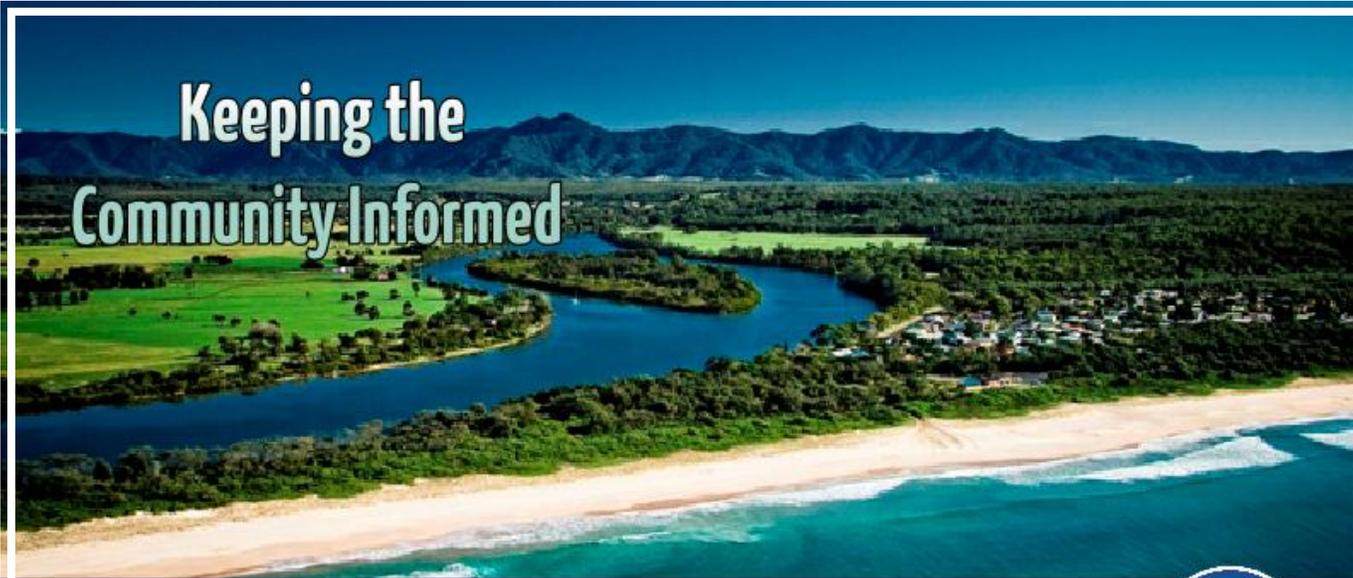


Keeping the
Community Informed



Bellingen Shire
COUNCIL



2011/12 Annual Report

www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au

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Bellingen Shire – a lifestyle region

Bellingen Shire is located on the Mid North Coast of NSW halfway between Sydney and Brisbane and just south of Coffs Harbour. It has a total area of 1,605 square kilometres with a coastline of approximately 10km. State forests and National Parks cover 53% of the rural area. The resident population of the Shire was 13,490 in 2011. Over the past 5 years the population of Bellingen Shire has increased at an average annual rate of 0.8%.

The Shire is located within the traditional lands of the Gumbaynggirr people whose tribal boundaries extend along the east coast of New South Wales from south of Nambucca, north of Woolgoolga and west across the Dorrigo Plateau escarpment.

Bellingen Shire consists of three broad topographical areas incorporating the seaboard around Mylestom, Repton and Urunga, the valleys of the Bellinger and Kalang rivers and the Dorrigo plateau landscapes. Each has its own characteristics and provides a choice in cultural and natural diversity.

The area extends inland from Urunga at the mouth of the Bellinger River and includes its broad and fertile valley with the historic and beautiful town of Bellingen as its regional centre. Further inland the Waterfall Way climbs through the World Heritage Area of the Dorrigo National Park. Just beyond is the tableland town of Dorrigo and the wild Nymboida River. The Dorrigo escarpment forms a natural barrier across the Shire.

The Pacific Highway and north coast rail line provide a strong transport infrastructure linking Sydney and Brisbane. The scenic Waterfall Way, rated number three of Australia's top 10 most iconic drives, also offers easy access from the coast through the lush Gondwana Rainforests of the Great Divide to the New England region. The large regional airport at Coffs Harbour provides a gateway for international and domestic visitors to the Shire.

The links to Coffs Harbour provides significant employment opportunities, commercial and retail services and access to high quality transport, education, health and tourism infrastructure. The Coffs Harbour Education Campus incorporates the Southern Cross University, TAFE North Coast Institute and a senior college providing exceptional learning opportunities.

