



WEST WIMMERA SHIRE COUNCIL

2019- 2020

ANNUAL REPORT

The best of country living

Council Information

Offices

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Office Hours

Monday to Friday
8.30am – 5.00pm

Website

www.westwimmera.vic.gov.au

Auditor

Crowe Horwath, Ballarat
Victorian Auditor General, Melbourne

Banker

National Australia Bank

Solicitors

Stewart & Lipshut
Victoria Street, Nhill

Internal Auditor

RSD Audit
Breen Street, Bendigo

Maddocks

La Trobe Street, Melbourne

Russel Kennedy Solicitors

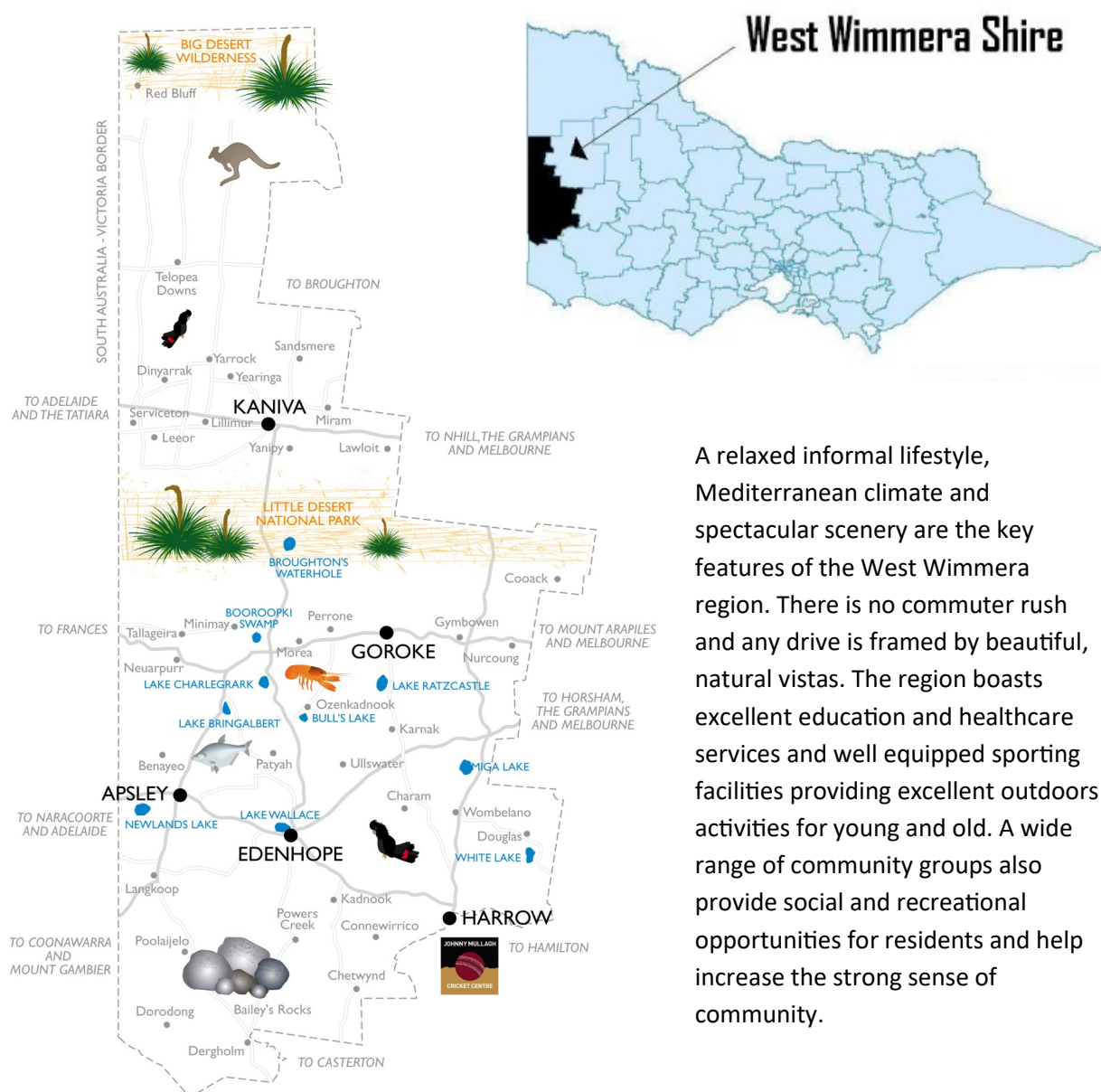
La Trobe Street, Melbourne



About West Wimmera

West Wimmera Shire Council, situated along the Victorian - South Australian border, covers 9,200 square kilometres and includes the townships of Apsley, Edenhope and Harrow in the southern half of the shire through to Goroke, Kaniva and Serviceton in the north. Home to approximately 4,000 people, the region prides itself in its welcoming communities and wide diversity of industry and environment.

Consisting of untouched desert parks, vast wetlands and fertile plains, West Wimmera is equally known for its acres of wheat and legumes, and as a home to the famous Malleefowl, red-tail black cockatoo and a unique abundance of wildflowers.



A relaxed informal lifestyle, Mediterranean climate and spectacular scenery are the key features of the West Wimmera region. There is no commuter rush and any drive is framed by beautiful, natural vistas. The region boasts excellent education and healthcare services and well equipped sporting facilities providing excellent outdoors activities for young and old. A wide range of community groups also provide social and recreational opportunities for residents and help increase the strong sense of community.

Council Vision, Mission, and Values

Council Vision

West Wimmera Shire delivers the very best experience and opportunity that rural living has to offer.

Our Values

West Wimmera Shire Council values its resident population and its wellbeing. This will be demonstrated through promotion of viable and sustainable communities, the retention of the current population and support to grow communities.

West Wimmera Shire Council values good governance and transparent decision making. Supporting community groups and advocating on their behalf will enable open dialogue to occur with residents.

Representing the whole of West Wimmera is highly valued by Councillors.

A connected community, both via transport infrastructure and modern digital technology that enables us to be connected to the world for business and education.

Partnerships (locally, regionally, and with government) are valued as a way of ensuring sustainable service delivery.



Mayor's Message

It is my pleasure to present the 2019-20 Annual Report of West Wimmera Shire Council.

It has been a year handicapped in the latter part by Covid-19 restrictions. This has hindered some of our strong advocacy programs that are driven by face to face contact with government ministers and advisors. However we have been able to successfully maintain government support and funding for mental health outreach within our shire. This has been expanded to include other parts of the Wimmera region, based on the model that this shire has developed. Other advocacy rolls still continue but in a different form using technology to maintain our contacts.



Receiving continued financial support allows West Wimmera to successfully develop, progress and grow, which also contributes to building strong resilient communities. A number of important social infrastructure projects have either been completed or are well advanced during the year. The Edenhope Community Hall Redevelopment is nearing completion. The Edenhope Library is almost ready to relocate to its new home. We look forward to this new facility being able to better meet the needs of that community. Other significant works include the completion of the amenities upgrade at Lake Charegrark, which improves the appeal of that very popular tourist attraction, located centrally within the Shire. The Harrow Recreation Reserve upgrade is also virtually complete, and ready for use by the Harrow Community. Gender friendly facilities will be appreciated by all sporting groups' and clubs who use them.

Council continues to maintain and renew our road network; with in excess to \$9.8 million spent on capital renewal and upgrade of our roads and infrastructure on top of a further \$3.9 million of preventative maintenance works. The road network is recognised as an extremely vital part for West Wimmera, supporting our agricultural base.

I would like to acknowledge the contribution made by both the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments to the ongoing delivery of services to our Shire Communities, through recurrent finding programs such as aged and disability services and libraries. Without this ongoing funding a greater burden would fall upon our ratepayers to maintain current standards.

The Victorian Government has made new funding available to I.T upgrades to allow staff having to work from home to be able to access the council networks. Also provision has been made to enable Councillors to be able to communicate, and run meetings through internet without having to be all present in one room as with council meetings in the past. Recent Council Meetings have had a mixture of Councillors and staff being present and on-line. This funding is greatly appreciated as enabling a way of providing a clear service to all participating, including allowing flexible community access to Council Meetings



With the Covid-19 restrictions in place council has made efforts to provide a safe workplace for its employees. When possible staff have been able to work from home. Unfortunately this means the hours of opening at the offices has had to be limited.

Services, and particularly VicRoads needs are being met by appointment. Road works are continuing as normal. 3 year old kindergarten had to cease for one term to meet social distancing requirements, but will recommence in the 3rd term after alterations to buildings have been completed.

During the year West Wimmera Shire Council undertook a review of the delivery of library services across the municipality. After careful consideration the decision was made to remain as a member in the Wimmera Regional Library Corporation. Council is confident this will continue to provide a strong and effective library service to our community.

There are many issues that affect communities and individuals within our Shire. Where it has been possible the council continues to advocate on issues that are seen as important to all of us including:

- Road funding
- Pest, Plants and Animals
- Native Vegetation
- Rural Mental Health Outreach Services
- West Wimmera Rural Water Pipeline
- Digital Connectivity



Cr. Bruce Meyer OAM

Mayor



Chief Executive Officer's Message

On behalf of the staff of the West Wimmera Shire Council, I wish to highlight a few points of interest within the Annual Report.

The 2019/20 year saw West Wimmera complete a number of significant projects that have been in the planning phase for many years. To see a number of them finally get completed is a great achievement for a small rural shire.

The successful completion of the Edenhope Community Centre Building (former Edenhope Mechanics Hall), has been a massive win for the Edenhope Community. I

would like to acknowledge the hard work of the staff that have managed to get the project from a proposal that seemed out of reach to become a reality. The Council also must be acknowledged for taking a leap of faith and making the tough decision to invest in the development.

Ultimately the project would not have been possible without a large injection of funds from the state and federal governments. The funding assistance through the Living Libraries fund and a further injection through Regional Development Victoria, have made the facility possible. In addition to the state government funding, a considerable financial contribution was provided via the federal Drought Communities fund and Council is extremely grateful for the assistance and will hopefully get the opportunity to acknowledge this at a formal opening.

Similarly, the facilities at the Harrow and District Recreation Reserve have, for a long time, required upgrading. Through the work of the Rec Reserve committee, access to \$1m was gained from the state government through Sport and Recreation Victoria, a further contribution from the federal Drought Communities fund and funding from AFL Victoria has enabled the facilities to be constructed and provide a female friendly capacity to all of the buildings.

The final large scale project that was completed, was the Kaniva Wetlands and Fauna Park site. This project was a high priority during a social infrastructure planning exercise a number of years ago and the finished product has drawn praise from across the region. It has created a brilliant family space that can be utilised by the travelling public and the local population.

As with the other large projects, it would not have been possible without the assistance of a federal grant and a number of state government contributions.

All of the aforementioned projects have also benefitted from localised fund raising and this is an area where West Wimmera excels along with the high levels of volunteerism.



The final point I would like to touch on is the continued high scoring that West Wimmera receives through its annual community satisfaction survey. These results come from dedicated people implementing programs and providing services that are well received by the community. In particular the high level of satisfaction in the customer service areas of Council is something that the shire should particularly proud of.

As we wind our way through 2020, which has been a difficult time for so many people, we should all take the time to reflect on how lucky we are to be in a safe place and look forward to a time when we can all start to meet face to face again.

This year has tested the mettle of Local Government and West Wimmera has adapted very quickly, with Councillors meeting predominantly via video and staff working remotely, it has shown that Local Government will be quite different beyond the current circumstances.



David Leahy

Chief Executive Officer



Advocacy

The West Wimmera Shire Council, Council Plan 2017-2021, has been divided into Actions and Advocacy Actions to enable more accurate tracking of activity associated with the plan and to ensure that the activities align with the plan.

In previous years, our Councillors and CEO have attended a series of appointments with state Ministers and their senior advisors.

Unfortunately due to the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns, Council was unable to undertake these meetings face to face with the Ministers and senior advisors.

Advocacy in the times of Covid has become a series of remote meetings, via telephone or video conferencing means, and the odd old fashioned letter to the right people.

Through this all Council maintains its contact with other tiers of government and continues to advocate on behalf of our residents.

Understandably, the focus from the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments have been upon Covid-19 response and relief activities for much of the year. Council continues to advocate to other tiers of government to ensure that we receive 'our fair share' of assistance and that our voices are heard at the top layers of government.

One example of this involves the continued advocacy Council makes regarding the South Australian border closure and the impact this has on our border community. Council has and continues to advocate to the Commonwealth, South Australian and Victorian Governments as well as the Cross-border Commissioner to ensure that our border community is treated fair and equitably



COVID-19

As with much of the nation West Wimmera Shire was impacted throughout the year by the Covid-19 Pandemic.

