

PROMOTING BETTER PRACTICE PROGRAM

LEICHHARDT MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

APRIL 2015



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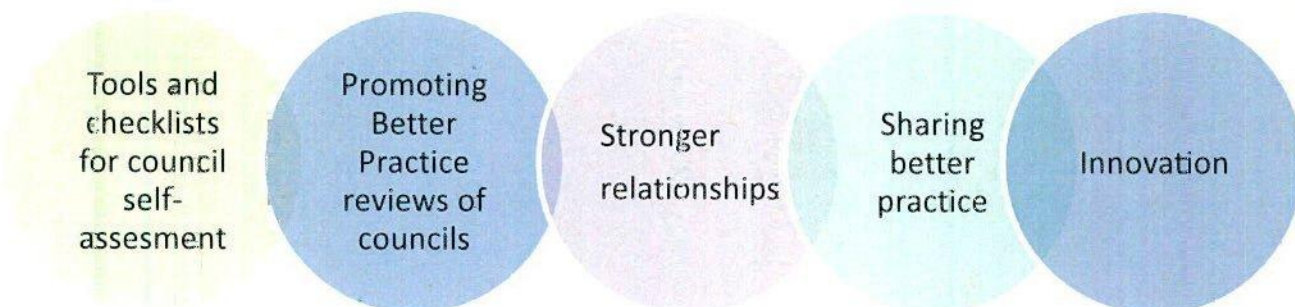
1. PROMOTING BETTER PRACTICE

The Program

By promoting better practice, the Office of Local Government aims to assist in strengthening the local government sector by assessing performance and promoting continuous improvement.

The Program includes:

- working with councils to identify, share and promote better practice in key areas.
- working cooperatively with councils to promote strong relationships within the sector.
- providing councils with feedback on areas requiring improvement or further development, and assisting them in developing solutions.
- identifying trends and issues arising from council reviews to support policy and legislative changes for the local government sector.
- encouraging and facilitating innovation within the NSW local government sector.



Promoting Better Practice reviews

Reviews of individual councils are designed to act as a 'health check' to examine the extent to which there are appropriate strategies, policies, systems and procedures in place at the strategic and operational levels of councils.

The reviews are conducted by a team from the Office of Local Government in collaboration with councils. During a visit to the council, key strategic areas are examined. A key outcome is a report which reflects the findings of the review but most importantly contains a Review Action Plan with strategies to facilitate better practice and increase the council's overall capacity to deliver appropriate services to its community.

Key strategic areas considered

Leadership and governance examines how the elected body and the council organisation provide leadership within the local community. It considers all the means by which a council is directed and controlled to ensure effective decision-making and to ensure the organisation is meeting its legal and ethical obligations. The council's regulatory and enforcement framework is also considered.



Councils work with their communities to prepare a community strategic plan which covers a minimum of 10 years and forms the foundation of its service delivery. The focus is on how well the council engages its community in planning, and how well the Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program, and Operational Plan capture the community's aspirations and goals. The extent to which strategic land-use planning matters are integrated into the council's implementation of the Integrated Planning and Reporting framework are also considered here.

Capacity to deliver considers the current and future financial capability of a council to sustain its operations and deliver appropriate services to the community as set out in the Community Strategic Plan, the Delivery Program and Operational Plan. The quality and utility of the council's long-term financial planning, asset management, and workforce planning is a key part of this assessment.

Services to the community relates to how the facilities and services in the Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program and Operations Plan have been translated into action. This includes looking at how the council informs the community of its performance in delivering services and facilities according to the plans, and how it measures customer satisfaction or receives community feedback to inform ongoing planning.

The review process

PROMOTING BETTER PRACTICE REVIEW PROCESS

PREPARING



This involves the completion of a comprehensive self-assessment checklist by the council and consideration of a range of documents by the review team.

ASSESSING



The review team considers local circumstances in order to understand the pressures on the council and how the council has sought to manage within that environment.

DISCUSSING (VISIT TO THE COUNCIL)



A visit to the council allows the team to 'reality check' what it has found in the material received from the council, and to discuss any issues that arise. The visit is focused on conversations with councillors and key council staff on those strategic areas that contribute to the council's overall health and sustainability. Councillors are provided with the opportunity to complete a survey and/or meet with the review team.

ANALYSING AND REPORTING



After the visit, the review team prepares a report in collaboration with the council. All [review reports](#) are published once the report is tabled by the council.

IMPLEMENTING AND MONITORING



The review report contains an action plan to guide the council in addressing areas identified by the review for further development. The council and the Office monitor progress as agreed.

Better practice identified during the review is shared elsewhere in the local government sector as appropriate.