The Shire is a lifestyle region with an emphasis on cultural vibrancy, liveability and social cohesion. It has diverged over the years and is now a mix of traditional and non-traditional farming. Many of today's residents are artists, craftspeople, writers, musicians and horticulturalists, with approximately 12.1% of employed residents having established home-based activities.

Bellingen Shire is an economy in transition. While the traditional industry base of timber, dairying, potato and meat processing are essential to the economic health of the Shire, emerging and developing industries include tourism which is underpinned by the Dorrigo Rainforest Centre, national parks, cultural attractions and a successful events sector. Aquaculture, agribusiness/processing, arts and cultural industries, organics and regional cuisine and aged care have also developed.

A number of diverse world class businesses are based in the Shire and Coffs Coast region and compete nationally and internationally due to their innovative culture, continuous quest for improvement and access to a skilled and committed workforce.

Bellingen's creative economy distinguishes Bellingen from its neighbours. The physical character of the Shire, of river valleys, varied landscapes, warm and humid sub tropical climate and small and friendly townships, combined with the notion of an economy consisting of skilled artisans and creative enterprises represents a very powerful and precious image.

The events sector is also part of this creative economy. The renowned annual Bellingen Jazz & Blues Festival, Bellingen Energy Festival, Camp Creative, Dorrigo Folk & Bluegrass Festival, Global Carnival and ToastUrunga all add to the Shire's already buzzing cultural life. The Bellingen Readers and Writers Festival, Bellingen Music Festival and the River Festival have also added to the variety of artistic and cultural events on offer. The vibrant monthly Bellingen Community Markets also provides an opportunity to showcase our people and culture.

The Bellingen Show celebrated 122 years in May and has only been cancelled once during that time, in 2009 due to flooding. Despite huge changes in the Bellingen community over this period, the essential character of this very traditional show has not changed with a strong rural emphasis focussed on competitions and judging of cattle, horses, poultry and produce, community participation in pavilion displays and art, and ever popular acts and sideshows.

The 100th Dorrigo Show took place in November and this wonderful event has been showcasing the varied talents of the plateau community and preserving the town's proud agricultural heritage.

Tourism is strengthened by the fantastic climate, a stunning environment, café, market and festival culture and access to a wide range of tourism and recreational opportunities. For lifestyle you can choose the Dorrigo plateau, rural areas, town convenience or beachside living.

In March 2009 two of the Coffs Coast's idyllic villages were counted amongst the Best 100 Towns in Australia, with one proving it has better coffee than Sydney and the other standing out as a gateway to an 'otherworldly atmosphere' of natural beauty.

Bellingen was rated as the 27th best town in the country, while Dorrigo came in at 77 in a poll by Australian Traveller magazine.

Everywhere we're asked the same question: what is our favourite town? Australian Traveller reported. So for our fourth birthday, we set out to answer that much debated question and compiled a list of towns that are unique, beautiful and are often hidden gems.

Bellingen was rated the most well-preserved town on the Mid North Coast and was recognised as 'a laidback town making its evolution from a dairy subsistence to a romantic B&B experience'. You can get better coffee in Bellingen than in Sydney these days.

Dorrigo was praised as 'the gateway to the parks, the beach and the rainforest'.

Statistics on the Local Government Area

Population	13,490
Average Age (years)	46
Australian Citizenship (%)	91.2
Area (sq. km)	1,605
Area National Park and State Forest (Hectares)	85,510
Area National Park and State Forest (%)	53
Gross Regional Product (\$ million) (2010/11)	402.6
Number of Businesses (June 2011)	1,192
Median Sales Prices for Dwellings (\$) (Dec Qtr 2011)	365,000
Length of Rural Sealed Roads (km)	247.7
Length of Rural Unsealed Roads (km)	194.7
Number of Councillors	7
Number of Electors (August 2012)	9,298
Number of Private Dwellings	5,698
Number of Rate Assessments (1 July 2012)	5,974
Total Ordinary Rates Levied (1 July 2012)	\$5,693,596
Total Rateable Land Value (1 July 2012)	1,478,735,093
Total Revenue (\$million) (30 June 2012)	31.03
Number of Employees (30 June 2012)	143
Average Annual Rainfall (mm)	1,520
Temperature . Average Mean Maximum January (C)	29.8
Temperature . Average Mean Maximum July (C)	20.0

Economic Profile

Each year Council produces an Economic Profile of the Shire to assist business and the community to gain an understanding of the Shire and to help guide future growth.