During the first lockdown , Council closed its Customer Service Centres in Edenhope and Kaniva in mid March, with the majority of staff working from home where possible. A staged re-opening of the two Service Centres occurred from mid-May, with many staff returning to the office. Strict Social Distancing requirements have been put in place within the two Customer Service Centres, for both staff and customers.



Mayor Bruce having his temperature checked by Courtney on entering the Kaniva Customer Service Centre

It was considered appropriate for Council's works teams to continue to operate whilst employing strict social distancing requirements where possible. This included single driver/operators of equipment and staff travelling to worksites independently. All plant and vehicles are sanitized and thoroughly cleaned daily.

Council's Community Care services also maintained essential operations with social distancing and sanitizing requirements in place. The wearing of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was implemented as appropriate and training was given to staff in the correct application of PPE and hand hygiene. Where possible, assessments were conducted remotely. Staff were trained to conduct welfare 'gate checks' on clients before entering the property. Council considered the risk to our highly-valued volunteer network was such that meals on wheels delivery was taken on by Council's own staff, with all PPE being worn and client safety checks being undertaken by staff at delivery time.

The potential for serious impact from Covid-19 on our most vulnerable residents is well understood by Council. Whilst it was unfortunately not possible to continue with group social support activities, efforts were made by Council's Community Services unit to contact and provide support to our isolated and vulnerable residents. Council was, with the support of the Victorian Government and the Red Cross, able to provide a number of care packages and meals support to our residents who required assistance. Council will continue, with the assistance of the Victorian Government, to implement programs to keep in touch with our vulnerable residents, including the loaning of communication equipment to enable isolated residents to keep in touch with family and loved ones.

The full impacts of Covid-19 on our local economies is being assessed with Council staff contacting all registered businesses across the municipality.

Council continues to work alongside agencies such as the Wimmera Development Association and Regional Development Victoria to assess this impact.

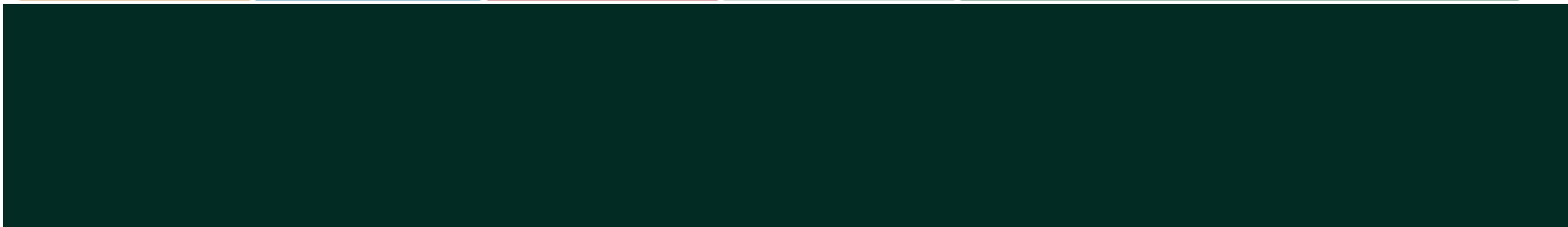
Of major concern to our communities has been the closure of the state border by the South Australian Government. This has impacted not only our cross border communities ability to access services and facilities which would normally be available but has also had a serious impact on visitor traffic, seriously impacting on our hospitality and accommodation sectors and well as greatly reducing retail from passing traffic. Of great concern to Council is the reduction in access to medical and educational facilities that happen to be across the border, as well as the severe social impacts on our border economies. Council continues to actively advocate on behalf of our border communities with the South Australian, Victorian and Commonwealth governments on this matter, so as to be able to find a common sense solution. Council recognises the difficulty caused by people needing to transition from medical and educational services across the border into the Victorian system, and stands willing to provide assistance to residents who are forced due to the political position of the South Australian government to transition in this way.

Council relaxed its Hardship provisions for rate deferment for Covid affected ratepayers by introducing a specific Covid related policy. Included in this policy are rate deferrals, longer term payment plans and the waiving of interest charges. The majority of the impact of will be felt in future years rather than 2019-20. Council also waived all business registration costs for the remainder of the 2019-20 and 2020-21 years. Council encourages all ratepayers who are suffering hardship to contact us.

Council has continued to provide stimulus into our local economy by maintaining as many of our programs as possible and utilising local suppliers as much as possible. Council made a conscious decision to maintain works and capital programs to provide spending within our shire boundaries to stimulate the local economy. Council has carried this philosophy into the 2020-21 and will continue to look to work with the Victorian and Commonwealth governments to implement stimulus activities within the municipality (More information can be seen in our Financial Statements and the 2020-21 Budget).

Council continues to work behind the scenes to advocate for our community to access health and screening services, with the possibility of a positive outcome in late 2020.

Also of concern to Council is our community's mental and social health. Council continues to provide funding support and advocacy to the Rural Mental Health outreach service and is pleased to see an expansion in this service is planned for the 2020-21 year. Council also continues to partner with both the Commonwealth and Victorian governments to provide social support and engagement services.



Financial Summary 2019-20

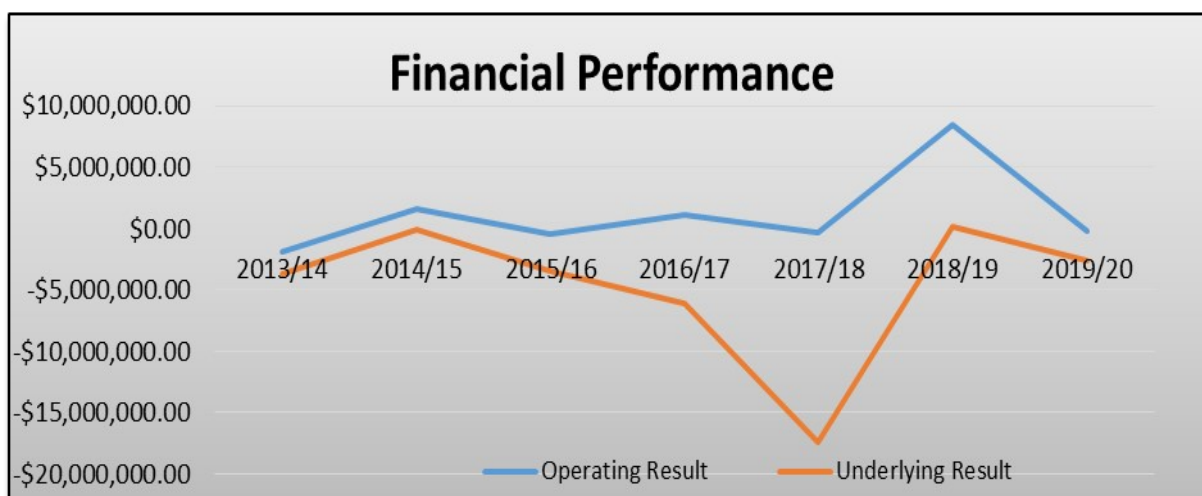
Council's financial position continues to remain sound. A summary of our performance is outlined below. Detailed information relating to Council's financial performance is included within the financial statements and performance statements addendums of this report.

Operating Position

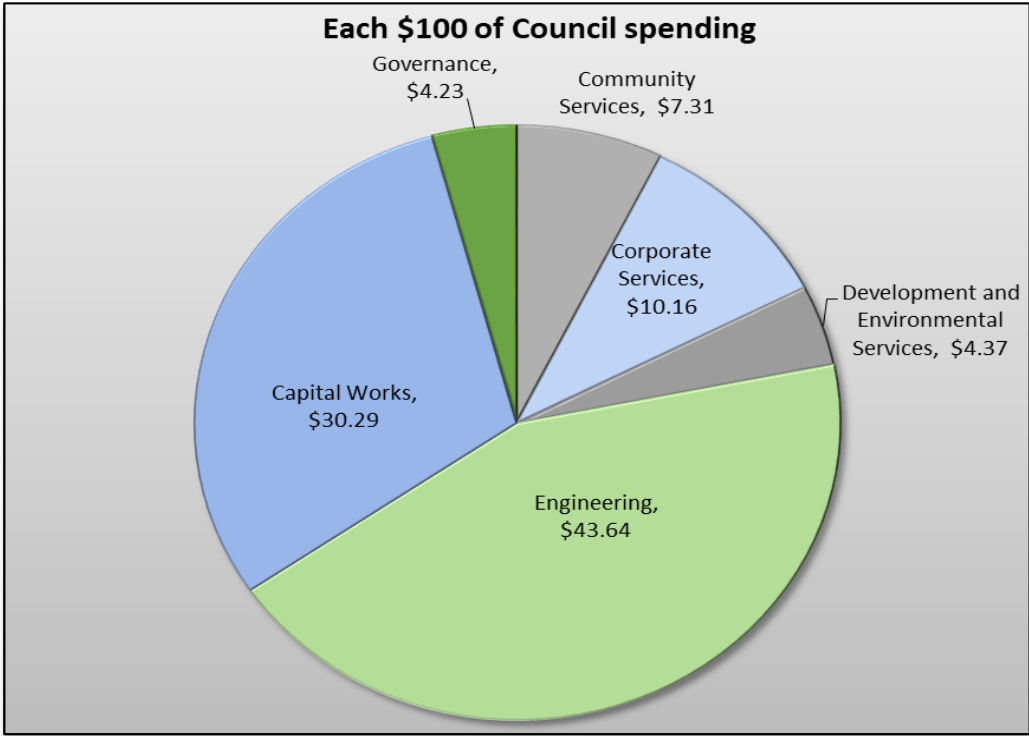
Council's operating result for 2019/20 shows a slight deficit of \$0.21million (\$5.97million surplus 2018/19). After taking into consideration other comprehensive income, Council's total comprehensive result was a deficit of \$2.41million (\$21.94million deficit 2018/19). This comprehensive deficit includes an asset revaluation decrement of \$2.07million as a result of a full revaluation of Council's land and buildings during 2019/20.

Council's underlying result for 2019/20 (the operating surplus less non-recurrent income) shows a deficit of \$2.61million (2018/19 \$0.65million deficit). This decline can be mainly attributed to decreases in grant funding and reimbursements. Recurrent operating grants such as the Financial Assistance Grants saw a small increase in 2019/20, however significant decreases in non-recurrent and capital grants lead to a total overall decline of \$7.09million in grant funding as compared to 2018/19.

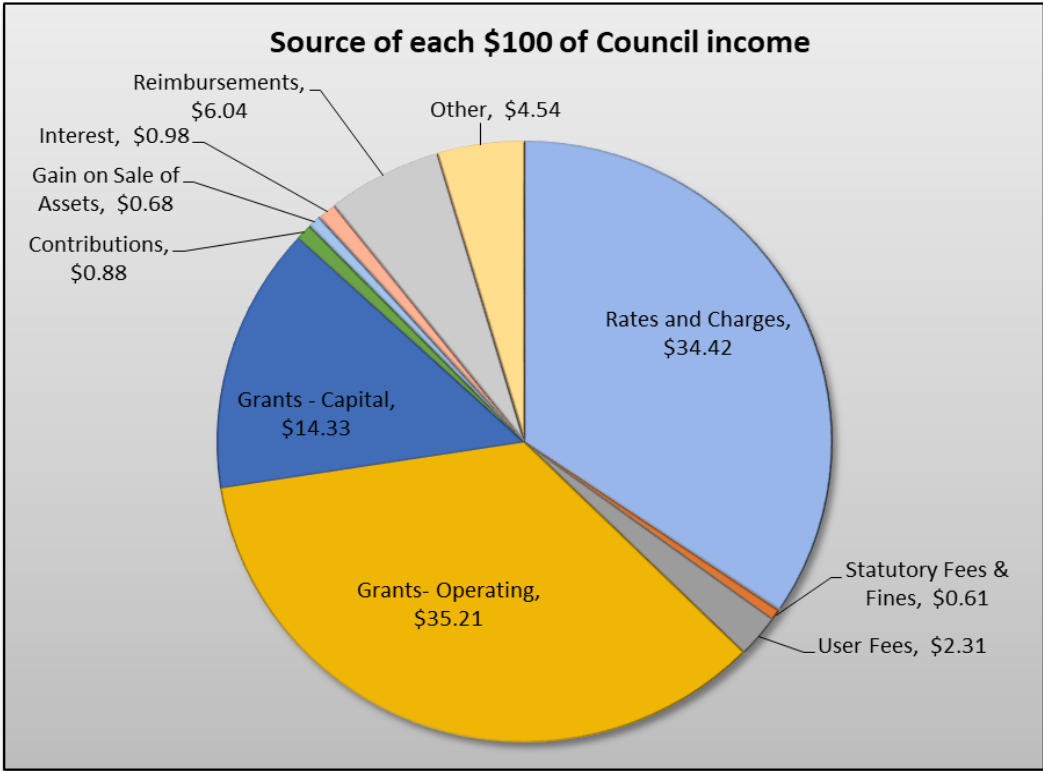
This information needs to be considered in context with all of Council's income and expenditure sources. When analysing Council's financial data, we note that Council incurs a significant depreciation charge of \$7.55million for 2019/20. This amount is not a cash expense, rather it represents the consumption of Council's assets annually. If this amount was removed from Council's underlying result, Council would be generating a significant underlying surplus. This indicates that Council is reliant on upon non-recurrent funding sources (particularly capital grants) to fund its asset renewal. It must be said that this is not an uncommon position within local government in Victoria, with all but the largest municipalities facing similar issues.