About the Leichhardt Promoting Better Practice review

The Promoting Better Practice Review of Leichhardt Municipal Council was undertaken in July 2014. The review team consisted of Caroline Egberts, Principal Program Officer and Duncan Jamison, Senior Program Officer. A member of the review team also observed part of the Council's July ordinary meeting.

The review team would like to thank Leichhardt Council Mayor, Cllr Darcy Byrne, the General Manager, Peter Head and the Senior Management Team for their enthusiastic participation in the review and for providing valuable assistance. The presentations were also much appreciated and afforded the review team a wealth of information about the Council's strategic directions, key initiatives and examples of better practice.

The review team trialled a strategic approach to the review developed in consultation with the General Manager. The site visit occurred over two days and involved all members of Council's senior executive team and other relevant officers. The interactive forum included presentations, discussions and questions relating to each strategic area. It was agreed that this was a very positive exercise.

The Council also presented the findings arising from its completion of the Self-Assessment Checklist and an Action Plan to address the areas it identified as requiring further development.

2. ABOUT LEICHHARDT MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

The Leichhardt Local Government Area covers an area of 10 km² and is on land that traditionally belonged to the Gadigal and Wangal people of the Eora nation.

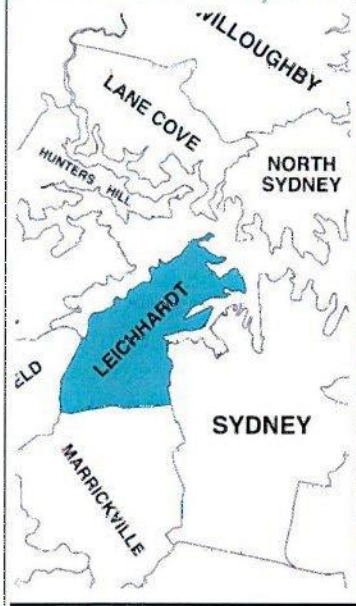
There are approximately 56,300 residents in Leichhardt Local Government Area with the population projected (NSW Planning and Environment) to have increased to 67,550 by 2031. The forecast growth is comparatively lower than in neighbouring areas, however the demographic changes in Leichhardt will see significant growth in the number of residents who are 0-15 years old and the those who are older than 65.

The profile of the Local Government Area reflects its proximity to the Sydney Central Business District, with comparatively high housing costs as well as a high average income.

The Council currently employs around 450 staff.

A summary of the Council is provided on the following pages.

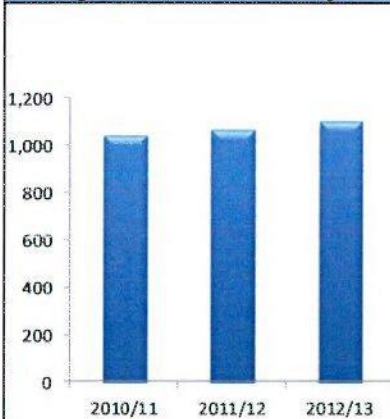
Leichhardt Municipal Council



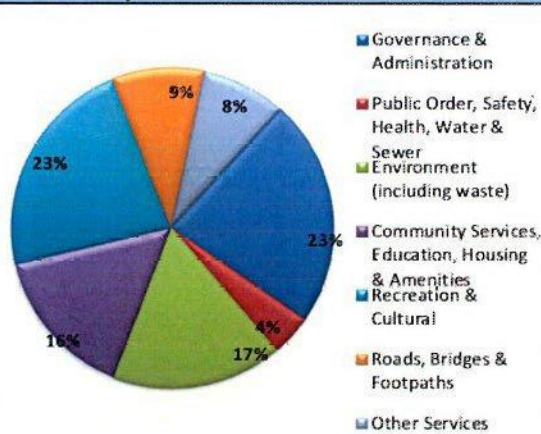
Leichhardt Municipal Council has an area of 10.32 sq. kms with a population of 56,307. Located in the inner west region of Sydney, it contains predominantly residential housing, with the main streets characterised by mixed use retail and commercial developments. Best known for its cultural life and harbour side location, the area contains a diversity of buildings, many with a heritage character. The area has a broad ranging local economy with high numbers of small businesses.