The 2012 snapshot of economic activity in the Shire revealed the population is growing and more people are now in jobs. The estimated number of employed persons in the Shire was 5,651 in the March Quarter 2012, which represented a strong annual increase of 1.2% from the level in the March Quarter 2011. This also represented the sixth quarter of positive annual employment growth.

Community Profile – Demographic Story of Shire at your Fingertips

The profile is delivered online as an interactive website called profile.id and is freely available from Council's website.

The website includes topics on ancestry, changing size of dwellings and equalised household income. The home page, data and notes are designed to tell a demographic story of our community. Improvements to the user interface and interactivity features are aimed at supporting government agencies, professional planners, students, community groups, local businesses and council in their planning and decision making.

The Profile includes data from the 2011, 2006, 2001, 1996, and 1991 ABS Censuses in such a way as to describe how the shire has changed over the last 20 years and in comparison to other relevant areas. The Profile is also complimented with an online Atlas that uses maps to show details where specific groups of people live and highlights diversity within the shire.

Tourism – a big dollar boost

Tourism continues to be a vital driver in the Shires economic life. The quality of product and services has created experiences for visitors which have led to the development of repeat business market for the Shire.

During the past year Destination NSW released new tourism statistics, which were based on an average over the last 4 years to September 2011, showing an increase in total visitor numbers from 226,000 to 253,000 (overnight, international and day trippers). The total spend also increased by 121% from \$28 million to \$ 62 million.

The reason for this increase is the product variety and the natural beauty which the coast, valley and plateau have to offer. Each geographical area attracts its own market segment which in turn creates a rich mixture of visitors.

The events market segment continues to grow with the introduction of new events such as Made in Dorrigo, a market which accepts product only made in the Dorrigo postcode. A real local event with broad appeal, ToastUrunga continues to pack them in each Father's Day. Camp Creative, an icon event of the Shire, continues to offer fresh and innovative activities. Other events which dot the events calendar are the Dorrigo Folk and Blue Grass Festival, Bellingen Energy Fair and the Bellingen Jazz and Blues Festival.

However the one event which has recently passed its 30th birthday is the Bellingen Markets which is held each month. The value of this event can be seen each month with a large increase of visitation to the Shire.

The traditional of the agricultural show continues with the Bellingen and Dorrigo shows each putting on a great display of local produce and competitive events in cattle, horses, poultry and produce.

Council also continues to maintain a strong working relationship with Coffs Harbour City Council Tourism marketing group. Each year a marketing plan is developed to target market segment in our key markets . Sydney and Northern NSW. In the past year there has been a strong emphasis on the use of PR which has resulted in a number of stories appearing in the traditional media outlets. A greater use of social media via web sites, blogs and phone apps has also developed as this new media enables stories to be instantly communicated and to reach a much wider audience than traditional media.

Summary of Development Applications 2011/12

	2011/12	2010/11
Estimated Total Value of Works	\$13.152M	\$38.247M
Number of Development Applications - Residential	122	161
Number of Development Applications - Industrial/Commercial	20	21
Number of Development Applications - Mixed	1	1
Number of Development Applications - Other	48	67
Number of Development Applications - Subdivisions	14	22
Number of Development Applications - Determined	201	272
Number of Additional Lots Created	51	41

Employment Lands Strategy (ELS)

The Draft ELS actively seeks to ensure availability of land for commercial and industrial purposes and the community engagement process commenced in April 2012. The ELS is an important strategic planning document that will accompany the existing Growth Management Strategy that was adopted in 2007 and set the direction for future investment in industrial lands in the Shire.

The ELS has been prepared in response to the recommendations of the Five Year Economic Development & Tourism Plan adopted by Council in 2010. This Plan highlighted a lack of suitably zoned employment land as a key issue that needed to be addressed by Council. The development of the ELS is the first step in addressing this issue.

It covers the whole of the Shire and looks at a wide range of different potential employment generating uses. It considers the existing supply of land and looks forward over a 25 year planning horizon to ensure that sufficient land will be available to cater for projected increases in demand.

The key matters addressed include the need for additional industrial and/or commercial zones. Aged care housing is also addressed, and is one part of a much broader investigation, as is the potential for a caravan park site in Bellingen.

The ELS is an important part of Council's long term strategic objectives in terms of seeking to ensure that any future investment in local industry is not frustrated by a lack of zoned land, by significant development costs or constraints associated with the development of existing zoned land. The 25 year planning horizon that the strategy adopts recognises that economic cycles will change over time and that whilst current investment in industrial land may not be viable, it is vitally important to both protect existing industrial land (as also required by the State Government) and to ensure that the underlying strategy work has already been completed in the event of future investment in industrial activity in the shire.