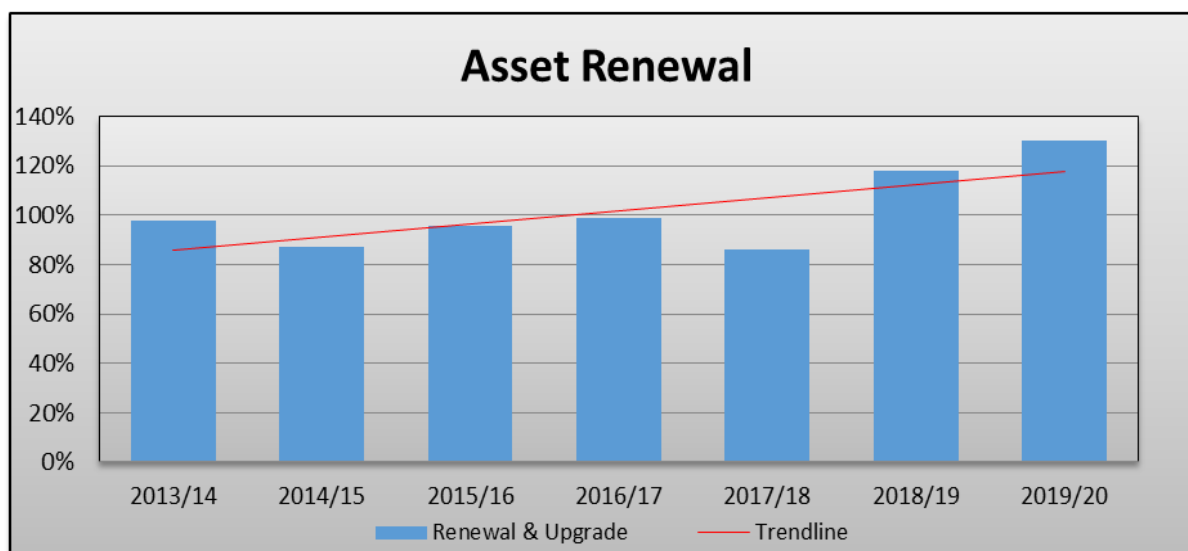
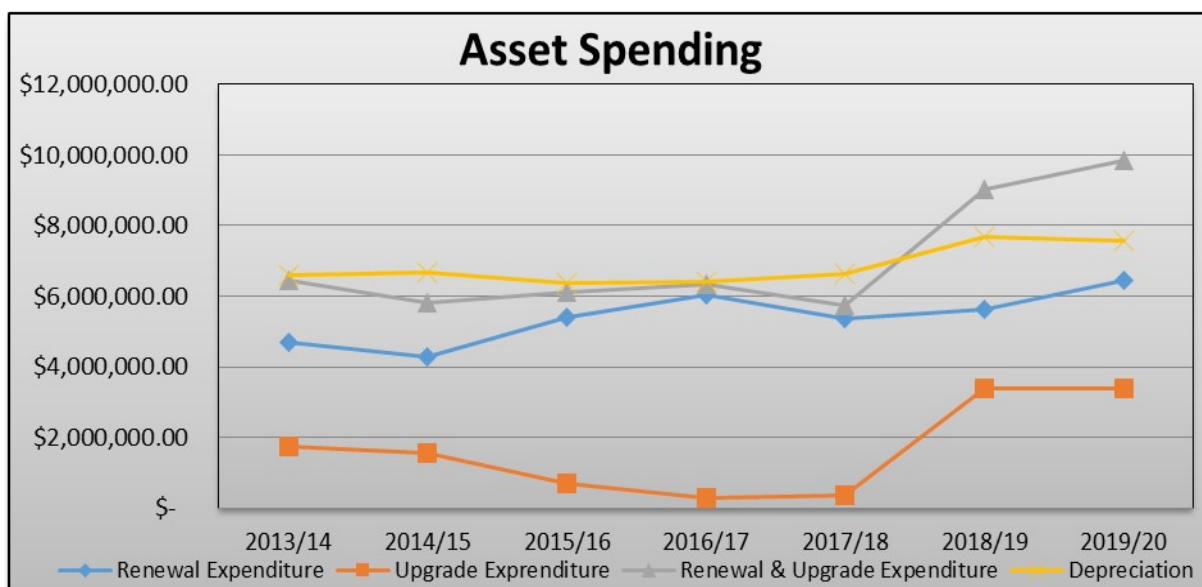
The following charts indicate the sources of Council's income and where this income is spent:



Council's reliance on grant funding can clearly be seen from the below chart, with grant funding making up \$49.54 of every \$100.00 Council receives.

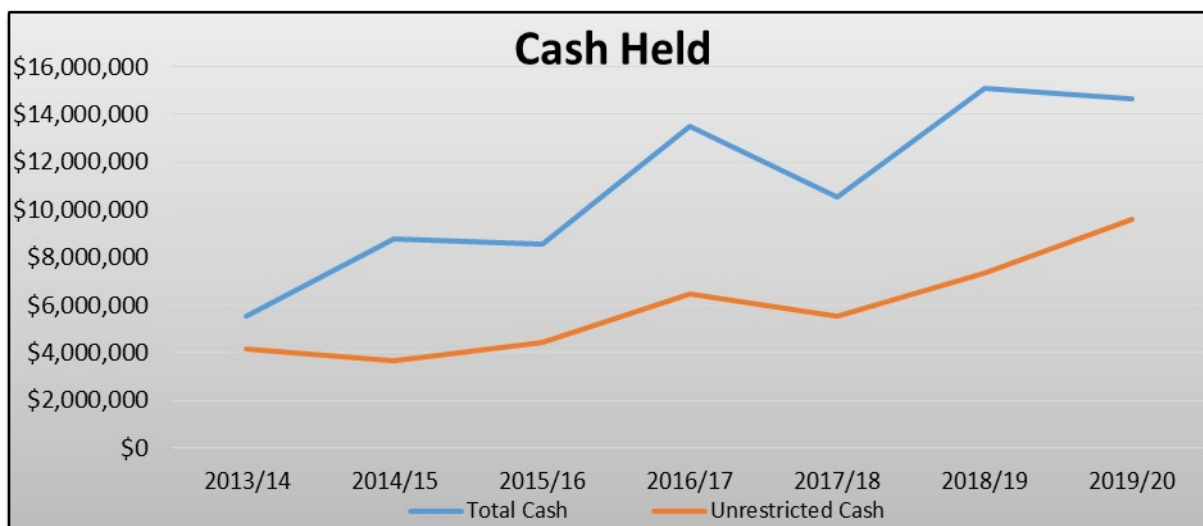


uncil delivered a significant capital expenditure program during 2019/20 of \$9.93million, an increase of 9.1% over the previous year (2018/19: \$9.1million). Of this, \$6.47million was spent on roads with a further \$0.44million spent on other infrastructure such as bridges, footpaths and drainage. Of the \$9.93million spend, \$6.44million was expended on renewing Council’s existing assets, with a further \$3.4million spent on upgrading Council’s existing assets. This amount was sufficient to cover Council’s consumption of its asset base, as measured through depreciation, meaning that Council was restoring its assets at a greater rate than it was consuming them during the year, as was also the case in the prior year 2018/19. The following graphs show Council’s last seven years of asset renewal and upgrade spending as compared to depreciation:

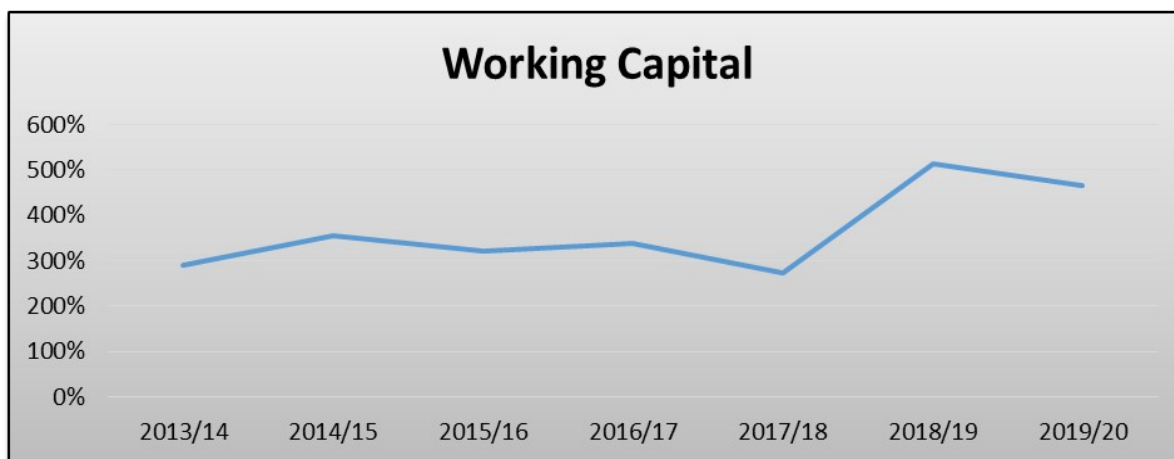


As can be seen in the above graph, Council has exceeded 100% renewal of its asset base as measured against depreciation for the current and prior financial years. Council is developing a longer term capital expenditure plan which identifies required spend on required assets to ensure effective capital renewal to enable service provisions to be met into the future.

Council’s cash position remains healthy, with \$14.67million in the bank at 30 June 2020. This represents a small decrease of \$0.44million on the previous year. Council is holding commitments by way of reserves, unspent grants and trust deposits of \$5.10million, with a further \$3.27million in grants received in advance (financial Assistance Grants), leaving an unrestricted cash amount of \$6.30million. It must be noted that the majority of the \$8.37million of funds restricted is held on a discretionary basis which Council may resolve to use for other purposes if the need arises.



Council retains a solid working capital ratio. This is the coverage of current liabilities by current assets, and measures the ability of Council to cover liabilities as and when they fall due. At 30 June 2020 Council had a working capital ratio of 467%.



Overall, Council has reported a small operating deficit for the 2019/20 year and continues to record an underlying deficit. A lack of own sourced revenue sources other than rate income coupled with the 2% rate cap creates a complex financial management issue for Council into the future.

Council has met its asset renewal requirements (as measured against depreciation expense) for the last two financial years, however the long term average indicates this is an area of ongoing concern for Council and again highlights Councils dependence on grant funding for asset renewal.

The fluctuation between operating surplus and deficit over the previous seven years is impacted by fluctuating external grant funding and events such as the flood events of 2016 and the subsequent recovery works. As Council is heavily reliant on grant funding, any fluctuation in this funding at a State or Federal level will ultimately have a significant impact on Councils financial position.



Our Councillors

West Wimmera Shire Council consists of five councillors elected from an un-subdivided municipal district.



West Wimmera Shire Council 2016-2020

Bruce Meyer, Trevor Domaschenz, Richard Hicks, Tom Houlihan, Jodie Pretlove

Cr. Trevor Domaschenz

Cr. Trevor Domaschenz was elected to West Wimmera Shire Council on 22 October 2016 and this is his first term in local government.

Councillor Domaschenz is West Wimmera Shire Council's representative to the following organisations and Committees:

- West Wimmera Landcare Network
- Wimmera Development Association
- Wimmera Mallee Regional Tourism Association
- West Wimmera Shire Cemetery Trust
- West Wimmera Shire Tourism Advisory Committee
- West Wimmera Shire Sustainability Advisory Committee

Cr. Richard Hicks

Councillor Hicks was elected to West Wimmera Shire Council on 22 October 2016 and this is his first term in local government. He holds a Masters of Rural Science from the University of New England.

Councillor Hicks is West Wimmera Shire Council's representative to the following organisations and Committees:

- Big Desert National Park Fire Control Committee
- Little Desert National Park Fire Control Committee
- Rail Freight Alliance
- Roadsafe Wimmera
- Western Highway Action Committee
- West Wimmera Shire Cemetery Trust
- Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Transport Group

Cr. Tom Houlihan

Councillor Houlihan was elected to West Wimmera Shire Council on 22 October 2016 and this is his first term in local government.