Your Local Population	LGA	Group Avg	Your Council	LGA	Group Avg
Five year population change (%)	8.1	7.2	Councillors (No.)	12	10
Population aged 19 or less (%)	19.9	21.8	Population per Councillor (No.)	4,692	4,722
Population aged between 20 & 59 (%)	64.5	58.7	Equivalent Full Time Staff (EFT) (No.)	471	282
Population aged above 60 (%)	15.6	19.5	2012/13 Revenue (\$'000)	80,196	60,845
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders (%)	1.0	0.5	2012/13 Expenses (\$'000)	73,301	54,366
Language Spoken Other than English (%)	15.1	26.8	Residential Pensioner Rebates (%)	9	10
Socio-Economic Index Rank (1 low, 152 high)	142	n/a	Population Density (residents per km ²)	5,311.98	3,954.36
Your Local Economy	LGA	Group Avg	Your Public Facilities	LGA	Group Avg
SALM Unemployment Rate (%)	2.2	3.1	Public Swimming Pool Complexes (incl rock pools) (No.)	2	3
Avg Taxable Income (\$)	76,617	74,020	Public Halls (No.)	7	7
Avg Household Family Size (No.)	2.8	2.9	Public Libraries (No.)	2	2
Largest Industry Employer	Professional		Open Public Space (ha)	83	151
Value of DAs determined (\$'000)	200,062	191,439	Total Road Length (km)	151.1	124.4
Active Businesses in LGA (No.)	7,381	6,215	Access to Internet at Home (%)	81.4	79.1

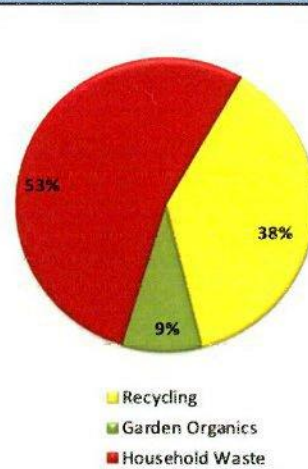
Average Residential Ordinary Rates



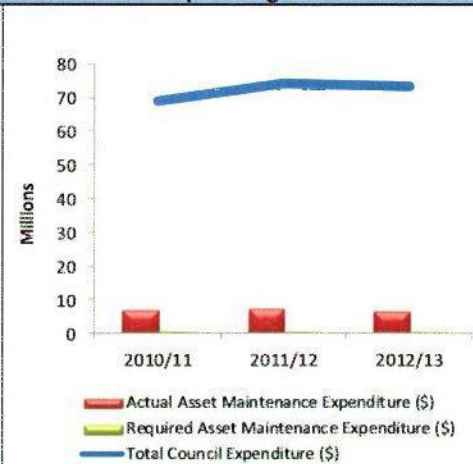
Expenditure on Services



Council's Waste Services

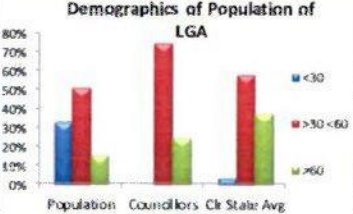
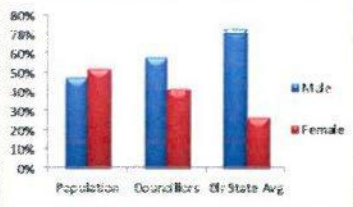




Council's Spending on Assets



In 2013 TCorp assessed your Council's current Financial Sustainability Rating as Sound with a Neutral outlook.

In 2013 the Infrastructure Audit assessed Council's infrastructure management to be Very Strong.

Contacting Council	Your Council's Finances	LGA	Group Avg	Your Council's Services	LGA	Group Avg
7-15 Wetherill Street	Avg Ordinary Residential Rate (\$)	1,106.71	1,002.72	Governance & Administration Expenditure per capita (\$)	291.74	273.85
Leichhardt NSW 2040	Avg Ordinary Business Rate (\$)	6,567.21	4,049.60	Environmental Expenditure (including waste) per capita	217.54	231.13
Postal Address:	Avg Ordinary Farmland Rate (\$)	n/a	2,461.54	Water & Sewer Services Expenditure per capita (\$)	n/a	n/a
PO Box 45, Leichhardt NSW 2040	Avg Ordinary Mining Rate (\$)	n/a	n/a	Community Services, Education, Housing, Amenities Expenditure per capita (\$)	203.99	144.59
Phone: 02 9367 9222	Total Land Value / Total Rate Revenue (\$)	370.02	467.43	Recreational & Culture Expenditure per capita (\$) *	300.58	203.70
Fax: 02 9367 9111	Typical Residential Water and Sewer Bill (including usage) (\$)	n/a	n/a	Public Order, Safety & Health Expenditure per capita (\$)	54.42	69.56
Email:	Avg Domestic Waste Charge (\$)	440.19	409.63	Other Services Expenditure per capita (\$)	111.25	103.67
leichhardt@lmc.nsw.gov.au	Own Source Revenue (%) (TCorp Benchmark 60%)	79	73	Library Services Expenditure per capita (\$)	46.96	53.91
Web:	Grants & Contributions Revenue (%)	10	15	Library Circulation per capita (Items)	10	9
www.leichhardt.nsw.gov.au	Operating Performance Ratio (%) (TCorp Benchmark >4.0%)	5.1	-1.7	Domestic waste not going to land fill (%)	43	52
Demographics of Population of LGA	Unrestricted Current Ratio	3.3	3.1	Development Applications (mean gross days)	91	87
	Outstanding Rates & Annual Charges (%)	7.5	3.8	Development Applications determined (No.)	472	309
	Debt Service Cover Ratio (TCorp Benchmark >2.0)	11.6	155.2	Companion Animals microchipped (No.)	16,738	9,080
	Cash Expense Cover Ratio (Mths) (TCorp Benchmark > 3 mths)	1.5	3.6	Companion Animals microchipped and registered (%)	50	60
Demographics of Councilors	Your Council's Community Leadership			Your Council's Assets		
	Development Applications determined by Councilors (%)	29	11	Roads, Bridges and Footpath expenditure per capita (\$)	122.29	117.29
	Audited Financial Reports submitted by due date (Y/N)	Y	n/a	Building & Infrastructure Renewal Ratio (%)	64.9	81.8
	Code of Conduct Complaints (No.)	3	4	Infrastructure Backlog Ratio (%) (TCorp Benchmark <20%)	2.3	8.7
	Complaints investigated requiring action (No.)	0	1	Road Length per '000 capita (metre)	2.7	2.8
Demographics of Staff	Cost of dealing with Code of Conduct Complaints (\$)	5,877	11,269	Asset Maintenance Ratio (TCorp Benchmark >1.0)	7.0	1.4
	Population per EFT Staff (No.)	120	183			
	See Appendix 1 for definitions, calculations & benchmarks See Appendix 3 for Council Groups			Comparative Information on NSW Local Government		
				Measuring Local Government Performance 2012-13		
						

