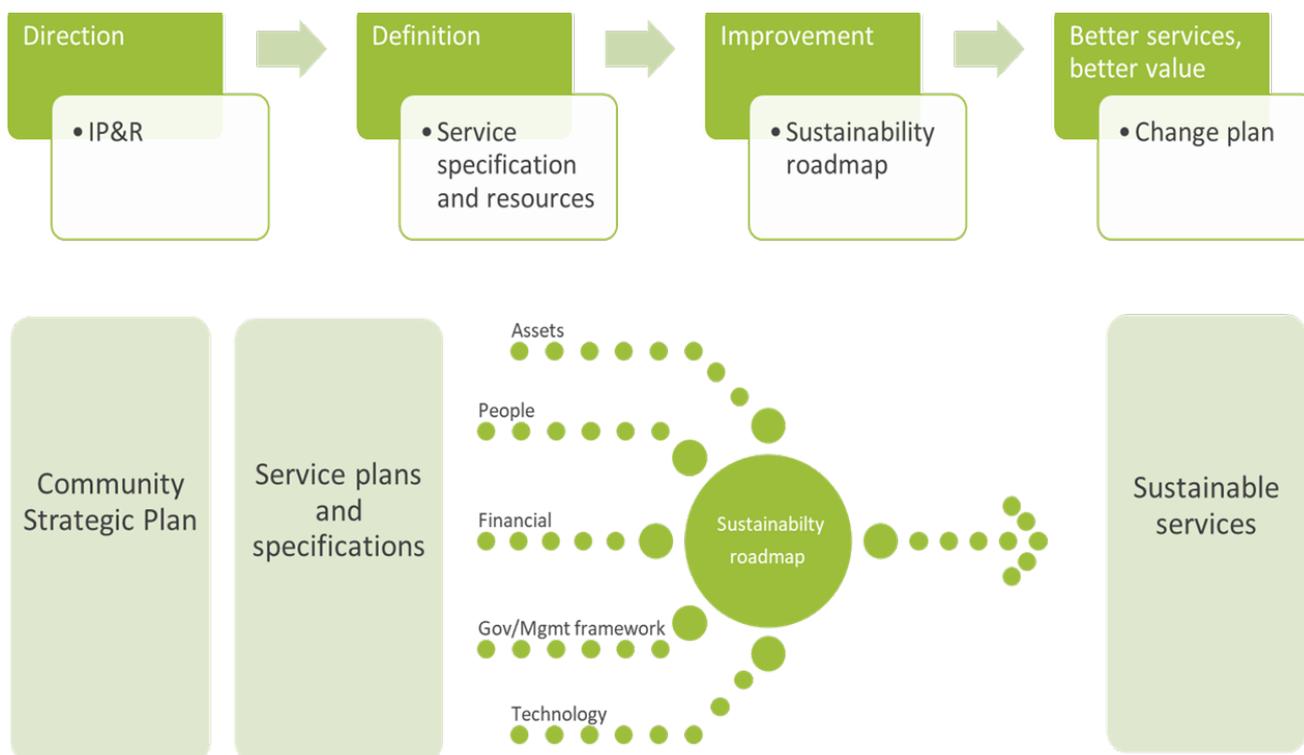
There are a number of components to achieving a sustainable organisation. Financial sustainability is often seen as the main goal, but financial sustainability does not necessarily provide organisational sustainability. For an organisation to be sustainable, its strategy, services, capability, capacity and resources must integrate to guide sustainable decision-making. The Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) framework was developed for the pathway to organisational sustainability, with integration between the key resourcing strategies.

If Council decides to apply for an SV, IPART will focus on whether Council’s application satisfies criterion five: where Council must explain and quantify productivity improvements and cost containment strategies it has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed SV period. IPART will look for evidence of strategies and activities the Council has adopted in the past, robust data quantifying the efficiency gains achieved and confirmation if any gains have been incorporated into Council’s Long Term Financial Plan. Council is addressing these challenges through a number of initiatives, including this improvement plan.

4 Improvement framework

We used the following framework as the basis for our approach.