Councillor Houlihan is West Wimmera Shire Council's representative to the following organisations and Committees:

- Douglas Mine Environment Review Committee
- Grampians Central West Waste and Resource Recovery Group – Forum Group
- Wimmera Mallee Sustainability Alliance
- Johnny Mullagh Interpretive Centre Inc.
- Municipal Emergency Management Planning (MEMP) Committee
- Municipal Fire Prevention Committee
- West Wimmera Rural Water Supply Project – Feasibility Study
- West Wimmera Shire Cemetery Trust



Cr. Bruce Meyer

Councillor Bruce Meyer was re-elected to West Wimmera Shire Council on 22 October 2016. He first became an elected representative for the former Shire of Kaniva in 1993, serving until that Shire amalgamated with the Shires of Kowree and Arapiles in 1995. Councillor Meyer was elected to the inaugural West Wimmera Shire Council in 1997 and has continuously represented the Shire since then.

Councillor Meyer is West Wimmera Shire Council's representative to the following organisations and Committees:

- Kaniva Community Sporting Complex
- Kaniva Recreation Reserve Advisory Committee
- Crabtree Estate Committee
- Municipal Association Victoria
- North West Municipalities Association
- Rural Councils Victoria
- Wimmera Regional Library Corporation
- West Wimmera Shire Audit Committee
- West Wimmera Shire Cemetery Trust

Cr. Jodie Pretlove

Councillor Pretlove was elected to West Wimmera Shire Council on 22 October 2016 and this is her first term in local government. Councillor Pretlove was elected Mayor in November 2018 for her second consecutive term as Mayor.

Councillor Pretlove is West Wimmera Shire Council's representative to the following organisations and Committees:

- Primary Care Partnership Wimmera
- West Wimmera Shire Audit Committee
- West Wimmera Shire Youth Council
- West Wimmera Shire Tourism Advisory Committee
- West Wimmera Shire Sustainability Advisory Committee



Organisational Structure

Council is the governing body that appoints a Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The CEO has responsibility for the day-to-day management of operations in accordance with the strategic directions of the Council Plan. Two General Managers/Directors and the CEO form the Senior Management Group.



Chief Executive Officer
David Leahy

David commenced with Council in February 2016. David brings to Council extensive senior management experience in governance and also works and project management across a number of public sector entities across two states.



Areas of Responsibility

- Overall Staff Management
- Strategy and Direction
- Governance
- Human Resources

Director Corporate and Community Services
Ashley Roberts

Ashley re-joined Council in April 2016 after an earlier stint as Manager Finance between 2012-2014. Ashley brings to Council over 20 years financial management and governance experience from both the public and private sectors. Ashley holds a Bachelor Commerce and an Associate Diploma in Accounting and is a member of CPA Australia and an Associate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



Areas of Responsibility

- Finance, Rates and Revenue, Payroll
- Customer Service
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Kindergartens, Early Years Services
- Risk Management, Audit Committee
- Maternal & Child Health Services
- Youth Services
- Home and Community Care Services
- Community and Volunteer Support
- Information Technology
- Libraries
- Cemeteries
- Economic Development and Tourism



General Manager Infrastructure, Development and Works Mark Marziale

Mark joined Council in June 2018. Prior to becoming part of the West Wimmera family Mark held senior positions in local government and the public sector across 3 states.

Mark holds a Bachelor of Arts in Planning (Architectural Studies) and a Graduate Diploma in Regional and Urban Planning. Mark is a Member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and a Registered Planner with the Planning Institute of Australia.



Areas of Responsibility

- Shire Buildings
- Roads Program
- Footpaths
- Culverts and Drains
- Waste, Recycling and Transfer Stations
- Public & Environmental Health
- Statutory Planning, Municipal Building Surveyor Services
- Strategic Planning
- Property Services
- Emergency Management and Fire Prevention
- Domestic Animals and By-Laws
- Roadside Pests & Weeds Program
- Parks & gardens
- Aerodrome
- Quarries
- Contracts and Procurement
- Seasonal Pools



Description of Operations

West Wimmera Shire Council is responsible for the delivery of over 70 services across many areas including:

- Economic and business development and tourism
- Family, early years, youth services
- Home and Community Care services
- Community and volunteers
- Finance, rates and revenue, payroll
- Information technology
- Libraries
- Parks and gardens
- Council and community building maintenance
- Road works, footpaths and other civil infrastructure
- Cemeteries
- Property Management
- Public & Environmental Health
- Planning and Building Approvals
- Waste Management
- Domestic Animal Management
- Stock Control
- Emergency Management & Fire Prevention

Economic Factors

The 2019-20 year saw the initial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic spread to the West Wimmera. During March/April 2020 the region was placed into temporary stage 3 lockdown which saw a reduction in business hours for many of our regional business coupled with a significant decline in traffic and subsequent decline in the visitor economy. Council anticipates that economic impacts of this event will be felt into the 2020-21 financial year

Major Changes

Council underwent an internal restructure during 2019-20 which saw an realignment of some staff duties. Notable to this was the bolstering of the Governance business unit with an acknowledgement of significant work arising from the implementation of the *Local Government Act 2020*.



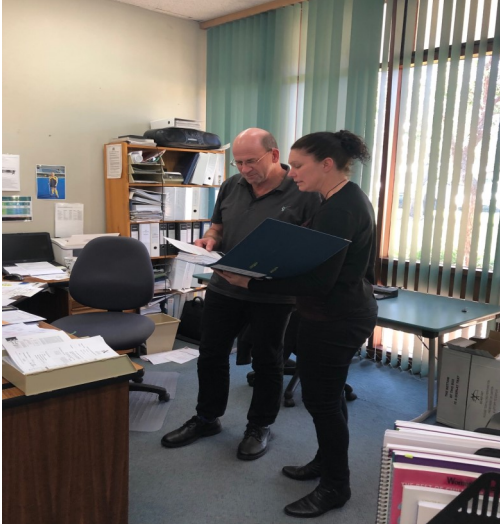
Also of note was the employment of a Manager of Community Support and Wellbeing to manage the day to day operations of Council’s Community Support and Wellbeing unit, which has brought together Council’s Maternal Child Health, Early Years and Aged and disability services into one management unit.

Corporate and Community Services

2019/20 presented some unique challenges for the Corporate and Community Services directorate, with a minor internal restructure and the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic affecting operations.

Tweaking the internal structure saw the Information Management (Records) function move to the Governance are of Council, whilst some resource shuffling within the directorate saw resources better aligned with needs. A new team known as Community Support and Wellbeing was formed to combine the day to day responsibilities of the Council’s Early Years, Youth, and Aged and All Abilities teams.

The Covid-19 Pandemic introduced many Corporate and Community Services staff to the concept of working from home for large periods of the year, placing unique demands upon Council’s ICT infrastructure. Pleasingly these demands have been largely met by Council’s



ICT services and incident recovery processes. A big thank you from management to all staff who continue to perform their duties efficiently and effectively under changing circumstances.

Council’s Community Services staff continued to provide front line service delivery to our most vulnerable and at need community members. Their dedication to ongoing service delivery for the welfare of our community during the face of the Covid-19 pandemic has shown outstanding dedication to our community.



Financial Services

Council continues to commit to providing a financially sustainable future for our municipality whilst maintaining services to our community.

During 2019/20 Council worked within the 3.5% rate increase cap variation granted to it by the Minister for Local Government. The purpose of this additional funding was to reduce Council's asset renewal gap and improve asset conditions across the shire. Council was able to put this funding towards delivery another largest on record capital works program of \$9.93million, coming off a then record program of \$9.10million from the previous year. This additional expenditure on Council's assets places Council in a strong position to provide services to our community into the future.

Customer Services

As the 'smiling face of Council', this past year has seen some changes and some challenges. We welcomed some new faces along the way, highlighting the importance that Council continues to provide a great customer's experience, and once again Council's customer service performance continues to be ranked extremely highly in the annual customer satisfaction survey undertaken for Local Government across the state.

The fact that Council's customer service ranks amongst the best in the state is a reflection of our skilled, dedicated and responsive Customer Service team. The team is missing our customer contact during lock down and eagerly await when the world gets back to some kind of normal.



Council maintains Customer Service Centres in Edenhope and Kaniva, and continues to provide services on behalf of Centrelink and Vic Roads to our communities.

Council's customer service team also manage the day to day operations of the Edenhope, Goroke, and Kaniva cemeteries.

Community support and wellbeing

During 2020 the introduction of the Community Support and Wellbeing unit emerged from the Corporate and Community Services restructure. This included the appointment of a



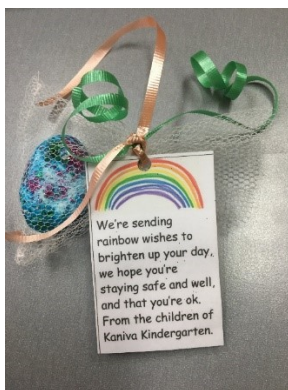
Manger Community Support and Wellbeing. The Community Support and Wellbeing unit encompasses Maternal and Child Health, Early Years – Kindergartens and Supported Playgroup, Youth and Community Services. The unit has a focus of bringing the ages and programs together to facilitate supportive and holistic outcomes for community members within council programs.

Covid-19 saw some changes to programs and the introduction of ongoing hygiene and safety procedures. Some positive outcomes occurred during this period and have been identified as beneficial to continue into the future. The collaboration of team members in the unit enabled facilitating connections between different ages. These projects included the kindergarten children painting rocks which were given as a gift with a poem of hope to community members via the Community Support Workers. Additional funding will allow continued practical, wellbeing and technological connection and engagement support for the remainder of 2020 for those facing vulnerability in the community and challenges due to Covid-19.

A few team members of the Community Wellbeing and Support unit are also part of the pandemic sub-committee where they work collaboratively with regional and local stakeholders to assist those vulnerable in the community and contribute to the pandemic plan.

Community Services

During 2020 the Community Services team supported 221 consumers with a variety of essential services. Services include personal care, home care, home maintenance, social support, meals and respite. The team also encountered a few staff changes with fresh ideas arising from those changes. The pandemic saw minor changes to service delivery, e.g. weekly home care reduced to



fortnightly which was quickly reinstated when restrictions eased. Appreciation was given to the Community Support Workers (CSW) who continued to provide services to the aged and disability members in our community during this unprecedented time. This dedication enabled little interruption to service delivery during this time. The CSW's also provided a great deal of wellbeing support to consumers with additional veranda chats, general wellbeing check-ins and short social distancing walks. With volunteers unable to engage in meals on wheels the CSW's also completed this valuable service.



Kindergartens

After lengthy recruitment, which remains a challenge at West Wimmera Shire, a new teacher from Melbourne looking for a 'tree change' was appointed in January. Her teaching and worldly experience and dedication has proven a positive outcome with a new perspective to the program and the re-establishment of the Parent Advisory Group working together on projects.



Home Schooling West Wimmera Style

The kindergartens introduced new procedures with the Covid-19 which included families dropping children at the door to reduce risk of infection spread. Three year old kindergarten was suspended for term 2 and reintroduced in a shorter format for term 3 to enable appropriate hygiene procedures. Online learning programs were established for those at home during periods of government restrictions. Teachers sent out home learning packs whilst continuing to provide programs for those attending. One of the online home learner's story and photos made it to the Department of Education and Training minister. They were very impressed with West Wimmera Shire's approach to learning during challenging times.

During the term 2 school holidays WWSC Community Support and Wellbeing team together with the Parent Advisory Group (PAG) organised an exciting new inclusive and natural outdoor learning environment at Kaniva Kindergarten. This had been in planning for some years with a combination of PAG fundraising efforts and recent success of a Department of Education Infrastructure Grant.



Before

Included in the new play environment are an all abilities play house, extended bike track, fort with changeable attachments for safe risk taking opportunities, natural river bed with water pump, fruit and vegetable gardening spaces, calming nooks for relaxing and Inviting alcove to meet together.

Included in the new play environment are an all abilities play house, extended bike track, fort with changeable attachments for safe risk taking opportunities, natural river bed with water



After



The PAG also fundraised to add a large shade structure which enables additional all weather outdoor learning opportunities.



A collaborative approach between stakeholders enabled the Kaniva Kindergarten yard upgrade



Kaniva Kindergarten children enjoy the yard upgrade

Kindergarten Enrolments 2020

Kindergarten	Four year old	Three year olds	Total
Edenhope	13	16	29
Goroke	6	5	11
Kaniva	10	12	22
Note: All kindergarten's implemented a combined 3 & 4 year old program in 2020			

Similar enrolment numbers are predicted for 2021

Supported Playgroup

Nature play was the highlight of supported playgroups in term 1 and 2. The sessions were held at Council's two new parks - Goroke Nature Play Space and Kaniva Wetlands and Fauna Park. These sessions were very popular with large numbers of families attending.



