



Central Desert Shire Council Issues Summary 2012 - 2013

Issues Summary

STRENGTH

ISSUE

Dedication of staff and Councillors.

DESCRIPTION

Council staff work in a demanding environment and generally display considerable dedication to their duties. Councillors also display strong commitment to the Shire.

STAKEHOLDER

All staff members, Councillors and the residents of the Shire

SOLUTIONS

Consultative Committee to be of assistance to management in solving a wide range of staff issues and problems as practicable.

Consultative Committee to meet regularly and to be given ongoing assistance in all aspects of their operations.

Councillors to be encouraged and supported whilst undertaking activities on behalf of the Council.

Staff to be congratulated on an ongoing basis for their dedication.

ISSUE

Growing knowledge of staff and Councillors.

DESCRIPTION

Staff and Councillors are becoming more familiar with the way "things work around here". This helps provide a consistent message in the communities and consistent service delivery in Service Delivery Centres.

STAKEHOLDER

All Shire Council staff and Councillors.

SOLUTIONS

Promotion of Central Desert Shire as a friendly and professional organisation is attracting better qualified and experienced staff.

Continued relevant training, development programs and learning processes available to staff.

Issues Summary

STRENGTH

ISSUE

Strong local and grass roots representation through Local Boards and Council representation.

DESCRIPTION

Community residents can discuss relevant matters and provide advice to Council through their Local Board (LB) and Councillors.

STAKEHOLDER

Central Desert residents and ratepayers, stakeholders.

SOLUTIONS

Implementation of Community Engagement Strategy.

Board members receiving ongoing training and development opportunities which encourage greater community leadership and governance.

Government agencies and other stakeholders can consult with the Local Boards regarding community matters and programs.

Good advice is provided to Council for the purpose of policy development or lobbying the government.

Local Board meetings take place bi-monthly to discuss relevant community matters and assist in the resolution of issues in a timely manner.

Establishment of Reconciliation Action Plan.

ISSUE

MOUs signed and other positive engagements with key stakeholders

DESCRIPTION

Council has entered into a large array of agreements/arrangements with key stakeholders for improved collaborative processes.

STAKEHOLDER

All key stakeholders

SOLUTIONS

Continue to seek new opportunities for collaborative engagement with stakeholders.

Maintain and enhance current arrangements.

ISSUE

Strong positive reputation with external funding agencies.

DESCRIPTION

Council's strong emphasis on acquitting grants in an accurate, efficient and timely manner is enhancing a positive reputation for Council .

STAKEHOLDER

All funding agencies

SOLUTIONS

Continued monitoring of progress and strict adherence to grant requirements.

Issues Summary

STRENGTH

ISSUE

Solid Financial system.

DESCRIPTION

Solid Financial system which allows Council to produce timely financial reports and meet compliance requirements.

STAKEHOLDER

Council, EMT, Finance section and all staff, funding agencies, NT and Commonwealth Governments and general public.

SOLUTIONS

Continue to embed good financial procedures within organisation.

On going training in use of financial system and internal financial procedures.

Continued use and development of user friendly reporting options.

ISSUE

Popular Shire newsletter distributed widely and informative website.

DESCRIPTION

The Shire Council newsletter is very popular and an effective mechanism to communicate with residents and other stakeholders. Council is particularly proud of its well maintained website, which contains a wealth of relevant information.

STAKEHOLDER

Shire Council communities; all stakeholders and the general public

SOLUTIONS

Distribute newsletter to all communities and residents

Ensure website is kept up to date and is relevant.

Continue production of the quarterly newsletter.

Use newsletter to promote the Shire Council in the region and NT

ISSUE

Strong compliance with the Local Government Act

DESCRIPTION

The NT Local Government Act has many issues requiring compliance from Council. Since its inception, Council has developed strong compliance with the Act.

STAKEHOLDER

Residents and ratepayers, Department of Local Government and other external stakeholders.

SOLUTIONS

Maintain strong compliance through training, internal audit and ongoing promotion of compliance requirements.

Issues Summary

STRENGTH

ISSUE

Bi-monthly Shire Service Delivery meetings with all managers.

DESCRIPTION

All managers come together every second month for two days of professional development, exploring council policies, presentations on various communities programs and building effective working relationships.