The strategy aims to provide land associated with each main settlement to provide for population based support services such as light manufacturing and mechanical repairs. Having a viable industrial zone also allows for future rejuvenation of existing centres if historic industrially based activities choose to relocate from town centres to these areas. Additional land around Raleigh & Urunga has also been identified in view of opportunities that may arise from the Pacific highway upgrade.

The ELS also recognises the need for future investment in aged care housing in the Shire. The strategy has considered a range of sites for aged housing in Dorrigo and undertaken a strategic assessment of future employment lands needs for Dorrigo.

In this regard, the strategy identifies a selection of alternative sites for aged care housing in Dorrigo that score highly in terms of relevant criteria and would not in fact require rezoning from Industrial. It also looks carefully at the existing supply of industrially zoned land in Dorrigo and finds that despite the area zoned, the majority of land is either already developed, subject to large potential costs for redevelopment or is Crown Land reserved for public recreation.

The Strategy was publicly exhibited from 5 April to 8 June 2012 with forty six (46) submissions being received, including comments from the Department of Planning & Infrastructure. Submissions were then grouped into categories and key issues determined. In order to address some of the key issues raised it is anticipated that potential amendments to the strategy will need to be considered by Council in 2012/13.

Your Council

Council provides a range of day-to-day services for our local community and is responsible for issues that affect our daily lives. These services include:

- libraries, community centres and halls
- recreation facilities such as public swimming pools and sporting fields
- infrastructure such as roads, bridges, boat ramps, skate parks, public toilets and picnic areas
- water and sewerage services
- environmental and public health services
- waste management and recycling
- controlling companion animals
- planning and development services
- services for specific groups in the community such as children, young people, older people, people with disabilities, indigenous people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Council operates within laws set by the NSW Government with the main powers and responsibilities coming from the Local Government Act 1993 and associated regulations.

Council elections are held every four years with the last election being held in September 2008 and the next election to be held on Saturday 8 September 2012. Each council must have between five to fifteen councillors with Bellingen Shire having seven councillors, one of whom is the mayor who is directly elected by the local community.

The role of the councillors is to set the council's strategic direction and make final policy decisions. Council meetings are held monthly, on the fourth Wednesday, to discuss issues and make decisions on behalf of the local community. You are most welcome to attend these meetings and to watch your elected members at work.

A number of Advisory Committees have been set up to assist council to develop various plans and policies and many community committees (Section 355 NSW LGA 1993) have been established to have the care, control and management of community and sporting facilities.

Council employs a range of administrative, outdoor, technical and professional staff. The general manager is responsible for implementing the strategic direction and policies set by the councillors and managing the work of council staff.

Members of the public are entitled to have access to the majority of council documents. Council may also allow you access to other documents, but this will be a matter for the designated Public Officer to decide.

You could be involved with the decisions made by your Council by

- writing or telephoning Council about issues important to you
- talking to your councillors
- addressing Council during the Public Access Session at the beginning of each Council Meeting on any agenda item
- attending public meetings and forums held on specific issues throughout the year
- lodging submissions through the council's community engagement process

Elected Representatives



Back Row: Crs Sean Tuohy, Bruce Cronin, Dave Scott & Gordon Braithwaite
Front Row: Crs Ian Coe, Mark Troy (Mayor) & Kerry Child (Deputy Mayor)

Cr Mark Troy (Mayor)
1 Mahers Road, BELLINGEN NSW 2454
Phone 6655 1901 Fax 6655 1901
council@bellingen.nsw.gov.au

Cr Bruce Cronin
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Phone 6655 1181 Fax 6655 1181
chairman1@aapt.net.au

Cr Kerry Child (Deputy Mayor)
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Cr David Scott
"Carinya"
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Cr Gordon Braithwaite
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Cr Sean Tuohy
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Phone 6655 0707
seanbellingenngreen@gmail.com

Cr Ian Coe
41 Perrys Road, REPTON NSW 2454
PO Box 2018, MYLESTOM NSW 2454
Phone 6699 1047
iancoe@y7mail.com

Record of Attendance at Council and Committee Meetings

Councillor	Ordinary Meetings	Extraordinary Meetings	Committee of Council - Works
Mark Troy (Mayor)	11	4	2
Kerry Child	11	4	2
Gordon Braithwaite	11	4	2
Ian Coe	9	4	2
Bruce Cronin	8	4	1
David Scott (Deputy Mayor)	10	3	2
Sean Tuohy	11	4	2

Eleven (11) Ordinary Meetings of Council were held on 27 July, 24 August, 28 September, 27 October, 23 November, 14 December, 22 February, 28 March, 26 April, 23 May and 27 June.