Maternal and Child Health

The last twelve months have been like no other in the past twenty years of the current MCH nurse!

Soon after the year clocked over I approached senior management with the proposal of employing a Perinatal Emotional Health Practitioner (PEHP) to the Shire utilizing some of the Enhanced Home Visiting monies that we have also had difficulty in finding an allocation for. This proposal was warmly received and endorsed by management with the appointment going to Adrienne Caldwell RN/RM in March 2020. Unfortunately this was just as the Covid 19 pandemic was beginning to take hold in the country so the 'in home' counselling that we had planned was delayed until restrictions were a little lifted in June. Overall this has been a very positive and warmly received service by women of the West Wimmera with access to all that require in both antenatal and postnatal periods.



The impact to the MCH service during the pandemic has been kept to a minimum so to lessen the stress and worry to already anxious families. Although most MCH services across Victoria had to cancel all face to face consultations along with the very valued home visit for newborns and enhanced clientele, I was able to keep services going as Immunisation delivery was to continue.

This allowed the continuation of Key Age and Stage visits while essential vaccinations were also administered. This also included the Under 5 year's influenza vaccination with some 175 paediatric doses given to date. This was done with the assistance of the Shire's EHO who was invaluable in ensuring social distancing was adhered to as clients made their way promptly through the clinic. We also considered the occasion a 'practice run' should we, in time, be fortunate to have a Covid 19 vaccination made available with the local governments awarded the task of administering it in the time to come.

Enrollments

This year has not been too dissimilar from last year when it comes to new babies into our region. Unlike last year's record breaking 52 we have had 50 this year. 32 were born in Victorian hospitals and 18 in hospitals of South Australia. Difficulties lie with obtaining referrals from the birthing hospitals in South Australia and it is often by 'word of mouth' that I learn that these babies have come from hospital and requiring follow up. The pandemic

has also brought families to use the West Wimmera service who would normally attend services in Bordertown or Naracoorte, however, with border closures their admittance to buildings on that side of the border is prohibited and as such they are using the Kaniva and Edenhope centres.

Immunisations

The annual report that is submitted to DHHS each July showed that the service delivered some 806 vaccinations, this does not include the visitors to the area that drop in for a catch up vaccination, nor the school program which is delivered to the three secondary colleges, nor the staff flu vax program, so you can say that once again this service has also been very busy. This is a further increase from last year's total which would be attributed to the excellent update of the local families having their children immunized against influenza. Each year we see more and more families take up the offer of having their child vaccinated against the flu, with some discussion that next year it may include even younger infants and possibly primary school children, we will just have to wait for a directive from the state Department of Health for that one.

The influenza vaccination is also available for any pregnant woman in the shire with many taking up the offer.

Professional Development

Up until March professional development had been attended to as much as previous years including a national conference in Sydney which saw delegates from all over Australia come together for shared learning and networking. It is always wonderful to attend such events to 'check in' professionally and measure one's self against peers to measure that service provision to the client base of the West Wimmera is on par with others. Reflection from that event indicates that our clientele are receiving a higher standard in fact with the qualifications and experience of the nurse, the relieving nurse and now the PEHP clinician.

By Five WSM Early Years Project

The partnership with the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne allows access to specialist paediatric support through the use of telehealth. A shared consultation with a family, the MCH nurse and pediatrician Dr William Garvey has been a wonderful way of providing the



family with a specialist consultation with no cost to them or lengthy wait to see a GP, then the transport to and from Melbourne. This service may not be needed daily or even weekly, however, when utilized it has proven to allay parents' concerns or set up the necessary pathways to specialist clinics.

Dr Billy is a true advocate for families and for Maternal and Child Health Nurses who all live rural remote and have limited access to care that city families enjoy. Let's hope the project keeps going.

Monica Feder

RN/RM/MCHN/GradDip(Mid)/GradDip(Family&ChildHealth)/MNSc(NPrac)/Nurse Immuniser

Youth



2019-20 was shaping up to be the best ever for Youth Services West Wimmera before COVID-19 hit.

The first half of the year saw many activities for you young people in our Shire with quite a high level of engagement and participation.

School Holiday activities such as craft activities at the Red Tail Gallery Edenhope, Goroke Community Health Centre, DJ Workshops and Tie Dye T Shirts were all things that were enjoyed between July and October 2019

Bus trips to a Hollywood Themed Dance Party and Karaoke night at Nhill, Skate Park Competition in Nhill, Birchip Freeza, Halloween Party in Jeparit, Pool Party at Kaniva, Ice-Skating trip to Mount Gambier and in early 2020 a Silent Disco at the Henley on Lake Wallace Festival.



Many more activities including a Youth Week Event including the 3 High Schools in West Wimmera was planned for early Term 3, along with plans for a wide range of school holiday activities for the Easter School Holidays.

With all of those things parked for a later date, it has been a challenge to engage young people in our area, who are already rurally isolated and for most of Term 2 and the last part of Term 1, socially isolated.



Work continues to address these additional challenges in the current climate, and it is hoped that the latter part of this year will see us being able to offer a wide range of social activities, including a function at the new Edenhope Community Hub. As our Halloween Freeza was one of the last events to be held at the old Edenhope Hall, it would be great to think that we could be amongst the first to hold an exciting event at the new one.

A campaign is currently underway to recruit a new Youth Action Council which will be a cross section of the youth community, who are ready and willing to represent their peers to create activities and events that will appeal to young people across our Shire. They will also be given the opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns about things that they would like to see happen in the places they work, study and live in.



The Community Support and Wellbeing unit continually contribute to positive outcomes for the West Wimmera Shire community by focusing on WWSC Council strategic plan's visions, values and the following relevant objectives and priorities.

WWSC Council Plan Strategic Objective

- 3. Quality sustainable community services and infrastructure
- 5. Thriving, safe and diverse local communities
- 6. Participating in activities that address health and wellbeing issues
- 7. Providing access to and promoting the natural environment

WWSC Municipal Health and Wellbeing Priority

- Healthy Living
- Inclusive and Supportive communities
- WWSC Municipal Early Years Plan Priorities
- Social engagement opportunities for families
- Safe play environments



Support for all families

Sustainable services

WWSC Economic Development Plan Direct Action

WWS should plan and deliver streetscape improvements within the towns of Edenhope, Apsley, Goroke, Harrow and Kaniva

Kaniva Family Violence Awareness Walk 27 November 2019

The West Wimmera Shire Council in collaboration with the West Wimmera Health Service, Kaniva LINK Neighbourhood House and Horsham PCP, held their second Family Violence Awareness Walk in Kaniva on Wednesday the 27 of November.



Approximately 50 people gathered to walk the main business precinct of Kaniva commencing at the Kaniva Men's Shed. People of all ages came along to show their support. It certainly raised awareness as people were seen peering out of their shops and waving as we walked by. A banner made by the Kaniva College students lead the way. At the end of the walk everyone gathered back to the Kaniva Men's shed where Jo- Anne Bates the Coordinator of Wimmera Sexual Assault and Family Violence Centre and Deputy Chair Wimmera South West Family Violence Partnership addressed the crowd. Jo – Anne spoke of the statistics on Family Violence in the West Wimmera Shire Council and general statistics on Family Violence throughout the state. Her speech was very moving and made a huge impact on the crowd.

Thank you to the Kaniva Men's shed for the use of their venue and for cooking the BBQ on the day.

This is such an important day on our Community calendar, thank you to all for raising the awareness of Family Violence in our community.



Edenhope Family Violence Awareness Walk 29 November 2019



The West Wimmera Shire Council in collaboration with the Edenhope and District Memorial Hospital and the Edenhope Tourism Group along with Horsham Primary Care Partnerships held a Family Violence Awareness Walk on Friday 29th of November.

Approximately 25 people gathered at the Edenhope Lions Park to walk up both sides of Elizabeth Street to Raise Awareness of Family

Violence. People of all ages attended. A comment was made that this is a great opportunity to raise awareness in a public place and to encourage the people of the town to take notice. Robyn Lyons who is the Social Worker for the Edenhope and District Memorial Hospital addressed the crowd in the public seating area beside the Bendigo Bank.

The Edenhope Tourism Group cooked the BBQ for all the walkers who attended.

I would like to thank all those who organised and involved themselves in some way from cooking the BBQ to all the people who attended, It certainly caught the eye of the general public as they were walking or driving by.

Economic Development

2019-20 has been a year like no other in the Economic Development area with not only the involvement in a number of major community projects, engagement and development of a major area of advocacy on the West Grampians Pipeline, but the onset and domination in the second half of the year of COVID. The need to support the businesses of West Wimmera with information resulted in many hours on the phone checking in with businesses and working with other units of Council to try and achieve this.

The impacts of COVID on our communities and township economies is yet to be fully understood, and work continues through organisation such as the Wimmera Development Association and Remplan to ensure that as best we can there is accurate data to support this understanding. Promotion of online business tools such as localised (a business to business networking website) and networking with the regional, state and national



economic development officers has been part of ensuring that West Wimmera is looking for opportunities to grow our business community. The appointment of a part time Business Support Officer as part of the restructure of the Community and Corporate Directorate was an acknowledgement of the importance that Council places on the business community

Tourism

Tourism and Events has been a very busy area of Council in the 2019/20 year. Resources were aligned to the portfolio with the appointment of a part time Tourism officer (joint with the Business support officer) and together with the Events support. The end of 2019 was busy with a number of successful community run events, and the development of some significant community projects such as the Pick-my-project funded Silo painting to occur at Kaniva, Goroke and Serviceton. COVID again impacted significantly on this space. These projects have progressed as best they have been able to, and whilst the silos remain to be painted, the artists are engaged, and the agreements in place with the property owners, and funding bodies so that the projects can be completed as soon as conditions allow. Council continues to work with these impacted communities to support them to realise their ambitions and grow the tourism sector.

The loss of tourist trade and traffic and the cancellation of planned events and fundraising opportunities has been felt keenly across the Shire, and the unit has been working hard to understand the impact and support the community to adjust.

Other work has been able to proceed, and the Indigenous Cricket Trail Signage project has progressed with Barengi Gadjin Land Council (BGLC) engaged to undertake the consultation and LookEar PTY LTD appointed to work with BGLC in the delivery of the project outcomes. The project will continue into 2020/21 as COVID restrictions made the consultation process to decide on the outcomes of the on the ground outcomes very difficult without significant risk to a vulnerable sector of the community.

Wimmera Mallee Tourism Group has been able to proceed with the township and caravan park revitalisation project and the development of a touring guide and promotional campaign "Unearth Amazing".

Major Projects

West Wimmera Shire has undertaken again had a busy and successful year for major projects. Projects have been undertaken with the assistance of funding sources, from both the State and Federal Governments, as well as 'in kind' and financial support from local community groups and funds committed from Council's budget.



Kaniva Shire Hall Refurbishment

Council has completed refurbishing the Kaniva Shire Hall, the iconic 1924 building required significant work to return it back to its former glory.

The works have been completed over a number of years, commencing with the major structural and footing repairs which commenced in 17/18. The following year the major refurbishments were commenced and included: painting external and internal, replacement of floor coverings, kitchen upgrade including plumbing and new appliances, toilet facilities refurbishment, and Installation of heating and cooling in the supper room and office facilities.

During this year the final stages the kitchen upgrades were completed. Drainage was installed in the adjacent carpark to prevent future damage to the repaired footings. Internet antenna was installed to wi-fi enable the whole hall facility, and increase usability for a range of potential hirers, and purposes.

Kaniva Cultural and Tourism Precinct

This significant landscaping and playground installation work for the Kaniva Cultural and Tourism Precinct was completed in 2019/20

- Redevelopment of the wetland area
- Installation of an accessible play space
- Construction of accessible BBQ area and shelters
- Construction of road, footpaths and parking areas
- Installation of new toilet facilities
- Construction of an additional flight aviary

Formally opened on the 2nd September 2019 by the Member for Lowan Ms Emma Kealy, the final works were completed later that year.

Once again Council is highly appreciative of the funding and support given by both the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments which has enabled this project to be realised.

The precinct has been very popular with tourists and locals alike with good utilisation and visitation as and when pandemic restrictions have allowed.



Edenhope Cultural and Community Centre

Construction works which began in the second half of the 2018/19 year after an extensive public consultation program, reached practical completion in June 2020. This has been a



significant project for Council and the Community as well as other major stakeholders such as the Wimmera Regional Library Corporation.

The Edenhope Library space, a public activity space, meeting room and a large open space area suitable for larger scale functions have all been completed. Rest room facilities are included also and a room for fit out as a commercial kitchen.

In addition to funding contributed by Council, Council was funded for the construction of this facility from the Commonwealth Government through the Drought Communities *Funding Program* and from the Victorian Government through the Living Libraries Program.