STAKEHOLDER

Executive Management Team.
Managers and Coordinators.

SOLUTIONS

Ensure Shire Service Delivery meetings are informative, engaging and relevant with open and productive discussion encouraged.

Continue to have bi-monthly Shire Service Delivery meetings to build a cohesive management team with all relevant managers attending the entire meeting.

Promote Shire Service Delivery meetings as an opportunity to encourage leadership qualities in management and a shared mind set.

Issues Summary

WEAKNESS

ISSUE

Optimum use of Records Management Information System is needed.

DESCRIPTION

The Council uses InfoXpert as its Record Management System. Although operational and utilised, the full benefits of a fully functional records system have yet to be realised.

STAKEHOLDER

Applies to all of the organisation.

SOLUTIONS

Records management in remote communities is managed effectively.

InfoXpert working successfully with all users of this Records Management System being totally familiar with its use and their responsibilities.

ISSUE

Lack of staff housing and accommodation.

DESCRIPTION

High cost of housing and rental in Alice Springs and lack of staff housing in communities constrains employment opportunities and the ability to attract quality staff.

STAKEHOLDER

Head Office and all Shire communities are affected.

SOLUTIONS

Subsidised rentals be applied in communities.

Ensure Salary Sacrificing Program is well known to potential and existing staff.

Advocate to external funding bodies for additional staff housing to be provided.

ISSUE

High staff turnover.

DESCRIPTION

This is a common problem in the Northern Territory. High turnover results in loss of corporate knowledge, higher training costs and disruptions to operations.

STAKEHOLDER

All staff and residents in communities.

SOLUTIONS

Conduct psychometric testing during recruitment in critical positions.

Rollout of Indigenous Employment Strategy.

Continue to have bi-monthly service delivery meetings and other staff meetings to promote communication and staff engagement.

Improved induction processes for all staff.

Implementation of Workplace Mentoring programme.

Issues Summary

WEAKNESS

ISSUE

Lack of well ingrained operational procedures (corporate knowledge).

DESCRIPTION

Whilst a lot has been achieved in a short time span, greater efficiency can occur if corporate knowledge is supported by further policies and procedures being established.

STAKEHOLDER

All staff, in particular Managers.

SOLUTIONS

Enhance corporate knowledge by improving staff retention and reducing staff turnover.

Continue to develop policies, procedures and manuals and ensure these resources are widely available.

Train relevant staff in effective use of Council systems and requirements.

ISSUE

Poor standard of many Shire owned assets and the associated costs of maintenance, including ability to maintain all Council assets in good condition.

DESCRIPTION

Council inherited many assets that were already of poor standard. Of particular concern is the fleet of plant and equipment that is generally aged and of poor condition due to rough use, environmental conditions and the limited resources available at time of purchase. The working environment also contributes to premature wear and tear.

The high turnover of operators, some with inadequate training and supervision, can contribute to poor maintenance of plant and equipment.

Shire housing and other built assets are also of poor quality and requires significant investment to bring these facilities to a suitable standard. Increasing compliance requirements (particularly concerning WH&S and environmental health) is posing additional challenges as facilities need to be maintained and upgraded to meet new standards.

STAKEHOLDER

Shire Service Managers, Work supervisors/ Field officers, Coordinator/Managers, and Executive Staff.

SOLUTIONS

Develop and implement appropriate maintenance programs for all built assets.

Driver and operator training to improve care and use of plant and equipment.

Regular servicing of vehicles and plant to ensure reliability of operation.

Develop Asset Management Plans and use plans to continue lobbying governments for adequate funding.

Cost recovery for vehicles used by core, commercial or agency services.

Planned replacement of vehicles and plant in accordance with asset management strategy and policy.

Issues Summary

WEAKNESS

ISSUE

Lack of operational capability to undertake core works.

DESCRIPTION

The Council's core functions include road and drainage, waste collection, and maintenance parks and other Council assets.

The Council does not currently possess sufficient resources or skills to ensure core works are adequately addressed. For example, the Council currently does not have the expertise to undertake its own roads and drainage works in house. Much of this work is therefore contracted out at higher cost or if not undertaken, an accumulation of basic roads and draining maintenance issues that need to be addressed.

STAKEHOLDER

All Service Delivery Centres.