Four (4) Extraordinary Meetings of Council were held on 7 November, 30 January, 8 May and 21 June.

Two (2) Works Committee Meetings were held on 24 August and 23 May.

Election of Deputy Mayor

Councillor David Scott was elected unopposed as Deputy Mayor at the Ordinary Meeting of Council held on the 28 September 2011.

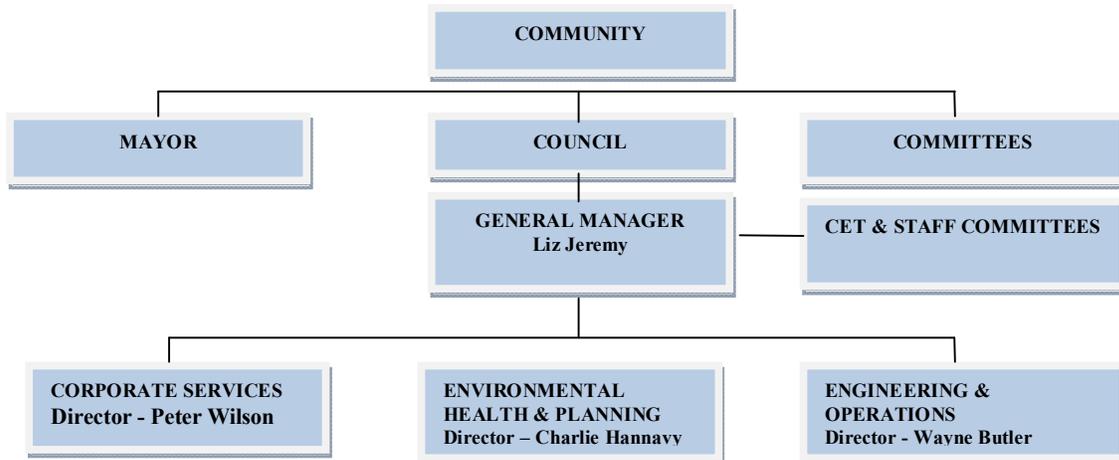
Organisational Structure



**Cr Mark Troy
Mayor**



**Liz Jeremy
General Manager**



- Administration Support
- Financial Management
- Risk Management & Insurances
- Human Resources & OH&S
- Library Services
- Economic Development & Tourism
- Public Cemeteries
- Information Technology
- Records Management
- Fire & Emergency Services
- Corporate Planning
- Organisational Development

- Development Control
- Building Services
- Public Health
- Environmental Management
- Pollution Control
- Law Enforcement
- Community Development
- Strategic Planning
- Community Services
- Flood Plain Management

- Roads & Bridges
- Parks & Recreation
- Plant & Equipment
- Water & Sewerage
- Waste Management
- Vegetation Control
- Quarries
- Buildings & Asset Maintenance
- Emergency Management

Council Executive Team

The General Manager, together with the senior management team form the Council Executive Team (CET) which is responsible for the functional implementation of Council's decisions and directions and provide professional and technical advice to staff, councillors and relevant committee members.

Delegations from Council to the General Manager enable the Council to concentrate on important policy issues and matters impacting on the Shire. The General Manager's delegated powers allow for more efficient and effective operations and expedient implementation of Council decisions.

General Manager	Liz Jeremy	15 November 2010 - present
Director of Corporate Services	Peter Wilson	4 January 2006 - present
Director of Engineering & Operations	Wayne Butler	4 January 2010 . 27 January 2012
Director of Environmental Health & Planning	Charlie Hannavy	22 January 2007 . present

Vision, Mission & Strategic Framework

Vision

A Shire of outstanding natural beauty, scenic rural landscapes and attractive towns and villages with a distinctive local character.

A prosperous and cohesive community enjoying a variety of satisfying lifestyles, a wide range of employment opportunities, and high quality infrastructure, services and facilities.

Mission

To enhance our community's lifestyle and protect our unique environment through effective leadership, community involvement and commitment to service.

Strategic Framework

Leadership and Governance

Goal

Effective community leadership through good governance and sound administration.

Four Year Priorities

- Improve and promote the Management Plan as a shared strategic framework for priority setting and coordination within Council and with other key stakeholders.
- Maintain a sound financial position and examine options for increasing revenue and reducing costs.
- Work effectively with a wide range of community groups and other stakeholders both through existing joint committees and by establishing new partnerships.
- Enhance the flow of information to the community on Council's activities and support necessary community involvement in planning and decision-making processes.
- Enhance information & communications technology resources and consider e-business options.
- Improve governance policies and procedures.
- Continue to develop the skills and capacity of Council's workforce to meet changing needs.