Regional Development Victoria has partnered with the Community of Edenhope and Council to fund a further project for the fit out and activation of the Community Centre, commencing in 19/20 this project will conclude in the coming year. This project funding has enabled new library shelving and fit out, the reinstatement of the mechanical services for air conditioning, supporting the communities drive to procure function room furniture.



Making a Difference @ Harrow

This project, funded by a \$1.0million grant from the Victorian Government, significant community group contributions, as well as additional funding from AFL Victoria, Drought Affected Communities (Commonwealth Funding) and West Wimmera Shire Council, provides for gender friendly change rooms and facilities to benefit the sporting clubs and community groups that use the Harrow Recreation Reserve.

Commenced during 2018/19 Council in partnership with the Harrow community partnered on a redevelopment of facilities at the Harrow Recreation Reserve.

The funded project has been completed as at 30 June 2020, with the formal opening of the facility held over until community gatherings are able to occur. The community will continue to develop the site with further plans for continued upgrade works on this site to continue the growth commenced with this significant project.

Community Strengthening and Other Grants Program

Council's Community Strengthening Grants program is designed to promote and increase participation in community initiatives, to build and strengthen local networks and partnerships and to support community leadership, learning and skill development.



This annual grant program is delivered across two rounds, round one at the start of the financial year and round two mid financial year. The grants are organised to provide financial assistance to local community organisations to support the provision of programs, activities and services which respond to identified community needs, contribute to the building of a stronger community, develop innovative approaches and local social issues and are in accordance with Council's strategic objectives.

A total of \$43,145.00 was granted by council through the grant process, consisting of one business strengthening grant and \$28,145.00 to the community in 2019-20 for the following projects:

Community Strengthening Grant - Community Projects		
APPLICANT	PROJECT	GRANT
Life saving Victoria	Aquatic safety program	\$ 2,732
Community Strengthening Grant - Community Events		
APPLICANT	PROJECT	GRANT
Windmill Stitchers of Kaniva	Quilt show and demonstration	\$ 500
-		
Community Strengthening Grant - Facility Upgrades and Equipment Purchases		
APPLICANT	PROJECT	GRANT
Perrone Hall	Solar panels and switch board	\$ 5,000
Lake Charlegrark Country Music Marathon	replace manual lift doors with roller doors	\$ 4,913
Kaniva and district bowls club	Ditch and wall grass repairs and upgrade	\$ 5,000
Dergholm and District Soldiers Memorial Hall	Supper room repairs and upgrade	\$ 5,000
Council Community fund Grant		
Harrow Discovery Centre	Performance of "Black Cockatoo" in Harrow in conjunction with Cricket Australia	\$ 5,000
Business Strengthening Grant		
Beetanicals – Natures little helper	Promotional video production and business expansion, including attendance at national trade fair	\$ 15,000

Infrastructure Development and Works

Works

The Infrastructure Engineering and Works teams have again been very busy during the past year with considerable capital works projects being completed, ongoing maintenance of council infrastructure and the continual upgrade and improvements to our asset management systems and GIS.



Kadnook Connewirricoo Road Bridge over Kadnook Creek – new deck overlay and guard rail

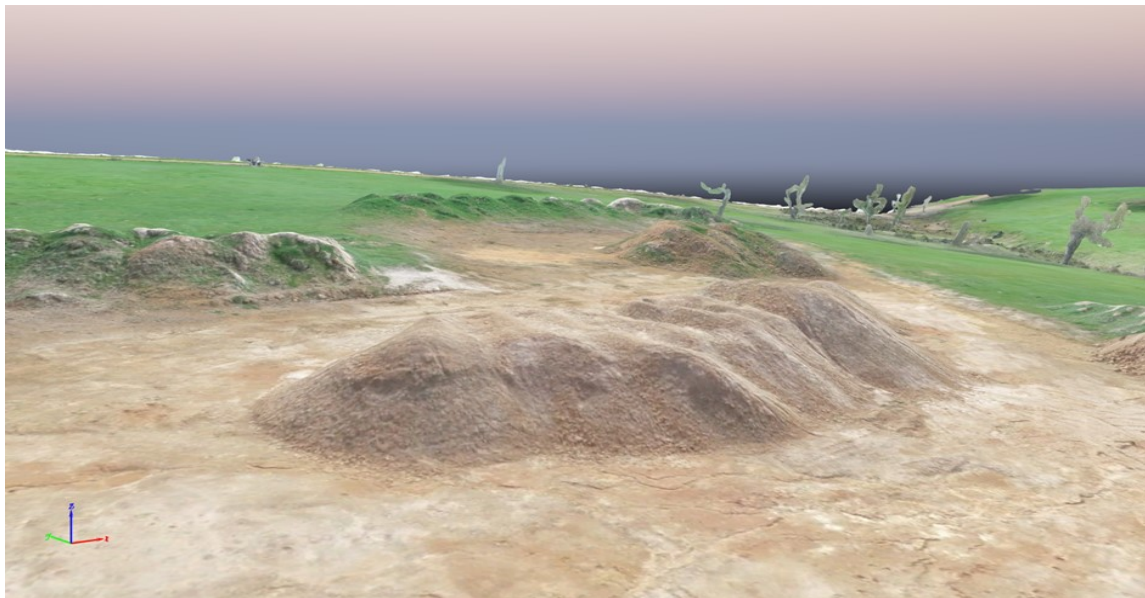
Council's maintenance program includes sealed and unsealed roads, bridges, council-owned buildings and reserves, playgrounds, footpaths, kerb & channel and parks & gardens. In addition, Council has the contract for maintenance of VicRoads arterial roads within the municipality including sections of the Wimmera and Western Highways.

The capital works program was boosted by the inclusion of the Victorian Government \$1.434m Fixing Country Roads allocation in addition to the Federal Government \$1.528m Roads to Recovery allocation along with Council's normal road funding allocation. In addition, there was the State Government Energy Saver program of \$50,000 combined with \$50,000 Council contribution. Capital works consisted of a variety of works including renewal, upgrade and safety initiatives of sections of roads and other infrastructure including:

- Approximately 46km of unsealed road resheeting
- 38km of sealed road shoulder resheeting
- 62km of resealing sealed road pavements
- Kadnook Connewirricoo Road Bridge over Kadnook Creek, strengthening and upgrade
- Newlands Settlement Road reconstruction
- Kybybolite Road reconstruction
- Leeor Road reconstruction



Brooks Road reconstruction
Serviceton South Road reconstruction
Douglas Street construction (upgrade to sealed surface)
Kadnook Connewirricoo Road reconstruction and widening
Ozenkadnook Mortat Road reconstruction and widening
Fry / Yarrock Street intersection kerb and channel
Phillips Street footpath
Lake Wallace foreshore irrigation
Edenhope Pound electricity connection and air conditioning
Edenhope Shire Office Solar PV and lighting upgrade
Goroke Preschool Solar PV and lighting upgrade
Kaniva Shire Office Solar PV and lighting upgrade
Kaniva Kindergarten Solar PV and lighting upgrade
Kaniva Information Centre Solar PV and lighting upgrade
Kaniva Shire Depot Solar PV and lighting upgrade
Painting of Kaniva and Goroke swimming pools



Asset Management & GIS

There have been several items of note within the Assets and GIS section below:

- Upgrade of Council's enterprise mapping system allowing increased functionality and access to information for both external customers and internal staff.
- Completion of Level 2 Bridge Inspections to enable forward works planning and budgeting of maintenance/renewal works.
- Initiation of the Drone Data Capture Program to assist in asset inspections, project design, planning permits, waste reporting and grant applications. This technology can cut down time of traditional manual survey methods by up to 80%.
- Implementation of a structured Traffic Monitoring Program – with over 300km in total of road traffic analysis completed in 2019-20 financial year. This enhances Council's knowledge on the demand of our road assets and is crucial in road design and safety.
- Implementation and utilisation of mobile technology in conducting a Road Curve Safety Review especially in determination and verification of advisory speeds on our sealed road network.

Contracts

The Contracts Department is responsible for the development, implementation and administration of all contracts undertaken by the Council.

The activities include administration of all contracts and agreements from the preparation of specifications, advertisements, evaluation, awarding of contracts, monitoring of works to the successful completion of the project.

As at the 30th of June, the Council has 31 active contracts covering a diverse and important range of works and services for the West Wimmera Shire Council.

During the year the Council let 15 new contracts for a combination of capital plant purchases, works and services. The total value of these contracts is \$1,529,610.00.

2019/20 Contracts related to Capital Works:

CM0505 Kaniva Cultural & Tourism Precinct Pedestrian Bridge	\$29,890.00
CM0506 Kaniva Cultural & Tourism Precinct Shelter & Toilet Kit	\$25,223.00
CM0513 Stabilisation of Various Roads	\$189,210.00
CM0518 Kadnook Connewirricoo Rd Bridge Strengthening	\$233,452.00
CM0522 Kaniva Museum Shed Extension	\$13,500.00

2019/20 Contracts related to Plant and Equipment Purchases:



CM0519 Supply & Delivery of a Tip Truck and Trailer

\$289,209.00



Once again the largest project in term of dollars was the annual sealing program for local roads. This was the first year of a five year collaborative contract involving five Wimmera Councils for this work. Locally based sealing contractor Inroads P/L of Horsham are contractors for this work.

Council aims to reseal 15% of the total sealed road network each year to maintain this important asset and provide quality service to our community.



Through Procurement Australia, Council held a contract with AGL Pty Ltd for the supply of electricity to public lighting within Townships throughout the Municipality. This contract ended on 30 June 2020.

Through Procurement Australia, Council also holds a contract with Origin Energy for the supply of electricity to all of Council's 41 metered sites throughout the Municipality.

This contract ended on 30 June 2020.

Wimmera Mallee Waste from Rainbow holds three waste contracts with the Council, a weekly kerbside garbage collection service, a fortnightly kerbside recycling collection service, and the transfer of waste to the Dooen landfill.

Council has entered into a number of contracts with Procurement Australia and the Municipal Association of Victoria, who have negotiated contracts for a range of goods and services for the benefit of all Victorian Councils.



Local Laws & Animal Control

The Local Laws and Animal team was kept busy throughout the year with a myriad of duties, from lost dogs to stock at large to pest and weed control. During the year we welcomed Donna to our team to help us continue to provide a responsive and effective service to our community.

During the 2019/20 the Local Laws and Animal Control team was busy with the following:

- Attendance at two stock vehicle rollovers (February and March) to provide site control and assist with the clean up
- Responding to five incidents of cattle being at large—whilst no infringements were issued, a number of Notices to Comply were issued to improve fencing
- Six dogs and two cats were impounded. Both cats were subsequently returned to their owner whilst two of the impounded dogs were re-homed.
- Fourteen puppies and two adult dogs were surrendered to Council. These were re-homed with the assistance of Phoenix Animal Welfare
- There were three barking dog complaints investigated.

Over the year Council had 615 dogs and 130 cats registered.

Other items which kept the Local Laws team busy included issuing fire permits to burn off, undertaking inspections and issuing Fire Prevention Notices to reduce vegetation, and inspecting and issuing Notices to Comply to clean up unsightly properties. The Local Laws team were also involved in pest and weed control measures, including working with other agencies and lobbying for funds to assist with prevention and reduction of pests and weeds across the shire.

Environmental Health

Council's Environmental Health office undertakes tasks to ensure the public health of our community. This involves undertaking inspections of food premises and testing samples, as well as ensuring that septic systems are correctly installed.

At the beginning of 2020 Council's Environmental Health Officer (EHO) was tasked with updated Council's Pandemic Plan—a task which has taken on greater significance with the subsequent COVID-19 pandemic. Our EHO has been heavily involved in our Pandemic Sub Committee and working on our response. This includes working with registered businesses to assist them to understand and interpret the directions made by the



Chief Health Officer of Victoria.

During 2019-20 Council's EHO undertook:

- 68 inspections and assessments under the *Food Act 1984*
- 27 inspections at registered food businesses under the *Tobacco Act 1987*
- Issued 9 permits to install or alter septic tank systems

Another interesting role Council's EHO has undertaken over the year is to work through the application of the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2019*, in particular where this legislation relates to public swimming pools.

Planning

Council's planning department handles enquiries, applications and issuing of planning approvals across the shire. Planning is of significant importance in applying the rules of land use under legislation and the West Wimmera Planning Scheme to ensure land is used in appropriate ways to provide for the sustainable liveability of our community.

During 2019/20 Council received 132 formal general planning enquires, with 36 Planning Permit Applications being received, and 9 Certifications being issued.

There are currently also 3 enforcement matters under investigation.

Building Services

Council's building Services unit handles approvals for building activity within the shire in accordance with legislation. Building approvals are important as they ensure that constructions and modifications are appropriate to community expectations and are above all safe.