3. KEY STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

The proximity of the Leichhardt Local Government Area to the Sydney Central Business District means that the community enjoys the high levels of services, employment, infrastructure and opportunities that a modern city provides.¹

This inner-city location also means the Council will face a number of challenges as a result of the projected population increases across the Sydney Metropolitan Area. The demands on planning, infrastructure and services at a regional level will be significant. It is pleasing to note that Leichhardt Council is considering such impacts in its forward planning. For example, the Council's Integrated Transport Plan acknowledges the future transport issues which are likely to arise through the population increase predicted to occur outside the Leichhardt local government area.

Successfully addressing such challenges, supporting the delivery of the Metropolitan Strategy and meeting the future needs of Greater Sydney will require strategic leadership from the Council and an effective partnership with the State. Increasingly, there will be tension between its role as a partner in regional planning and service delivery and its role in representing the needs of its local community. A current example highlighting this tension is the WestConnex project.

Leichhardt Council is clearly committed to strengthening its capacity to respond to future challenges. The Council uses the Integrated Planning and Reporting framework effectively to undertake long-term planning and continues to look for ways to improve planning and reporting processes across the organisation. Importantly, this means the Council has a good understanding of the asset renewal pressures which will impact on its financial sustainability and is able to work with its community on suitable options to address this into the future.

As this report notes, improving the capacity of the elected Council to focus on strategic issues is a priority for the organisation. The Council is strongly encouraged to continue reviewing governance arrangements for ordinary Council meetings and its various committees in order to streamline decision-making processes.

¹ Leichhardt Council's Community Strategic Plan (Leichhardt 2025+)

This includes ensuring efficient consideration of development applications to allow the Council to focus on strategic concerns. Leichhardt Council continues to have a high percentage of development applications which are determined by councillors. While the time taken to process applications has been improving, this aspect of the Council's work needs further attention. It is pleasing to note that the Council has resolved to commence a twelve-month trial of an Independent Hearing Assessment Panel to improve the way it considers planning matters.

4. STRATEGIC CAPACITY, DIRECTION AND SERVICE DELIVERY

Local councils have an important role in undertaking strategic community planning. The Integrated Planning and Reporting framework guides councils to carry out efficient long-term planning and delivery of services in partnership with the community.

The review team found that Leichhardt Council has excellent Integrated Planning and Reporting processes in place and produces high quality, well-integrated, planning and reporting documents. The effective implementation of the framework puts the Council in a strong position to meet the priorities articulated in the Community Strategic Plan, *Leichhardt 2025+*.

The maturity of Leichhardt Council's long-term planning is demonstrated by the Strategic Service Plans which sit under the mandated Integrated Planning and Reporting plans. These include the Community and Cultural Plan, the Environmental Sustainability Strategy, the Employment and Economic Development Plan, and an Integrated Transport Plan which all have a ten-year planning horizon and four-year delivery program.

Underpinning the Council's high-level performance in this area is a long-standing commitment to extensively involving its community in decision-making processes. This commitment was formalised through the Council's Community Engagement Framework which was developed in 2010.