Figure 4 Sustainability improvement framework



The foundation of this improvement plan is building organisational capacity and capability through a range of improvement initiatives that will require investment as well as provide savings/improvement in a financial capacity.

Details of all improvement initiatives, containing past, present and future improvements, are identified in section 7, reflecting the following strategic objectives:

- cost containment strategies
- productivity and process improvements and efficiencies
- revenue generation
- long-term organisational and operational sustainability.

These will ensure Council is able to achieve organisational sustainability through enhanced financial and operational savings, efficiency gains and resource needs.

The improvement plan contains the following key themes or categories to achieve the strategic objectives for delivering the saving and efficiency outcomes:

- asset rationalisation
- change in service levels or stop services

- increased fees and charges
- energy efficiencies
- staffing and process efficiencies
- revenue generation enhancements.

5 Productivity improvement review process

The review process included:

- two staff workshops
- a spreadsheet to collect, collate and analyse improvement opportunities across the entire organisation
- an elected member workshop.

5.1 Gathering opportunities

The first step was a workshop held on the review process and overall financial sustainability, to bring leadership collaboration and organisational participation. The session looked at:

- long-term financial sustainability
- organisational capacity to deliver
- process for the organisational service review
- a potential special variation.

The next step involved the gathering of opportunities using a tailored spreadsheet to collect and collate improvement opportunities across the entire organisation. One sheet was to collect past improvements that have already been implemented and the second sheet to collect potential opportunities for further improvement. These covered all services and identified cost savings, productivity and process improvements, revenue-generating opportunities and any resourcing shortfalls. This initiative required a higher-level scan across all services, as opposed to a detailed service-by-service review (which was one of the opportunities identified). This initial step in the service improvement journey is designed for banking quick wins and identifying future opportunities.

The process included:

- Revisiting financial savings, organisational improvements or revenue opportunities that have previously been considered and/or discarded but need to be reconsidered alongside other opportunities.
- Developing further cost-saving opportunities.
- Providing Council with a list of opportunities that can be considered and prioritised to create financial savings.
- Providing a list of the other organisational improvements (technology, processes, policies etc) that will enable the organisation to operate more efficiently and be more sustainable.

Survey respondents considered the efficiency and effectiveness of each opportunity, as well as the following factors:

- reasons for pursuing the opportunity
- ease of implementation
- productivity, process and other non-financial gains
- one-off implementation costs
- ongoing expenditure/costs
- ongoing savings/reduction in expenditure
- ongoing increase in income/revenue.

5.2 Prioritisation of opportunities

Following the opportunity gathering process, a second session was held with senior staff to discuss all potential improvement opportunities suggested, as well as any previously completed past improvements. Improvements were feasibility tested, figures checked and then improvements were ranked to be either low, medium or high priority for Council to undertake.

Following the workshop, the final fully prioritised improvement plan was created and this is included as section 7. A summary of the improvement plan total benefits and analysis is included as section 6.

The improvement plan details the following:

- past improvements that have been incorporated into Council's previous LTFPs (section 7.1)
- present improvements that are high and medium priority and have now been built into and accounted for within Council's updated LTFFP, which will feed into Council's sustainability journey and any potential SV application (section 7.2)
- lower priority future improvements that have not been fully analysed but may create additional benefits for Council in the future and as such have not been included in the updated LTFFP (section 7.3).

6 Summary of improvements

6.1 Past improvements

During the course of the review, staff identified and cost 59 past improvements which Council have already completed as part of its ongoing push for organisational sustainability. These past improvements often involve continuing cost savings, as well as productivity gains and process improvements, and these are already accounted for within Council's LTFP.

Some of the biggest cost savings made by Council have been due to a reduction in workers' compensation claims, an optimisation of the loan cycle by taking loans at lower rates, the installation of LED street lighting and the review of village servicing at Barellan, which have saved Council a combined \$702,000 through these four improvements. 32 of the identified past improvements have increased cost savings, 44 encouraged productivity and efficiency gains, and three increased revenue generation.

Full details of all of the identified past improvements are included in the past improvement plan as section 7.1. These past improvements total \$0.939 million per year in financial benefits, plus an estimated \$98,700 in additional efficiency and productivity savings.