For the 2019/2020 fiscal year the Building Department issued 36 Council Permits to the value of \$1,830,936.66. There were 82 Private Building Surveyor Permits issued to a value of \$8,618,817.00. Overall, the total number of Building Permits has increased indicating that there is more building activity in the Shire, but for smaller scale developments. It also indicates a strong shift towards Private Building Surveyors rather than using the Municipal Building Surveyor services offered by Council. There was 14 general enquiries lodged, not including counter or phone enquiries which are not recorded. There were 48 requests for property information and 3 Building Notices issued from a total of 7 complaints.

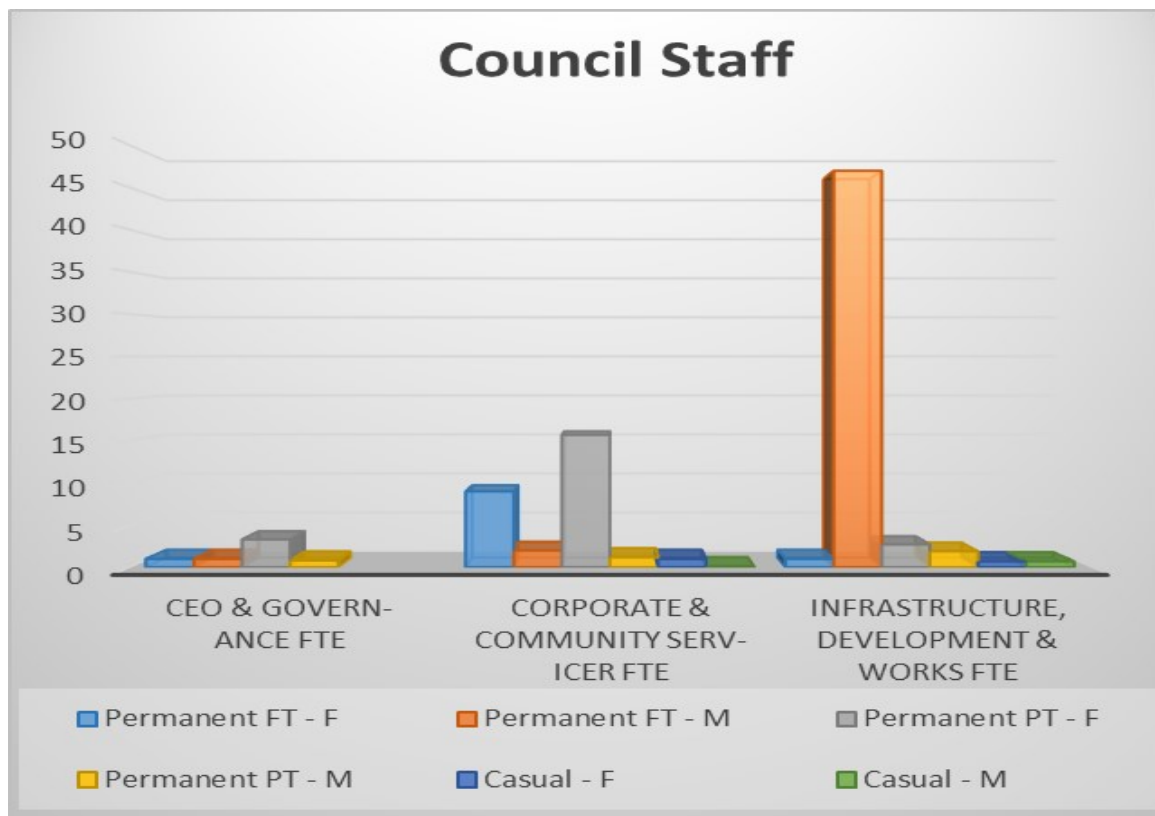




Council Staff

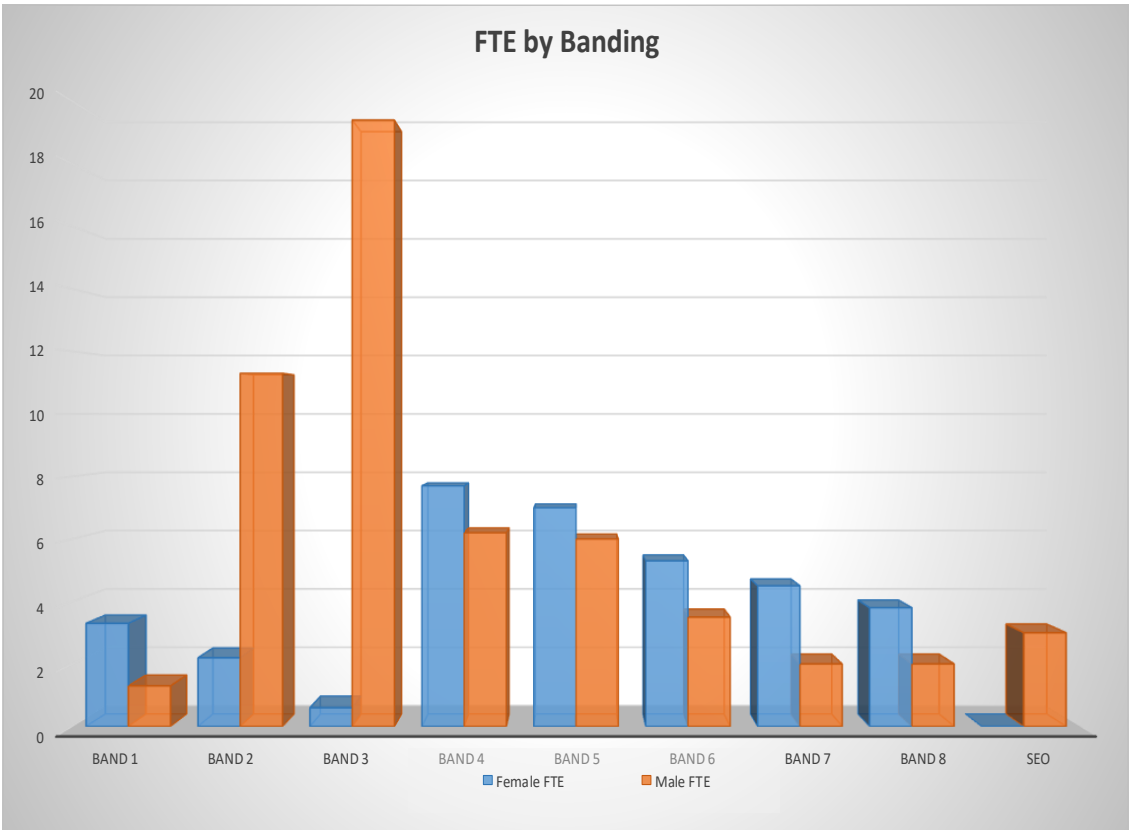
A summary of the number of full time equivalent (FTE) Council staff by organisational structure, employment type and gender is set out below.

Employment Type/ Gender	CEO & Gov- ernance FTE	Corporate & Community Ser- vices FTE	Infrastructure, De- velopment & Works FTE	Total FTE
Permanent FT - F	1.00	9.00	1.00	11.00
Permanent FT - M	1.00	2.00	47.00	50.00
Permanent PT - F	3.30	15.70	2.70	21.70
Permanent PT - M	0.80	1.20	1.90	3.90
Casual - F	-	1.00	0.70	1.70
Casual - M	-	0.20	1.90	1.70
Total	6.10	29.00	54.00	89.10



A summary of the number of full time equivalent (FTE) staff categorised by employment classification and gender is set out below.

	Female			Male			TOTAL
	Permanent	Part Time	Casual	Permanent	Part Time	Casual	
Band 1	-	0.80	0.40	-	-	-	1.20
Band 2	11.00	3.10	1.20	-	1.30	0.30	16.90
Band 3	-	0.60	-	19.00	-	0.40	20.00
Band 4	3.00	4.70	-	5.00	1.20	-	13.90
Band 5	-	7.00	-	5.00	0.90	0.10	13.00
Band 6	3.00	2.30	-	3.00	0.50	-	8.80
Band 7	2.00	2.50	-	2.00	-	-	6.50
Band 8	3.00	0.70	0.10	2.00	-	-	5.80
Other	-	-	-	3.00	-	-	3.00
TOTAL	22.00	21.70	1.70	39.00	3.90	0.80	89.10



Equal Employment Opportunity/Human Rights

West Wimmera Shire Council continues with its practice of providing a non-discriminatory working environment.

West Wimmera Shire Council has a responsibility to its members of the community to create and reflect the nature and needs of its community. West Wimmera Shire Council is wholly committed to the principles of Equal Employment Opportunity and Human Rights. These policies extend to all employees and potential employees.

In all our practices and policies, Council adheres to the principles of no discrimination in relation to sex, marital status, parenthood, race, colour, national origin, physical or mental impairment, religious or political affiliation. In accordance with its objective, West Wimmera Shire Council's Equal Employment Opportunity program continued to maintain a non-discriminatory working environment.

Selection of individuals for employment, promotion or advancement, training and staff development will be on the basis of personal merit in fair and open competition according to the skills, qualifications, knowledge and efficiency relevant to the position involved.

Council's Policy on Equal Employment Opportunity reflects our desire to enjoy a workplace free of discrimination where each person has the opportunity to progress to the extent of his or her ability.

Employees are encouraged to raise equal opportunity issues or grievances with any manager, chief executive officer or senior officer. Confidentiality will be respected.

Council is a member of the CORE (Communities Of Respect and Equality) alliance.



Governance, management and other information

Governance

West Wimmera Shire Council is constituted under the Local Government Act 2020 (the Act).

The Act defines the role of a Council as:

The role of a Council is to provide good governance in its municipal district for the benefit and wellbeing of the municipal community
(Local Government Act 2020 S.8)

The role of a Council includes:

To participate in the decision making of the Council; and

To represent the interests of the municipal community in that decision making; and

To contribute to the strategic direction of the Council through the development and review of key strategic documents of the Council, including the Council Plan.

Council's formal decision-making processes are conducted through council meetings and Special Committees of Council. Council delegates the majority of its decision-making to council staff. These delegations are exercised in accordance with adopted council policies.

Council Meetings

Council meetings were held on the third Wednesday of the month for the 2019-20 year, with the exception of January when no Council Meeting was held. The 11 Ordinary Meetings were rotated between Edenhope, Kaniva.

No Special meetings were held through the year.

Where appropriate or required by Covid-19 regulations meetings have been held remotely via videoconference. All meetings since April 2020 have seen the public gallery closed, with live-streaming of meetings accessible to the public being provided as an alternative.

Community Forums

One Community Forums was held in November 2019 at Goroke. Unfortunately Community Forums schedules at Dinyarrak for April 2020 and Apsley for May 2020 did not go ahead due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.



Community Forums give the Councillors an opportunity to have a meal with local residents and discuss local issues in a relaxed, informal atmosphere. The community is provided with the opportunity to lodge customer requests, which are followed up by the relevant staff members and outcomes communicated back to the community.

Local Law –Meeting Procedure & Common Seal

Local Law No. 7 – Meeting Procedure and Common Seal was reviewed and endorsed by Council in February 2017. The Local was subsequently gazetted and has been in operation since that date.

Local Law No.7 was scheduled to cease to operate on 15 February 2026. However with the implementation of the *Local Government Act 2020* this Local Law will be replaced during the first half of the 2020-21 financial year.

Review of Delegations

West Wimmera Shire Council undertook a complete review of all delegations in August 2019.

The next review is scheduled for August 2020.

Review of Council Policies

West Wimmera Shire Council policies are reviewed regularly in accordance with a rolling review schedule

The review includes compliance with relevant legislation, removal of any procedural items and tailoring of policies to current activities and reformatting to current template styles.

As policies are reviewed and endorsed by Council, they are uploaded on to Council's website (where public access is available).

Councillor Code of Conduct

In accordance with Section 76C of the Act, Council adopted a revised Councillor Code of Conduct on 15 December 2016, which was revised in June 2019. A council must review the Councillor Code of Conduct within the period of 4 months after a general election.



The Councillor Code of Conduct outlines the following:

Core Values

In pursuing its strategic objective, West Wimmera Shire Council believes in and is committed to the following values:

- Integrity
- Respect
- Selflessness
- Openness

Under the Local Government Act 1989 Councillors must:

- act with integrity; and
- impartially exercise his or her responsibilities in the interests of the local community; and not improperly seek to confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person.
- avoid conflicts between his or her public duties as a Councillor and his or her personal interests and obligations
- act honestly and avoid statements (whether oral or in writing) or actions that will or are likely to mislead or deceive a person;
- treat all persons with respect and have due regard to the opinions, beliefs, rights and responsibilities of other Councillors, Council staff and other persons;
- exercise reasonable care and diligence and submit himself or herself to the lawful scrutiny that is appropriate to his or her office;
- endeavour to ensure that public resources are used prudently and solely in the public interest;
- act lawfully and in accordance with the trust placed in him or her as an elected representative;
- support and promote these principles by leadership and example and act in a way that secures and preserves public confidence in the office of Councillor.