The Council continues to strengthen its strategic planning and reporting on an ongoing basis. Examples of this work include:

- A 2013 review of the organisational structure to ensure alignment with the strategic goals and outcomes for *Leichhardt 2025+*, the various underlying Strategic Service Plans and the Delivery Program.
- Establishing the new position of Manager Customer Service and Corporate Planning to help drive and embed Integrated Planning and Reporting processes sustainably into the organisation. Through this position, the Council aims to achieve more effective annual and four-yearly planning. A key focus is also to develop more succinct and meaningful reporting for councillors and the community.
- Introducing a business planning process to clearly articulate how each business unit contributes to achieving the outcomes *Leichhardt 2025+*. This will involve mandatory

progress reporting and monitoring at all levels to improve accountability and further integrate planning and reporting throughout the Council.

- Implementing specifically-designed software in the first quarter of 2014-15 to consolidate and streamline existing Integrated Planning and Reporting processes. The software will enable the Council to report across all aspects of Integrated Planning and Reporting as well as extend this reporting into its business planning processes.

The Council's response – Strategic Capacity, Planning and Service Delivery

Leichhardt Council acknowledges the very positive comments the Review Team has to say about Council's Strategic Capacity and forward planning. The software has been implemented and Strategic Service Plans are currently being reviewed.

5. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

This section examines the Council's overall financial position and how it is managing its finances and assets in order to deliver the outcomes of its Community Strategic Plan.

A review of Leichhardt Council's Resourcing Strategy suggests close links between the organisation's asset management and long-term financial planning processes. This has allowed the Council to develop a good understanding of its asset renewal backlog and the impact that this will have on its financial sustainability in the long term.

NSW Treasury Corporation (TCorp) assessment of Leichhardt Municipal Council

- TCorp has noted that local governments will be financially sustainable over the long term when they are able to generate sufficient funds to provide the levels of service and infrastructure agreed with their community.
- In 2012, TCorp undertook an assessment of the Council's financial capacity and its future sustainability. Based on the review of information provided by the Council, TCorp assessed Leichhardt to be in a sound financial sustainability position and forecast a neutral sustainability position if current service levels are maintained.
- TCorp defines a Council with a sound sustainability rating as having adequate capacity to meet its financial commitments in the short, medium and long term. While it is likely that a council with a sound rating may have a record of minor to moderate operating deficits, is expected to regularly report operating surpluses. It is able to address its operating deficits, manage major unforeseen financial shocks and any adverse changes in its business with minor or moderate revenue and/or expense adjustments.

Long term financial planning

The review team found that Leichhardt Council's Long-Term Financial Plan complies with legislative requirements and successfully meets the intent of this aspect of the Integrated Planning and Reporting framework. The current Plan is a valuable tool which helps to guide Council decision-making and discussions with the community about resource allocation.

The Plan is forecasting operating surpluses before capital grants and contributions for the full ten-year period.

However, asset modelling (detailed in Council's Asset Management Strategy) shows that the condition of Council's assets will deteriorate over the next 10 years if the current levels of spending are maintained. The Council has forecasted that the infrastructure renewal shortfall over the period of its Long-Term Financial Plan is \$24.6 million.

The Council has responded strategically to the asset renewal backlog. It has instigated an efficiency program which aims to find \$8 million to redirect to renewal costs over the life of the Long-Term Financial Plan (further details of this program are included below).

Continuous Business Improvement – Better practice example

'Living within our means'

Council designed an in-house continuous business improvement program titled 'Living within our means'. Led by the Senior Management Team, this ongoing program is focussed on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation. It aims to achieve budget savings while improving service delivery to the community, particularly on infrastructure renewal over the period of the Long-Term Financial Plan.

The program, endorsed by the Council in November 2013, has two key components:

- **Strategic Reviews** looking at 'value for money' on selected aspects of council operations. The initial focus is on reviewing procurement, debt management and rate arrears, corporate services, asset utilisation (eg fleet), grants administration and purchased services. This has achieved immediate results with identification of more than \$1.2 million in efficiency savings/additional revenue in the 2014-15 Budget.

- **Business Reviews** involving line-by-line expenditure audits of business units and services. Commencing in the 2014-15 financial year, these reviews will determine the efficiency of the Council's outputs and provide a greater level of assurance that budget measures and service delivery goals are being achieved within a business unit or service area. This work will involve benchmarking of internal operations to ensure value for money, particularly in areas of the business where there is an established and competitive market (eg waste services).

A further \$2 million has been dedicated from Council reserves to infrastructure renewals over ten years. This leaves the funding gap for infrastructure renewals of approximately \$14.7 million over ten years.