Economic Development

Goal

Increased prosperity through targeted economic and tourism development.

Four Year Priorities

- Implement the Economic Development Plan, including preparation of strategies for creative industries, agribusiness, marine and freshwater aquaculture, and promotion of regional and local cuisine.

- Implement the Industrial Land Strategy, including preparation of a Local Environmental Plan for proposed industrial estates at Urunga and Dorrigo.
- Formulate business strategies to guide Council's involvement in tourism and caravan parks
- Support for community economic development activities, and retention of an investment property portfolio.

Sustainability and Environment

Goal

Sustainable growth, conservation of environmental resources and enhanced quality of life.

Four Year Priorities

- Implement the Growth Management Strategy and Sustainability Framework.
- Ensure Council is well placed to implement the State Government's proposed changes to proposals for strategic and local planning.
- Continue to improve the State of Environment Reporting and give a higher priority to environmental management issues in the Management Plan.
- Prepare a Town Centre Plan for Urunga and continue to implement appropriate development controls and townscape improvement programs to enhance the character of all major centres.
- Undertake floodplain management studies for the Upper Bellinger and Kalang rivers.
- Maintain a strong focus on vegetation management, control of noxious weeds and improving water quality in rivers.
- Implement the management plan for the lower Bellinger River and estuary, and undertake a scoping study to determine longer-term management issues and options for the coastal zone.
- Implement the Environmental Levy and consult with the community with regard to allocation of revenue collected.

Transport and Infrastructure

Goal

A safe, efficient transport system and other high quality infrastructure.

Four Year Priorities

- Introduce upgraded asset management systems and establish an overall plan for Shire roads to set appropriate and affordable standards ('levels of service').
- In cooperation with neighbouring Councils, seek further improvements to the Waterfall Way and provision of an alternative sealed route from Dorrigo to the coast.
- Strongly promote the Shire's interests in relation to planning for upgrading and realignment of the Pacific Highway.

- Finalise planning and if necessary commence works to upgrade water supply systems serving the Bellingen and the Urunga areas and sewerage systems in Bellingen, Dorrigo and Urunga.
- Update business plans for water and sewerage.
- Progress the long-term waste management strategy for the collection and processing of domestic and commercial waste.
- Place selected engineering operations on a more commercial footing and prepare necessary business plans.
- Review allocation of Section 94 contributions in the light of legislative changes.
- Implement the Bellingen CBD study.

Community Wellbeing

Goal

Community wellbeing and equitable access to adequate community services and facilities.

Four Year Priorities

- Update Council's Social Action Plan as an umbrella framework to guide service provision and promote greater community wellbeing.
- Enhance partnerships and coordination with community organisations, government agencies and other providers to secure needed services.
- Maintain efforts to promote understanding and cooperation with the Shire's indigenous population.
- Ensure effective implementation of the Disability Action Plan and associated Development Control Plan.
- Prepare a business strategy for ongoing management of swimming pools within available resources.
- Develop proposals for expanded library facilities and services.
- Complete investigations for a replacement Tidal Pool for Urunga.

The Year in Review

The Review outlines the wide-ranging initiatives undertaken during the past financial year to meet the challenges faced by the Council. The Review also shows the progress made in creating a more sustainable community and in achieving the priorities set out in the current strategic framework.

- Economic and Tourism Development Plan adopted in July 2011.
- Kalang River Water Quality Improvement Plan 2011 adopted in July 2011.
- Provided financial support of \$16,500 for local community environmental initiatives as a component of the Council's Environmental Levy.
- In August 2011 the NSW Government and Councils gathered in Dubbo to begin to develop the plan, Destination 2036, which sets out a long term reform agenda for local government in NSW. An Action Plan was finalised in June 2012 and an Independent Local Government Review Panel has been established to draw on independent expertise to help tackle the issues and identify how councils can best govern and be structured to support the future wellbeing and prosperity of NSW communities. Council is an active participant in this process
- Council won NSW Heart Foundation Healthy Community Award in August 2011 in recognition for its contribution to tackling heart disease. Council won the award for councils with populations of 15,000 or less with its demonstrated leadership and innovation to create a local environment which supports physical activity, healthy lifestyles and a greater sense of community. The incorporation of healthy planning principles within standard local government planning policies and instruments has resulted in environmental changes which will have a positive impact on people's health.
- In October Council was the national winner of the 2011 Heart Foundation Healthy Community Award for councils in its category. The 19-year-old Heart Foundation Awards recognise local government initiatives that have contributed to improving heart health in Australian communities.