Councillor Allowances

In accordance with Section 39 of the Act, councillors are entitled to receive an allowance while performing their duty as a councillor. The mayor is also entitled to receive a higher allowance.

The State Government sets the upper and lower limits for all allowances paid to councillors and mayors per determination of the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal. Councils are divided into three categories based on the income and population of each council. In this instance West Wimmera Shire Council is recognised as a category one council.

For the period 1 July 2019 – 30 November 2019, the councillor annual allowance as a category one council (as defined by the Local Government Act 1989) was fixed at \$19,376 per annum (+ 9.5% superannuation equivalent) and the allowance for the mayor was \$45,215 (+ 9.5% superannuation equivalent) per annum. The Minister for Local Government approved an annual adjustment of 2.0% to take effect as from 1 December 2019. The annual allowances were adjusted for the period 1 December 2019 to 30 June 2020 at \$19,764 per annum for the councillor allowance (plus 9.5% superannuation equivalent) and \$46,120 per annum for the mayoral allowance (+9.5% superannuation equivalent). The Mayor also receives access to a fully maintained motor vehicle.

The following table contains a summary of the allowances paid to each councillor during the year (including allowance equivalent to superannuation):

Councillor	Allowance \$	Superannua- tion Equivalent \$	Total \$
Cr. T Domaschenz	19,629.10	1,862.24	21,491.34
Cr. R Hicks	19,629.10	1,862.24	21,491.34
Cr. T Houlihan	16,255.03	1,542.69	17,797.72
Cr. B Meyer (Mayor November 2019 - June 2020)	36,452.58	3,613.13	40,065.71
Cr. J Pretlove (Mayor July 2019- October 2019)	29,278.16	2,628.79	31,906.95

Council Meetings: Councilor Attendance Record 2019-2020 Financial Year

Ordinary Meetings	Cr Meyer	Cr Pretlove	Cr Hicks	Cr Houlihan	Cr Domaschenz
Wed 17 Jul 2019	1	1	1	1	0
Wed 21 Aug 2019	1	1	1	1	1
Wed 18 Sep 2019	1	1	1	1	1
Mon 14 Oct 2019	1	1	1	1	1
Wed 20 Nov 2019	1	1	1	1	1
Wed 18 Dec 2019	1	1	1	1	1
Wed 19 Feb 2020	1	1	1	0	1
Wed 18 Mar 2020	1	1	1	1	1
Wed 15 Apr 2020	1	0	1	1	1
Wed 20 May 2020	1	1	1	1	1
Thu 18 Jun 2020	1	1	1	1	1
Total	11	10	11	10	10
Annual Statutory Meeting	Cr Meyer	Cr Pretlove	Cr Hicks	Cr Houlihan	Cr Domaschenz
Wed 6 Nov 2019	1	1	1	1	1
Special Meetings	Cr Meyer	Cr Pretlove	Cr Hicks	Cr Houlihan	Cr Domaschenz
Wed 3 July 2019	1	1	1	1	1
Wed 24 June 2020	1	1	1	1	1
Total	2	2	2	2	2
	Cr Meyer	Cr Pretlove	Cr Hicks	Cr Houlihan	Cr Domaschenz
Total Meetings attended in 2019-2020 Financial Year	14	13	14	13	13
Percentage of meetings attended for 2019-2020	100.00	92.86	100.00	92.86	92.86

During the 2019-20 year a complaint of serious misconduct was lodged against Cr. Houlihan. This complaint resulted in a Councillor Code of Conduct Panel being convened on 25 November 2019 to hear the complaint

The Councillor Code of Conduct Panel handed down its determination on 19 December 2019 that found that one count of Serious Misconduct and one count of Misconduct be sustained against Cr Houlihan.

Subsequently Cr Houlihan was suspended for a period of two months, resulting in Cr Houlihan missing the February 2020 Council meeting.



Councillor Expenses

In accordance with Section 40 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, council is required to reimburse a Councillor for expenses incurred whilst performing his or her duties as a Councillor. Council is also required to adopt and maintain a policy in relation to the reimbursement of expenses for Councillors. The policy provides guidance for the payment of reimbursements of expenses and the provision of resources, facilities and other support to the Mayor and Councillors to enable them to discharge their duties. Council also publishes in its Annual Report the details of the expenses, including reimbursement of expenses for each Councillor and member of a Council Committee paid by the council. The details of the expenses for the 2019-20 year are set out in the following table.

Councillor	Travel (excluding Mileage) \$	Mileage \$	Accommoda- tion & Meals \$	ICT expend- itures \$	Confer- ences & Training \$	Total \$
Cr. T Domaschenz	-	2,981.75	1,390.78	425.40	-	4,797.93
Cr. R Hicks	154.72	997.71	1,161.80	500.40	1,287.13	4,101.76
Cr. T Houlihan	-	2,625.48	-	398.38	-	3,023.86
Cr. B Meyer	-	-	283.87	425.40	-	709.27
Cr. J Pretlove	-	1,428.91	-	534.48	-	1,963.39

Governance and Management Checklist

	Column 1 Governance and Management Item	Column 2 Assessment	
1	Community engagement policy (policy outlining Council's commitment to engaging with the community on matters of public interest)	Policy Date of operation of current policy: 16 August 2017	X
2	Community engagement guidelines (guidelines to assist staff to determine when and how to engage with the community)	Guidelines Date of operation of current guidelines: 16 August 2017	X
3	Strategic Resource Plan (plan under section 126 of the Act outlining the financial and non-financial resources required for at least the next 4 financial years)	Adopted in accordance with section 126 of the Act Date of adoption: 20 June 2019	X
4	Annual budget (plan under section 130 of the Act setting out the services to be provided and initiatives to be undertaken over the next 12 months and the funding and other resources required)	Adopted in accordance with section 130 of the Act Date of adoption: 20 June 2019	X
5	Asset management plans (plans that set out the asset maintenance and renewal needs for key infrastructure asset classes for at least the next 10 years)	Asset Management Strategy Adopted 21 March 2018	X
6	Rating strategy (strategy setting out the rating structure of Council to levy rates and charges)	Strategy Date of operation of current strategy: 19 September 2018	X
7	Risk policy (policy outlining Council's commitment and approach to minimising the risks to Council's operations)	Policy Date of operation of current policy: 21 February 2018	X
8	Fraud policy (policy outlining Council's commitment and approach to minimising the risk of fraud)	Policy Date of operation of current policy: 21 February 2018	X
9	Municipal emergency management plan (plan under section 20 of the Emergency Management Act 1986 for emergency prevention, response and recovery)	Prepared and maintained in accordance with section 20 of the Emergency Management Act 1986 Date of preparation: 20 December 2017	X

Governance and Management Checklist

10	Procurement policy (policy under section 186A of the Local Government Act 1989 outlining the matters, practices and procedures that will apply to all purchases of goods, services and works)	Prepared and approved in accordance with section 186A of the Local Government Act 1989 Date of approval: 21 May 2019	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
11	Business continuity plan (plan setting out the actions that will be taken to ensure that key services continue to operate in the event of a disaster)	Plan adopted 16 June 2017	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
12	Disaster recovery plan (plan setting out the actions that will be undertaken to recover and restore business capability in the event of a disaster)	No plan Reason for no plan: Council has commenced preparing a Disaster Recovery Plan in accordance with an internal audit into Council's current Business Continuity capacities . It is anticipated that this be completed by 30 June 2020.	<input type="checkbox"/>
13	Risk management framework (framework outlining Council's approach to managing risks to the Council's operations)	Framework Date of operation of current framework: 21 February 2018	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
14	Audit Committee (advisory committee of Council under section 139 of the Act whose role is to oversee the integrity of a Council's financial reporting, processes to manage risks to the Council's operations and for compliance with applicable legal, ethical, and regulatory requirements)	Established in accordance with section 139 of the Act Date of establishment: 16 May 2013	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
15	Internal audit (independent accounting professionals engaged by the Council to provide analyses and recommendations aimed at improving Council's governance, risk and management controls)	Engaged Date of engagement of current provider: 21 February 2018	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
16	Performance reporting framework (a set of indicators measuring financial and non-financial performance, including the performance indicators referred to in section 131 of the Act)	Framework Date of operation of current framework: 21 July 2017	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
17	Council Plan reporting (report reviewing the performance of the Council against the Council Plan, including the results in relation to the strategic indicators, for the first six months of the financial year)	No Report Reason for no report: Quarterly Reports are presented to Council at assembly meetings.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Governance and Management Checklist

18	Financial reporting (quarterly statements to Council under section 138 of the Act comparing budgeted revenue and expenditure with actual revenue and expenditure)	Most Statements presented to Council in accordance with section 138(1) of the Act. June 2018 quarter not presented separately to annual financials. Dates statements presented: PE 30 Sep 2018 - 15 October 2018 PE 31 Dec 2018 – 20 February 2019 PE 31 Mar 2019 – 17 April 2019 PE 30 Jun 2019—17 July 2019	X
19	Risk reporting (six-monthly reports of strategic risks to Council's operations, their likelihood and consequences of occurring and risk minimisation strategies)	No reports Reason for no reports: Risk reports are made to Audit Committee and presented to Council with minutes of Audit Committee Meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>
20	Performance reporting (six-monthly reports of indicators measuring the results against financial and non-financial performance, including performance indicators referred to in section 131 of the Act)	No reports Reason for no reports: Council's systems are at the moment not flexible in reporting.	<input type="checkbox"/>
21	Annual report (annual report under sections 131, 132 and 133 of the Act to the community containing a report of operations and audited financial performance statements)	Considered at meeting of the Council in accordance with section 134 of the Act Date of consideration: 15 October 2018	X
22	Councillor Code of Conduct (Code under section 76C of the Act setting out the conduct principles and the dispute resolution processes to be followed by Councillors)	Reviewed in accordance with section 76C of the Act Date reviewed: 20 June 2019	X
23	Delegations (a document setting out the powers, duties and functions of Council and the Chief Executive Officer that have been delegated to members of staff)	Reviewed in accordance with section 98(6) of the Act Date of review: 15 May 2019	X
24	Meeting procedures (a local law governing the conduct of meetings of Council and special committees)	Meeting procedures local law made in accordance with section 91(1) of the Act Date local law made: 16 June 2017	X



Major Initiatives

Council identified a number of major initiatives in its 2019/20 Annual Budget. Each of these major initiatives is aligned with a Strategic Objective in the Council Plan. The following table indicates Council's progress against these major initiatives:

Council Plan Reference	Major Initiative	Status	Comments
Strategic Objective 1: A proactive, well-governed, professional and financially sustainable organisation that encourages community participation.	Continue to identify and drive shared service opportunities within the region which may be of benefit to West Wimmera Shire Council.	Achieved/ Underway	Council has resolved to continue its involvement in a regional group with the Rural Councils Transformation Program.
Strategic Objective 2: Meaningful partnerships to support advocacy priorities and service provision.	Investigate opportunities to improve access to utilities for the WWSC community.	Achieved/ Underway	A privately operated Fixed Wireless NBN internet service has been attracted to the northern end of the municipality .WWSC continues to lobby for improved NBN connectivity to our shire.
	Promote and advocate the business case for rural pipeline water supply	Achieved	Council is participating as a stakeholder in this non-council led study, and continues to advocate on behalf of the project to other tiers of government.
Strategic Objective 3: Quality sustainable community infrastructure	Undertake mapping of Community Assets to maximise coverage and prioritise Council investment	Underway	Council has commenced a review of all Council assets including identifying and mapping all services. This will be used in future service review and investment planning.

Major Initiatives

Council Plan Reference	Major Initiative	Status	Comments
Strategic Objective 4: Building on our agricultural and business strengths and supporting economic development.	Investigate cost effective ways to support local businesses.	Underway	Council has utilized its Business Assistance fund to provide strategic investment in local business. Post Covid-19 stimulus is being considered.
Strategic Objective 5: Thriving, safe and diverse local communities	Prepare outline community needs analysis as a basis for developing future detailed community plans	Not Achieved	Whilst some asset mapping has commenced, community planning processes have been delayed.
Strategic Objective 6: Participating in activities that address health and well being issues	Continue to advocate for improved health services to our community, including mental health and general practitioner services	Partially Achieved	Council continues to lobby for improved mental health outreach services within the municipality, with a level of success. Council continues to provide on going services as well as more specific Covid-19 support to our vulnera-
Strategic Objective 7: Providing access to, and promoting the natural environment.	Produce Lake Wallace Management Plan	Ongoing	Lake Wallace Management Planning has commenced.