The Long-Term Financial Plan includes scenario modelling to help inform the community about the impact of asset renewal on the organisation's financial sustainability over the next ten years:

- The first scenario is based on a continuation of the Council's services as currently provided within the annual rate peg. This scenario does not provide sufficient levels of asset renewal expenditure to maintain the community's assets (resulting in a growing infrastructure backlog) and thus this scenario is not financially sustainable in the long term.
- The second scenario has an increased level of asset renewal expenditure based on the Asset Management Strategy. This scenario is a more financially sustainable outcome for the Council in that the capital program is fully funded and the Council will maintain its asset base by renewing identified ageing infrastructure and ensuring cash reserves are set aside for those works yet to be identified.

It is noted that the Council has resolved to operate under Scenario One for 2014-15 while continuing to undertake its internal efficiency program.

The Council intends to continue consultation with the community on options to fund the Scenario Two model, including the possibility of raising additional income through an increase in fees and charges and possibly applying to increase rates. This will continue the conversation the Council initiated with the community in 2013-14 on a Special Rate Variation.

In 2013, Leichhardt Council consulted with its community about applying for a Special Rate Variation. While feedback from residents showed broad support for a rate increase, the Council decided against proceeding with an application and instead directed Council staff to identify savings which could be redirected to asset renewal.

A key lesson, identified by senior Council staff during the Promoting Better Practice Review, is that councillors should be kept well-informed about the Special Rate Variation process, particularly the outcomes of community consultation which occurs. This consultation has resource implications and it is advisable to have clear understanding of the Council's commitment to proceeding with an application before beginning this work.

Asset Management

Leichhardt Council has a strong focus on asset management, with a dedicated team to deal with its asset planning. The importance of good asset management decisions is also highlighted for new councillors as part of their induction program. Consequently, the Council prepares good quality asset management documents which clearly articulate the Council's policy, strategies and expenditure forecasts in relation to all of its assets.

A 2012 review by consultants Morrison Low rated Leichhardt Council's asset management systems at Core Level, meaning its plans are in the top 25% when compared with other NSW councils.

The Council has implemented an Asset Management Improvement Plan which aims to increase data confidence levels and increase levels of asset management from core competence to advanced maturity.

The Council's response – Financial Sustainability

The rating Council received from TCorp showed Council has a strong focus on financial sustainability. Council continues to undertake its "Living Within Its Means" program to find efficiencies that reduces expenditure and increases income. These savings are then dedicated to infrastructure renewal to close the funding gap. Staff and Councillors continue to review the infrastructure renewal shortfall during budget discussions. This is particularly the focus for the 2015/16 Budget in preparation for "Fit for the Future".

6. LEADERSHIP AND ORGANISATIONAL GOVERNANCE

This section examines the effectiveness of Leichhardt Council's decision-making processes, as well as the key structures, systems and processes involved in administering the strategic decisions of the Council.

Civic leadership and decision making

Community representation and participation

Leichhardt Council operates under a principle of 'Open Council' which reflects the organisation's long-standing commitment to community participation and transparency. This means that residents are able to talk on any agenda item of an ordinary Council meeting (for up to three minutes) and the Council's committee meetings are open to the public to attend and participate. The review team found that this is impacting the efficiency of ordinary Council meetings and the effectiveness of the Council's advisory committees in supporting local decision-making.

Improved decision-making processes

The Council has calculated that the number of items at ordinary meetings has increased by 25 per cent since 2007. In 2013, the average length of an ordinary meeting was just over five hours, which raises serious questions about the demands made on councillors' time, and the ability of the Council to focus on important strategic issues. Lengthy meetings may also be a disincentive for members of the community to attend, and could negatively impact on public perceptions of the role of councillors.

A member of the review team attended part of an ordinary Council meeting on 22 July 2014 and found the meeting to be conducted appropriately. It is worth noting however, that it took over one hour for Council to consider four mayoral minutes which, regardless of the issues covered, is considered excessive. It appears that the length of Council meetings may also be impacted by the councillors' commitment to thoroughly debate the items which are being considered.

The Council is exploring strategies to reduce the length of ordinary Council meetings, including the trial of a revised meeting structure which allows the Council to accept items in bulk following a call for items from the gallery.

It is pleasing to note that the Council has engaged the Australian Centre for Excellence in Local Government (ACELG) to provide advice on governance improvements. As part of this work, the Council is considering the establishment of a two-tier meeting structure, with the top tier focusing on significant policy and strategic directions requiring a decision of the full council and specifically matters which cannot be delegated under Section 377 of the Local Government Act.

ACELG has also found that the existing committee structure at Leichhardt Council does not provide the community with an effective way of engaging with the Council in a valid representational system. The Council is currently looking at how it can use advisory committees more appropriately and effectively in the decision-making process.

