PEER REVIEW
TWEED SHIRE COUNCIL - DRAFT COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE FRAMEWORK

INTRODUCTION

This peer review considers the Tweed Shire Council's draft Community Infrastructure Framework (the Framework). The framework will be used as the methodology for preparation of a Shire-wide Community and Cultural Facilities Network Plan, and to co-ordinate a range of implementation activities.

The review considers the suitability of the framework:

- as the planning methodology for Tweed Shire Council's community and cultural facilities network;
- to support coordination of relevant Council activities; and
- to inform investment and related decisions.

Comments are as follows, and as included in the attached draft Framework version.

PLANNING METHODOLOGY

The framework provides a clear and considered methodology for facility planning.

Principles and scope

The principles provide a sound basis for effective and efficient facility delivery. As was recognised in Council's responses to submissions, small amendments could be made to the framework to clarify consideration of equity issues (such as areas of disadvantage and where social cohesion needs to be further supported). We have suggested minor amendments to the background and principles in this regard.

Other minor amendments to the principles reflect suggestions by submitters.

The scope is clear and well defined. We have suggested minor inclusions for consideration.

Planning cycle

The planning cycle may benefit from clarification about the link between Step 1 and Step 2, and Step 2 and Step 3. It starts with a network approach, but could be read as dropping into a more individual facility planning approach by Step 2, rather than maintaining a corollary focus on the delivery of the network as a whole.

Perhaps an intermediary step is required between Step 2 and Step 3, to select a preferred scenario for network development for Council decision, before planning for individual sites. I've made a few suggestions in the diagram along these lines, e.g.:

- Development of preferred network solution;
- Site selection for future network needs; and
- Network activation (i.e. how facilities will link and avoid duplication).

Similarly, monitoring could consider the performance of the network, for example by mapping overlapping socio-economic heat maps by catchments for existing and planned facilities by expressed/normative need.

The design and delivery section would benefit from including a business planning step.

Benchmarks

Suggestions on the benchmarks for consideration include:

- would we consider neighborhood centres as district or local? Depending on the type and scale of facility anticipated, neighborhood centres might be considered local level, and a lower benchmark considered, e.g. 1:10,000 – 15,000;
- regarding exhibition spaces, you might articulate a network approach where Murwillumbah facilities are the hub which facilitates access to cultural programs and exhibits in smaller local spaces;
- with respect to performance centres - if it's likely that major commercial facilities or facilities in adjacent LGAs would subsume demand at district/regional level, Council planning might be better targeted to multi-use community and cultural spaces at local level; and
- you might consider a qualifier for disadvantaged areas e.g. 10% 'discount' on the benchmarks so they get prioritised?

Criteria for site options

The criteria for site options are excellent. I've made a few suggestions, mostly aimed at reflecting submission input.

SUPPORT FOR CO-ORDINATION OF COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

The general intent is sound.

Network Planning

It may be useful to articulate how facility network planning will link with other planning processes, e.g.

Network Planning will:

- consider priorities and implementation plans addressed in other Council plans and strategies

- advocate priorities identified for community infrastructure as part of Council's other planning processes

- develop shared KPIs between Council departments for facility network development

Plans and strategies with which facility network planning will link include:

- Local and Shire wide town planning projects

- Section 94 contribution plans

- community development plans and strategies, including plans for youth development cultural communities, and healthy ageing

- community facility planning projects, reports and strategies

- public transport planning

- disability access planning

- open space and recreation planning

- land use planning for greenfield and brownfield sites, and at LGA level

Integrated planning cycle

You might consider making this more explicit, e.g.

- an initial facility network plan would be developed, reviewed by key internal stakeholders (and potentially an external reference group) then recommended for adoption;

- the plan would be monitored in terms of network performance on an annual basis, linking to Council's corporate and financial planning cycles; and

- facility network plans would be reviewed every 3-5 years, potentially in line with review of land use planning instruments.

It may also help to further articulate the mechanism for integrated planning between planning streams, e.g.

- identify objectives and outcomes of other Council plans, including land use planning in relation to facility catchments;

- establish an internal planning forum to co-ordinate facility planning and delivery;

- establish a delivery team, involving members of the planning, building, environmental health and community and cultural development teams;

- develop shared KPIs for facility delivery with other Council departments involved in facility construction and management;

- convene a community advisory panel meeting on an annual basis for a three year term to support review of facility network performance;

- connect Council and community facilities with an information sharing network to encourage collaboration in planning and programming; and

- internal planning forum to co-ordinate monitoring and annual performance reporting

Mapping

This could include facility network layers linked to Council's land use planning maps, with detail including:

- facility catchments;

- socio-economic indicators;

- existing Council and other community facilities;

- approved facility locations; and

- preferred locations for facilities over the medium to long term.

This would be shared with and promoted to key stakeholders (internal and external).

INFORMING INVESTMENT AND RELATED DECISIONS

As above, we assume annual review of the network plan would be linked to both annual and triennial funding cycles, and to Section 94 contribution planning and delivery processes.

Planning could also include comparison of the business cases for network options being considered, including:

- value for money in terms of the number and type of needs served, and scale of catchments addressed, in relation to Council expenditure; and
- synergies and efficiencies in relation to to Council planning for land use, open space, transport and community development.

The scope of deliverables from facility network planning would need to support communication and promotion of the plan to:

- Councillors and council officers;
- companies intending to submit development approvals;
- companies seeking to increase their social responsibilities or social license;
- community and cultural facility managers;
- community groups and services seeking facility access;
- private facility providers; and
- Government agencies.

With respect to network efficiency, the framework (or subsequent plans) may refer to:

- shared planning and review mechanisms;
- shared social media strategies, and shared data and document storage;
- networked provision of internet and audio-telecommunications services; and
- shared buying of services (e.g. maintenance contracts) and consumables.

CONCLUSION

This framework provides a robust, practical and equitable methodology to assess and deliver on community and cultural facility needs in Tweed Shire. Enhancements could include:

- a stronger focus on review of network planning and efficiencies;
- more articulation of the network planning and evaluation step in the planning and delivery cycle;
- a stronger focus on internal planning and co-operation; and
- articulation of how the framework and plan will be shared and communicated to key stakeholders and potential funding sources.

Please refer to the attached marked up copy of the Framework for further detail.

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