SOLUTIONS

Develop rolling works plans within communities to enhance Council's operational capability and ensure works are prioritised and addressed.

Continue to lobby the NT Government for increased operational funding.

When the opportunity arises, engage suitably, qualified persons to build capacity.

Review the adequacy of the plant fleet and identify shortcomings to be addressed.

ISSUE

Wide variation in funding agency financial and performance reporting requirements.

DESCRIPTION

The Council has a large and varied grant base. Each grant requires specific financial and performance reporting. These impose significant workload issues for the Council.

STAKEHOLDER

Applies to the whole organisation.

SOLUTIONS

Finance section to work with project and program managers to refine management financial reports.

Continue to support LGANT's efforts to establish standard reporting requirements.

Issues Summary

WEAKNESS

ISSUE

Geographical size and remoteness of Shire.

DESCRIPTION

Servicing nine service delivery centres over 282 000 s/km is a huge logistical challenge that needs to be strategically addressed on an ongoing basis and in a cost effective manner.

STAKEHOLDER

Central Desert Shire Communities.

SOLUTIONS

Continue to lobby for improved road conditions and particularly to secure all weather access to communities.

Continued exploration of ways of improving IT services in communities.

Improve regional capability through regional work crews and co-operation.

Develop strategies for dealing with remote issues.

Ensure all IT problems are reported and attended to in a timely manner.

Continue to advocate for better internet and mobile phone coverage in all communities.

ISSUE

Financial Sustainability.

DESCRIPTION

Council is seriously under funded in relation to the provision of core services. This has particularly impacted the Council's ability to ensure appropriate asset replacement standards. In addition, many grants do not allow appropriate allocation of overhead costs thus forcing cross subsidization of agency services. The Council's limited ability to generate untied revenue also constrains the Council's ability to maintain autonomy over its activities.

STAKEHOLDER

All levels of government.

All Shire communities.

SOLUTIONS

Participate fully in NT Government Review of Financial Sustainability for Shires and continue to lobby for the recognition of the Council's financial situation.

Continue to lobby for appropriate grant funding that considers overhead allocations and includes capital depreciation/replacement as a factor in funding.

Issues Summary

OPPORTUNITY

ISSUE

Economic development opportunities.

DESCRIPTION

Council is involved in several economic development forums e.g. Central Australian MOU, combined Economic Development Committee (sponsored by Minister Malarndirri McCarthy), and the Local Implementation Plans in Lajamanu and Yuendumu. Regular meetings are conducted with prospective mining operators.

STAKEHOLDER

All Shire Communities.

SOLUTIONS

Leverage any economic development or local employment opportunities by working and linking with public, private and not for profit organisations.

Increase local employment through CDEP and Shire Projects.

Participate in and contribute to all relevant forums that could result in economic development within the region.

Pursue and encourage good ideas and strategies to promote business in the Shire.

ISSUE

Development of Lajamanu and Yuendumu as "Growth Towns".

DESCRIPTION

Local Implementation Plans (LIPS) have been signed for both Communities, with all levels of governments being the Lead or Support Agency for a lengthy list of outcomes proposed. The Council can use the LIPS to assist in lobbying for better outcomes for these communities.

STAKEHOLDER

All levels of government, the communities of Lajamanu and Yuendumu and others that will benefit from improved facilities being established.

SOLUTIONS

Cooperate closely with the Australian and NT Governments where Council is a support agency.

Council to undertake all items where it is the lead agency.

Co-operate closely with both the NT and Australian Governments to get the best results.

Issues Summary

OPPORTUNITY

ISSUE

Implementation of Regional Management Plan.

DESCRIPTION

The Local Government Act provides for a Regional Management Plan which includes, amongst the statutory requirements, establishing ways of improving service delivery by cooperation between councils and joint management of facilities, etc.

STAKEHOLDER

Central Desert, Barkly, MacDonnell Shires and Alice Springs Town Council as members of the Central Australian Region and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Regional Services as the owner of the plan.

SOLUTIONS

Participate in regular meetings of stakeholders seeking advantageous outcomes for Council.

Cooperation with all stakeholders in the implementation of the Regional Management Plan.

ISSUE

Ability to capitalise on available grants.

DESCRIPTION

The Council is highly dependent upon grant funding and must constantly pursue available grants. The Council's good record on grant compliance is a strength.