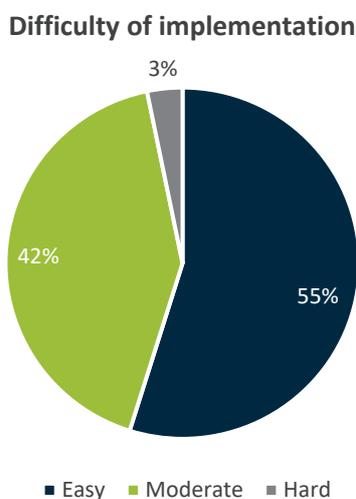
6.2 Present improvements

As part of the review, Council's senior management identified, cost and prioritised 33 present improvements, which Council will be implementing over the next three financial years and will be accounted for within Council's revised LTFP. The present improvements include cost savings, efficiency gains and requirements for additional resources to ensure an operationally sustainable council long-term. This includes items such as a salary system review and the employment of an IT trainee. All present improvements have been allocated an identified starting year, in the next three financial years, within the LTFP.

All present improvements were categorised, through the senior staff workshop, as either high or medium priority. Some of the higher priority items will require additional investment to ensure Council is able to operate in a sustainable way going forward. This includes the potential costs associated with a salary system review for which Council has created a reference group to investigate issues raised by employees. This is considered a high priority for Council and would account for \$650,000 in ongoing expenditure if a 7.5% salary increase was implemented, along with more flexible working arrangements, performance management and salary sacrifice improvements. This is, however, considered crucial for Council to attract and retain quality staff to ensure substantial long-term productivity and efficiency benefits.

There was a relatively even split in regards to difficulty of implementation, with 55% of the present opportunities being considered easy to implement by Council senior staff and 42% being considered moderate in their implementation difficulty. Only 3% of the present improvements are considered hard to implement, and this improvement would not provide any cost savings but would improve efficiency and the customer experience.

Figure 5 Difficulty of implementation



Excluding the salary system review noted above, the total value of all present improvements is estimated to be \$349,000 in yearly net benefit (not including one-off savings of \$200,000 in the implementation years).

Table 1 Improvement difficulty and estimated benefits of high/medium priority improvements

Improvement implementation difficulty	Estimated potential yearly net benefit
Easy	\$206,000
Moderate	-\$532,000 (due to \$650,000 in likely costs incurred following the salary system review) plus an additional \$200,000 one-off cost saving
Hard	\$0
Total	-\$326,000 plus additional \$200,000 one-off cost saving

The following improvements were considered to be some of the highest priority for Council and able to be implemented within the 2023/24 financial year:

- review Council's current utility (water, electricity and gas) usage and identification of ways to reduce usage/costing
- improvements to Asset Management Plans
- roads hierarchy review as part of the service review plan
- Climate Action Strategy implementation
- Council to go to market for a new Enterprise Management Solution and commence implementation
- Open Space and Recreation to implement technology to assist in management of weeds, parks and gardens and cemeteries
- section and position review when positions become vacant and ensure positions are reviewed before advertising
- undertake resourcing reviews for all works to determine most efficient and effective delivery option

- implementation/improved use of GPS tracking on all light and heavy fleet
- standardisation of plant and equipment where practicable
- whole Economic and Development team move into new Destination and Discovery Hub
- review new visitor centre staffing
- upgrade Depot fibre link from 1Gps to 10Gps
- review Council minute binding.

The full list of Council's present improvements, including cost savings, revenue and efficiency gains, are detailed in section 7.2.

6.3 Future improvements

Following the improvement gathering process, six of the improvement opportunities were considered to be lower priority and/or needing further analysis. These form Council's future improvements and full details are included in section 7.3; these improvements may require further assessment to determine if they will provide any additional financial, sustainability and/or operational benefits for Council. An estimated start date for the future improvements has also been included as either 2027 or 2028. The total value of the future improvements is currently estimated to be \$60,000 in yearly net benefit with an additional \$300,000 in the implementation year, along with further productivity and efficiency gains.