Determination of development applications

Agenda items generated by the Environment and Community Management Division have constituted the most significant increase in items considered at ordinary Council meetings since 2007. The Division is responsible for the development of the Local Environment Plan, the Development Control Plan and individual planning matters.

The number of Development Applications determined by councillors at Leichhardt Council has, in the last few years, ranged from 21% to 30% of the total Development Applications received by the Council. In 2012-13, Leichhardt Council had the second-highest percentage of determinations by councillors in NSW. The Council believes that this figure is due to keen community interest in the development application process and, more importantly, the number of applications which are substantially in breach of a development standard and require determination (as per State Environmental Planning Policy No 1 – Development Standards) by the full Council rather than under staff delegation.

The review team notes that the Council has resolved to trial an Independent Hearing Assessment Panel with delegated authority to determine relevant development applications. It is anticipated that this will improve the efficiency of decision-making in two key ways. Firstly, there will be more capacity at Council meetings to consider and decide upon other policy and strategic matters. Secondly, the panel will ensure the determination of development applications is based on transparency, objectivity and consistent decision-making, based only on planning merits. The intention is for the Panel to commence operating in September 2014 following public consultation.

Governance at the organisational level

Continuous Improvement

The review team found that Leichhardt Council has established sound governance systems which incorporate the principles of risk management. The Senior Management Team strives to continually improve its operations through evaluation and evidence-based decision-making. For example, the Council:

- regularly reviews its organisational structure to optimise service delivery and achieve its strategic priorities.
- undertakes benchmarking analysis to identify areas for improvement and efficiency.
- conducts a regular staff survey to seek staff feedback on improvement priorities and to inform development of the Council's Workforce Plan.

This commitment to organisational improvement has resulted in the following examples of better practice:

- In 2011, the Council began reviewing all existing customer service systems and practices across the organisation to identify options to improve service delivery. This work led to the preparation of a **Customer Service Strategy** which aims to embed a customer focus in all aspects of Council activity and improve the quality of customer service.
- The annual **Community Perception Survey** highlights the focus that Leichhardt Council has on evaluation and performance measurement. While customer satisfaction surveys are carried out by a number of councils, the extent to which the results are used and integrated by the Council is viewed as very effective. Resident feedback obtained through the survey is used to inform its strategic planning and service delivery priorities, thereby demonstrating the Council's commitment to continuous improvement.

Legislative Compliance

The Promoting Better Practice Review Program has previously identified that councils often lack a system or process to ensure legislative and regulatory obligations are met.

It is pleasing to note that Leichhardt Council recently engaged a private law firm to develop a Legislative Compliance Framework to help meet regulatory obligations. To assist with ongoing legislative compliance, the law firm regularly reports to the Council on legislation and other issues that may impact on the Council's policies and operations. The Governance

and Administration Manager reviews these reports and allocates staff responsibility to the actions which have been identified.

This information identified under the framework has been linked to the Council's Delegations Register to ensure staff awareness of all compliance matters.

Audit and Risk Management

It is worth noting that internal audit and risk is at the foundation of the Council's governance framework. An Audit and Risk Committee was established in 2012 to oversight risk, compliance, external accountability and internal control within the Council. Since being established, the Committee has promoted an enterprise risk management framework and supported the implementation of a risk register to assist Council staff to understand the key governance issue across the Council's activities. The Committee includes two councillors, two independent members with local government experience, and staff from the Senior Management Team.

The Council's response – Governance

Council has implemented a 12 month trial of an Independent Hearing and Assessment Panel to determine development applications and has also implemented a new committee framework to allow the Councillors to focus on strategic policy matters at a Second Council Meeting each month.

7. BETTER PRACTICE EXAMPLES

The Office of Local Government defines Better Practice as that which:

- is beyond or above minimum compliance requirements, published guidelines or in some way better than standard industry practice.
- is innovative and/or very effective.
- contributes to continuous improvement within the local government sector.

BETTER PRACTICE EXAMPLES	DESCRIBE THE INITIATIVE AND WHY IS IT CONSIDERED BETTER PRACTICE?	IS COUNCIL WILLING TO SHARE INFORMATION ABOUT THE INITIATIVE WITH OTHER COUNCILS?
1. Development of Strategic Plans under the Integrated Planning and Reporting framework.	The Council successfully uses Integrated Planning and Reporting to guide its long-term planning. An example of Better Practice in this area is the development of supporting strategic plans covering key aspects of Council activity. The Community and Cultural Plan, the Environmental Sustainability Strategy, the Employment and Economic Development Plan, and an Integrated Transport Plan are designed to support the implementation of the Community Strategic Plan and clearly link to all relevant Integrated Planning and Reporting documents.	All of Council's Strategic Plans are available at http://www.leichhardt.nsw.gov.au/About-Council/Plans-Policies-Publications