STAKEHOLDER

All levels of government.

SOLUTIONS

Continue to lobby/advocate to government for the best outcomes for Council.

Submit well researched/informed applications for grant funding.

Continue to lobby government for increased core funding.

ISSUE

Funding arrangements need certainty through longer terms.

DESCRIPTION

Far too many agency grants are for a one year term, causing problems for Council employment and long term planning.

STAKEHOLDER

Government Departments and Agencies
All Shire Staff and communities.

SOLUTIONS

Continual lobbying of government for agreements to be at least 3 year terms.

Issues Summary

THREAT

ISSUE

Reduction in funding for infrastructure development in communities that are not "Growth Towns".

DESCRIPTION

There is a growing concern in Council that funding for infrastructure development will be highly concentrated in "Growth Towns" to the detriment of the other Communities. This is particularly so in respect to new or additional housing.

STAKEHOLDER

All non "Growth Town" communities.

SOLUTIONS

Continue lobbying and advocacy to Government.

ISSUE

Social unrest in communities.

DESCRIPTION

Social unrest is causing a variety of problems in communities including threats to the health and safety of staff, inability to attract staff to remote locations and the high mobility of local residents between communities leading to servicing issues in these communities.

STAKEHOLDER

All communities and staff.

SOLUTIONS

Continue to ensure staff and Council property are safe and protected.

Participate in all forums called to discuss ways of overcoming problems caused by social unrest.

ISSUE

Handover of road assets to local government without sufficient funding.

DESCRIPTION

There continues to be considerable concern from Councils in respect to the proposed transfer of the responsibility of various Territory roads to local government.

STAKEHOLDER

NT Government.
Local Councils.

SOLUTIONS

Continue to work closely with and support efforts by LGANT to negotiate a fair deal for the Shires.

Issues Summary

THREAT

ISSUE

Post Intervention leasing of aboriginal land.

DESCRIPTION

Council currently has rights to occupy a range of buildings under the Intervention process. These were for 5 years and will expire in August 2012. Negotiations with relevant stakeholders is ongoing but there is uncertainty over the leasing and funding arrangements for occupied buildings.

STAKEHOLDER

All levels of government, all Shires and Central Land Council.

SOLUTIONS

Keep Council fully informed as the negotiation progresses.

Continue to work closely with LGANT and legal representative and the other Shires in obtaining security of assets at a reasonable cost.

Continue to lobby funding agencies to increase program funding to cover additional costs associated with lease payments.

Continue to lobby NT Government to increase operational funding to offset the additional costs associated with lease payments.

ISSUE

Changes in the policy environment at Federal and Territory Government level.

DESCRIPTION

At the Federal level policy is being altered to address the Stronger Futures legislation and to bring the Australian budget into surplus. At the Territory level there is an election due in August 2012.

STAKEHOLDER

Council, staff and residents.

SOLUTIONS

Work closely with all levels of government and their agencies to turn threats into opportunities or to lessen the impact on Council's operations.

Continue to advocate to government on issues affecting local government generally and Central Desert Shire in particular.

Issues Summary

THREAT

ISSUE

Revenue constraints.

DESCRIPTION

Council has a very low rate base with rate income less than 2% of total income and is also subject to constraining legislation on what rate income can be levied. There are limited untied revenue opportunities.

STAKEHOLDER

Ratepayers and all residents.

SOLUTIONS

Continue to lobby governments for increased core funding and longer funding arrangements.

Demonstrate true cost of services to funding agencies.

Advocate for improved rating regime.

Continue to pursue grant revenue opportunities and build in the true cost of services into grant applications.

ISSUE

Lack of understanding of the role of Local Government within the broader community.

DESCRIPTION

The role of the local government and particularly the responsibilities of local government are poorly understood in the broader community. This lack of understanding often leads to confusion and frustration when issues are raised with the Council that can not be addressed (for example community housing). The increasing predilection to use local government as a political tool has further added to this confusion.

STAKEHOLDER

Residents and ratepayers, general community, Council staff.

SOLUTIONS

Continue to produce and widely circulate the Shire Newsletter as a mechanism to counter-act negative publicity.

Support and participate in LGANT's public relations strategy aimed at increasing understanding of the role of local government in the broader community.