In addition to the future improvements incorporated within the improvement plan, Council will also undertake the mandatory yearly service review process, as defined by the Office of Local Government. There will likely be further long-term benefits from these reviews, although these will most likely be productivity improvements rather than cost savings.

7 Improvement plan

7.1 Past improvements

Past improvement details	One-off/ ongoing	Cost savings/revenue prior to 2022-23	Efficiency/ productivity gains prior to 2022-23	Efficiency gains in \$ prior to 2022-23
All financial documents located in records management system (creditor and debtor invoices, supp levy, timesheets, journals etc)	Ongoing		✓	\$9,000
Building alarm systems consolidation	Ongoing	\$1,000	✓	
Centrelink Rural Agency established in library - new income stream	Ongoing	\$40,000 (revenue)		
Change to procurement process - automated of purchase orders and payments - in record management system	Ongoing		✓	\$23,000
Change to procurement process - increased use of purchase orders and payments	Ongoing		✓	\$5,000
Eftpos system implementation	Ongoing		✓	\$5,000
Changing computer systems - reduced processing time and therefore increased productivity for staff	Ongoing		✓	
Changing the booking system for community transports	Ongoing		✓	\$1,000
Consolidation of photocopiers in last RFQ - cost savings on the lease and standardisation of consumables to reduce staff maintenance requirements	Ongoing	\$3,000		
Development of workforce plan 2017-21 and 2022-23 - provided a more defined reporting framework where HR report monthly on workforce profiling and associated challengers			✓	
Employed experienced IT Support Officer - reduced reliance on contractors for new IT projects and ongoing support	Ongoing	-\$14,000	✓	
Fibre optic network connections to EOC and Arts Centre - reused surplus fibre optic cabling from Teloca House sale to connect sites to Council network	One-off		✓	
Fringe Benefit Tax savings and improved processes through change in policy on vehicle leases	Ongoing	\$10,000	✓	

Past improvement details	One-off/ ongoing	Cost savings/revenue prior to 2022-23	Efficiency/ productivity gains prior to 2022-23	Efficiency gains in \$ prior to 2022-23
Implement mobile device management solution - centralised control of mobile devices, efficiencies as no longer required to manually update each device, plus improved security on mobile devices	Ongoing		✓	
Implementation of drone operations - reduces the need for land surveys and inspections on gravel pits, landfill etc	Ongoing	\$2,000	✓	
Implementation of hybrid vehicles in community transport	Ongoing	\$3,000	✓	
Implementation of RFID and lockable DVD cases	Ongoing		✓	
Implementation of VendorPanel to increase value and reduce risk	Ongoing		✓	
Implemented Papercut print management software	Ongoing	\$1,000	✓	
Implemented PDQ Inventory - reduced staff time patching software, reduced staff time to inventory hardware and software, plus improved IT security	Ongoing	\$30,000	✓	
Implemented Sophos RED SD-WAN devices	Ongoing		✓	
Implemented Microsoft Office 365	Ongoing		✓	
Improved process for delegations and policy reviews reduced duplication and streamlined processes	Ongoing		✓	\$3,000
Incentive payments for training	Ongoing		✓	
Inhouse training as opposed to other forms of training facilitation	Ongoing	\$20,000	✓	
Installation of LED lighting in offices - cost savings through decreases in billing, plus reduced carbon emissions	Ongoing	\$2,000		
Installation of LED street lighting	Ongoing	\$60,000		
Internal borrowings	Ongoing	\$18,000		
Introduce staff wellbeing program	Ongoing		✓	
Introduction of councillor iPads – reduction of printing costs, staff preparation and delivery time	Ongoing		✓	\$1,000
Introduction of e-signing documents - process reduces paper costs and time associated with printing, seeking approval signatures, scanning of document to save to records management system	Ongoing		✓	\$31,700