BETTER PRACTICE EXAMPLES	DESCRIBE THE INITIATIVE AND WHY IS IT CONSIDERED BETTER PRACTICE?	IS COUNCIL WILLING TO SHARE INFORMATION ABOUT THE INITIATIVE WITH OTHER COUNCILS?
<p>2. Alignment of organisational structure with the strategic goals and outcomes for <i>Leichhardt 2025+</i>.</p>	<p>Section 333 of the Local Government Act requires all councils to review their organisational structure within 12 months of an ordinary council election.</p> <p>The review undertaken by Leichhardt Council in 2013 was focussed on establishing the best organisational structure to achieve the outcomes of the Community Strategic Plan and its supporting plans. This is considered better practice because it helps the Council to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deliver the priority outcomes identified through community strategic planning. • embed the Integrated Planning and Reporting framework within the structure of the organisation. 	<p>Yes</p>

BETTER PRACTICE EXAMPLES	DESCRIBE THE INITIATIVE AND WHY IS IT CONSIDERED BETTER PRACTICE?	IS COUNCIL WILLING TO SHARE INFORMATION ABOUT THE INITIATIVE WITH OTHER COUNCILS?
<p>3. Strategic Reviews looking at 'value for money' on selected aspects of Council operations.</p>	<p>As detailed in this report, Leichhardt Council has initiated an ongoing review program to encourage business improvements and identify savings. As part of this program, all staff have the opportunity and are encouraged to identify business improvement strategies. Involving all staff in this process is considered better practice as it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helps to build an organisational culture which is customer focussed. • increases the likelihood of identifying options for improving efficiency across all aspects of the Council's operation. 	<p>Yes</p>

8. ACTION PLAN

As part of the review, the Senior Management Team used the Council Self-Assessment Checklist to undertake a review of the systems which support the Council's operation across a range of areas. These include strategic planning, governance, regulatory work, asset and finance, and community consultation. The following **Action Plan** was subsequently prepared by Leichhardt Council, in consultation with the Office of Local Government, to guide the implementation and monitoring of areas for improvement.

ACTION ITEM	PRIORITY	ACTION PROPOSED	TIME FRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	PROGRESS REPORT
1. Business Planning as an extension of the Integrated Planning Framework.	<i>High</i>	Utilise software to integrate Business Plans into the Integrated Planning and Reporting framework.	June 2016	Manager Customer Services and Corporate Planning	Currently reviewing Strategic Service Plans
2. Privacy Training.	<i>High</i>	The Council has identified 188 staff and 12 councillors to complete online privacy training.	June 2015	Manager Governance and Administration	90% complete

ACTION ITEM	PRIORITY	ACTION PROPOSED	TIME FRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	PROGRESS REPORT
3. Review of Legal Services Panel	<i>High</i>	Legal panel will be reviewed to ensure best value is achieved in terms of service levels and costs.	June 2015	Manager Legal Services	On track
4. Improve efficiency and effectiveness of Council committees.	<i>High</i>	Review committee structure, Code of Conduct for Committees, and formal membership.	June 2015	Group Manager Community and Cultural Services	New committee structure implemented. Terms of References being developed for committees.
5. Tracking of Councillor Requests and Councillor Resolutions.	<i>High</i>	Develop report and online tracking system to keep councillors informed of actions taken for requests and resolutions.	March 2015	Manager Information Technology	On track

ACTION ITEM	PRIORITY	ACTION PROPOSED	TIME FRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	PROGRESS REPORT
6. Strengthen the Council's enforcement and compliance policies and procedures,	<i>Medium</i>	Brief to councillors, and draft policy and procedures for all aspects of enforcement and compliance.	June 2015	Manager Compliance and Enforcement	Draft Policy currently on exhibition
7. Streamline the process for reviewing and updating Development Control Plans.	<i>Medium</i>	Finalise internal procedures to include regular housekeeping amendments for both LEPs and DCPs.	June 2015	Manager Environment and Urban Planning	On track
8. Prepare a Voluntary Planning Agreements Policy.	<i>Medium</i>	Adopt Policy	June 2015	Manager Legal Services	On track
9. Ensure consistency and integration of the Council's policies and procedures.	<i>Medium</i>	Undertake a review of all policies and implement a policy and procedure framework.	December 2014	Manager Governance and Administration	Completed

ACTION ITEM	PRIORITY	ACTION PROPOSED	TIME FRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	PROGRESS REPORT
10. Improve community access to the Council's Annual Report.	<i>Medium</i>	Developing a summary electronic report for the community for 2013/14 Annual Report.	November 2014	Manager Governance and Administration	Completed