Bellingen's entry in the awards showcased three different initiatives. The Bellingen Shire Development Control Plan introduced new policy directions aimed at improving the built environment, including its ability to promote incidental exercise and healthy lifestyle choices. New developer contribution plans provided the opportunity to include integrated design of shared pedestrian and cycle parks to connect key destinations in shire townships. Thirdly, the council has a multi-faceted Safe and Well program for all staff, which covers programs to encourage staff to take part in health and safety activities.

- Exercise equipment was designed for adults installed in Coronation Park, Dorrigo. The equipment was purchased and installed with funds from NSW Aging and Disability and the Heart Foundation Healthy Planning Award

- Council and Essential Energy demonstrated their ongoing commitment to the environment with street lights throughout the area being replaced with more energy efficient lighting. The replacement of more than 740 lights will save 196 tons of carbon dioxide emissions per year which is the equivalent of almost 35 passenger vehicles.

Street lighting currently accounts for 15% of Council's total corporate emissions. The benefits of changing to more energy efficient street lighting seemed the next logical step. The initiative was approved in early 2011 with the final lights being changed in January 2012. The project will make a significant contribution to meeting Council's emissions reduction target of 40% on 1990 levels by 2020.

- Former Australian test cricketer and Captain Adam Gilchrist was a guest of the Bellingen Shire when he unveiled a commemorative bronze sculpture of himself, on Saturday 10 September 2011, to commemorate Adam's birthplace.
- The Coffs Coast hosted the World Rally Championship in September. Bellingen Shire hosted 3 stages of the event and received rave reviews from the international drivers regarding the quality of the roads and the organisation of the event.
- The process to achieve the proper remediation of the old antimony processing plant at Urunga was commenced by the Environmental Protection Authority.
- A new RFS Station was opened in Kalang on 17 September 2011.
- Council engaged Blackadder Associates to carry out a comprehensive organisational review to position Council to deliver upon the aspirations and goals within Council's Integrated Planning & Reporting Framework, better meet state government requirements for the sector and to improve service delivery to the local community.

The review focused on the size and shape of the organisation to improve efficiency, team work and community service delivery. It is anticipated that the second stage will identify commercial ventures, strategic partnerships, resource sharing alliances and other opportunities to strengthen Council's financial sustainability.

- Decision taken to invest over \$6 million on a new sewerage treatment plant in Dorrigo to meet environmental issues.
- Mid North Coast Group of Councils OHS Group were recognised for its contribution to workplace safety by being nominated as a finalist in the 2011 Safe Work Awards.
- Members of Tourism Bellinger and Tourism Coffs Harbour merged to form a new tourism group, Tourism Coffs Coast, to represent the operators and associated industry people on the Coffs Coast. The aims and goals of the new association are to provide a voice for operators in the region and to work closely with both Coffs Harbour City Council and Bellingen Shire Council in the promotion and development of tourism.
- Tender process is underway for repairs to a stretch of the Bowraville- Bellingen road, which was cut by storm damage almost three years ago. The \$10 million project will be funded by the Roads and Maritime Services.

- The announcement of a \$5 million upgrade of the Bellinger River District Hospital is due in part to community action to save the hospital. Council supported the Health Action Group in an advocacy role amidst community concerns that the hospital was being slowly downgraded.
- Natural disaster relief was provided to the flood affected Bellingen Shire Local Government area in January 2012. The emergency service workers and council staff once again performed an outstanding job in the wake of these storms.
- Council supported the planning proposal to rezone the land occupied by the Bellingen Bowling Club from private recreation to medium-density residential.
- The Shire's Community Profile went live on the Council's website in February 2012, providing decision makers in the region with an invaluable tool for informed decision making. The profile is delivered online as an interactive website called profile.id and is freely available from the council's website.
- On 26 January 2012 the community was isolated by floodwaters in both the Bellinger and Kalang catchments resulting in the annual Australia Day celebrations being postponed. On 10 March 2012 the Australia Day Committee hosted a gathering of Award recipients and SES volunteers, on the banks of the Bellinger River at Mylestom, to celebrate Australia Day and to recognise our many volunteers.
- Draft Employment Lands Strategy prepared and community engagement process underway.
- An interdependent telephone Community Satisfaction Survey and Development Application Processing Survey were conducted in March/April 2012 to seek residents' views on the services Council provides level of customer satisfaction and preferred methods of engagement.