Past improvement details	One-off/ ongoing	Cost savings/revenue prior to 2022-23	Efficiency/ productivity gains prior to 2022-23	Efficiency gains in \$ prior to 2022-23
Introduction of Infocouncil business papers - standardisation of meeting agendas and minutes and improved staff efficiencies	Ongoing		✓	\$1,000
Introduction of technology for community transport	Ongoing		✓	\$2,000
IT server virtualisation	Ongoing		✓	
Learning and development opportunities are provided to all employees	Ongoing		✓	
MagiQ Council Connect Portal - cost saving from previous hub solution; used for all Council and committee meetings; reduced printing requirements and staff time	Ongoing	\$5,000	✓	
Management of digital mail items and hardcopy mail items	Ongoing	\$10,000	✓	
Migrated from Microsoft 365 E3 to 365 Business Premium – cost saving through consolidation	Ongoing	\$13,000		
Moved into Arts Centre - using a current Council asset for temporary visitor centre, increased local visitation and awareness	Ongoing		✓	
NBN migration	Ongoing		✓	
Optimised loan cycle by taking loans at lower rates	Ongoing	\$330,000		
Previous Library Service Review	Ongoing		✓	
Procurement decisions considering the benefit of collaborative arrangements locally and regionally	Ongoing		✓	
Reduce cash handling plus reduce petty cash – small reduction in costs	Ongoing		✓	
Reduced annual leave liability (2017/18 annual liability at \$840,744 compared with 2021/22 at \$648,153)	Ongoing		✓	
Reduced audit process timing through automated process - from 3 weeks to 1 week	Ongoing		✓	\$16,000
Reduction in workers' compensation savings	Ongoing	\$252,000		
Reuse of existing IT server hardware at Disaster Recovery Site (reduced purchasing costs)	One-off	\$16,000		

Past improvement details	One-off/ ongoing	Cost savings/revenue prior to 2022-23	Efficiency/ productivity gains prior to 2022-23	Efficiency gains in \$ prior to 2022-23
Sale of aged care centre (also ensured removal of operational risk)	One-off	Sale returned \$6,000,000 in revenue for other General Fund projects		
Service optimization by way of seeking external contractors for cleaning and the like	Ongoing		✓	
Solar panels on buildings	Ongoing	\$4,000		
Solar panels, ceiling insulation, entry airlock doors and LED lighting installed in library and admin depot – 75% reduction in energy costs	Ongoing	\$9,000		
Standardising Council to Samsung A13 mobile phones rather than more expensive brands/models	Ongoing	\$42,000		
Standardising of HPE switches has extended useful life to 10+ years with lifetime warranty and no ongoing maintenance contract	Ongoing	\$2,000		
Succession planning – clear career path provided to staff and allows for internal promotion	Ongoing		✓	
SUREWAY Employment Office relocated to library - new income stream	Ongoing	\$12,000 (revenue)		
Improved turnover rate	Ongoing		✓	
Upgraded Council internet to 1Gbs NBN Enterprise Ethernet	Ongoing		✓	
Works and Open Space and Recreation reviewed village servicing at Barellan, removing two staff and grader - saved one employee	Ongoing	\$60,000	✓	

7.2 Present improvements

Present improvement detail	Starting year	Priority	Difficulty of implementation	Efficiency/productivity gains	Yearly net financial benefit (ongoing)	One-off financial benefit
Review Council's current utility (water, electricity and gas) usage and identify ways to reduce usage/costing - target a 10% saving	Yr1-2024	1	Moderate		\$15,000	
Improvements to Asset Management Plans - changes to asset management spend and improvement plan	Yr1-2024	1	Moderate			
Roads hierarchy review as part of the service review plan	Yr1-2024	1	Moderate	✓		
Develop service review program for year 3 and beyond - one per year	Yr1-2024	1	Easy	✓		
Organisational flexible workplace arrangements	Yr1-2024	2	Moderate	✓		
Climate Action Strategy implementation – includes solar power implementation as stage 1	Yr1-2024	1	Easy		\$90,000	
Council to go to market for a new Enterprise Management Solution and commence implementation	Yr1-2024	1	Moderate	✓		
Open Space and Recreation to implement technology to assist in management of weeds, parks and gardens and cemeteries	Yr1-2024	1	Easy	✓		
Section and position review when positions become vacant and ensure positions are reviewed before advertising	Yr1-2024	1	Easy	✓		
Undertake resourcing reviews for all works, to determine most efficient and effective delivery option.	Yr1-2024	1	Easy	✓		
Implementation/improved use of GPS tracking on all light and heavy fleet	Yr1-2024	1	Easy		\$30,000	
Consider administrative burden when implementing additional reporting processes	Yr1-2024	2	Easy	✓		
Standardisation of plant and equipment where practicable	Yr1-2024	1	Easy	✓		

Present improvement detail	Starting year	Priority	Difficulty of implementation	Efficiency/productivity gains	Yearly net financial benefit (ongoing)	One-off financial benefit
Whole Economic and Development team move into new Destination and Discovery Hub – will increase team efficiency and morale	Yr1-2024	1	Moderate	✓		
Review new visitor centre staffing	Yr1-2024	1	Moderate	✓	\$27,000	
Employment of IT trainee as part of staff building and opportunity for local school leaver	Yr1-2024	1	Easy			
Upgrade Depot fibre link from 1Gps to 10Gps to improve connectivity to administration building, allowing more staff to work onsite	Yr1-2024	1	Easy	✓		
Review Council minute binding	Yr1-2024	1	Easy	✓	\$6,000	
Review of street sweeping service - involving residents	Yr2-2025	2	Moderate		\$20,000	
Review contribution plans 7.12 (capital income)	Yr2-2025	1	Easy		\$15,000	
Review fleet (heavy and small) and plant hire charges - potential savings from fleet plus efficiency savings from plant hire and plant optimisation prior to the replacement of any item	Yr2-2025	2	Easy		\$5,000	
Procurement review - e.g. one-off contract negotiations and competitive tendering (group procurement)	Yr2-2025	2	Moderate		\$5,000	
Review the need to retain all current pocket parks	Yr2-2025	1	Moderate		\$15,000	\$200,000
Move to fee-for-service model for aged care services as part of aged care reforms	Yr2-2025	1	Moderate		\$41,000	
Rationalisation of the potential duplication of assets when undertaking capital projects	Yr2-2025	1	Easy			
Working conditions reference group to investigate issues raised by employees – including an anticipated increase in salary from the salary system review (expected at approximately 7.5%)	Yr2-2025	1	Moderate		-\$675,000	
Service review plan for Destination and Discovery Hub including tourism strategy to capitalise on opportunities ensure targeted and accurate marketing	Yr2-2025	1	Hard			

Present improvement detail	Starting year	Priority	Difficulty of implementation	Efficiency/productivity gains	Yearly net financial benefit (ongoing)	One-off financial benefit
Migrate from Cisco VoIP to Microsoft Teams	Yr2-2025	1	Easy	✓		
Migrate MagiQ documents from on-premise to MagiQ Cloud, which will improve options for staff to work remotely	Yr2-2025	1	Easy	✓		
Domestic waste management charge review - how much is it contributing to financial sustainability of General Fund, along with Water and Sewer Funds	Yr3-2026	2	Easy			
Introduction of charges to offset merchant charges on credit cards	Yr3-2026	2	Moderate		\$20,000	
Increase the potential for private works	Yr3-2026	1	Easy		\$60,000	
Access control systems for all Council offices	Yr3-2026	1	Easy	✓		

7.3 Future improvements

Future improvement detail	Starting year	Priority	Difficulty of implementation	Efficiency/productivity gains	Yearly net financial benefit	One-off benefit/income/saving
Automation of suitable machinery and equipment - assess and evaluate further opportunities	Yr4-2027	3	Moderate	✓		
Solar power installation at Arts Centre, Parkside Museum, Barellan Museum (minimal savings per site) – anticipated saving of 50% of energy costs	Yr4-2027	3	Easy	✓		
Review amount of involvement in non-core service delivery	Yr5-2028	2	Hard		TBC	
Consider the conversion to electric vehicles across all suitable fleet, currently evaluating hybrids	Yr5-2028	2	Easy		TBC	
Look into paying a dividend from the Water Fund to the General Fund	Yr5-2028	2	Moderate		\$60,000	
Land and property strategy - review the land under Council operational ownership and sell any excess land	Yr5-2028	2	Hard			\$300,000