The survey asked residents which services and facilities they value and how satisfied they are with the levels of service Council is currently delivering. The assessment of resident satisfaction and importance ratings will enable the Council to identify priorities for improvement and to bench mark performance over time. The survey results will also play a key role in the setting of Council's future strategic direction, reshaping its services, deciding funding priorities and reviewing consultation strategies.

- A Climate Change policy was adopted in May 2012. Climate Change has been acknowledged by Council through its adopted emission reduction target of 40% on 1990 levels by 2020, in line with recommendations by the peak authority on climate change, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and through the development and adoption of the Bellingen Shire Emission Reduction Program.

The Policy provides an overarching framework for Council to guide strategic and operational planning decisions and to develop and implement Adaptation and Mitigation Action Plans.

- Construction of the new \$2million Bellingen Shire Youth Centre 'The Hub+' was completed in May 2012. The new facility was funded by DEEWR and was built on council owned land.

- The Bellingen Integrated Planning & Reporting Framework was developed, community engagement undertaken and each of the documents adopted by Council as follows:
 - Community Engagement Policy and Strategy (February 2012).
 - Shire of Bellingen 2030 Community Strategic Plan (March 2012).
 - Asset Management Plan Framework and Workforce Management Plan (April 2012).
 - Delivery Program, Operational Plan and Long Term Financial Plan (June 2012).
- An internal Service Review Program has commenced and staff have had input into the NSW Treasury Corp's Financial Sustainability Review, due for release at the end of 2012.
- The \$4.5million upgrade of the Raleigh Depot is proceeding with Stage 1 of the project, which included construction of the new stores and offices, having been completed and handed over to Council. Work is underway on Stage 2 which involves the upgrade of the workshop and the project is scheduled for completion in September.
- The CBD streetscapes project to enhance the central business districts of Bellingen, Dorrigo and Urunga completed. The works were funded by the Federal Government under the Commonwealth Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program, and involved an investment of \$1.5million.
- A range of other infrastructure projects were completed in 2011/12 including the Hammond Street, North Bellingen, Retaining Wall, the Moodys Bridge Bank Stabilisation, Stage 2 of bank protection works at Bellingen Island, Hungry Head Road shared cycleway/footpath, reconstruction of Peakes Bridge on Coramba Road Dorrigo, and the reconstruction of Deep Creek Bridge on Tyringham Road, Dorrigo.
- Discussions initiated with the Bellingen Showground Trust in relation to the establishment of a primitive camping area for visitors.

Australia Day – Celebrating Australian Identity and Culture

On 26 January 2012 our towns and valleys were isolated by floodwaters in both the Bellinger and Kalang catchments which resulted in our annual Australia Day celebrations having to be postponed.

Mayor Mark Troy, on behalf of the Australia Day Committee, subsequently contacted and congratulated our Australia Day Award recipients and made arrangements for the celebrations and citizenship ceremony to be conducted once the floodwaters subsided.

On Saturday 10 March 2012 around 100 local heroes and their families gathered on a beautiful afternoon on the banks of the Bellinger River at Mylestom to celebrate Australia Day, at an event hosted by the Bellingen Shire Australia Day Committee.

Both our Award Nominees and Award Recipients were present to receive congratulations and a vote of thanks for their contribution and a job well done.

The event in March also focused on thanking our wonderful State Emergency Service volunteers who work tirelessly for our community and are always there for us in times of crises. The Mayor presented each of the SES Controllers with a memento of the 2012 floods for each of the group volunteers. In so doing he acknowledged the essential work of the SES and offered heartfelt thanks on behalf of our community and the Shire.

The Mayor also congratulated Councillor Kerry Child on her contribution to both Bellingen Shire Council and our community and the honour of being awarded an Order of Australia Medal (OAM) for this important work.

The day provided a great opportunity to showcase the contribution of so many members of our community, who participate and work across a range of important areas including sport, recreation, the arts and community services contributing to the wonderful fabric of our community.

Congratulations to the award winners.

Citizen of the Year	Peter Nance
Young Citizen of the Year	Lachlan Harvey
Community Service Citizen Award	Betty Sawtell
Sportsperson of the Year	Justin Alford
Junior Sportsperson of the Year	Karlie Swanson
Community Group of the Year	Bellingen Lions Club
Community Event of the Year	Bellinger River Festival
Under 18 Creative Arts Award	Erika & Freya Cross

Presentation of Margaret Gundry Order of Australia Medal to Council

The late Margaret Gundry OAM made an enormous contribution to the Bellingen Shire community and it was therefore befitting that her family decided to donate her Medal of the Order of Australia to the Council.

Family and friends gathered at the Bellingen Branch Library on the 3 November 2011 to handover her framed OAM to the Mayor Mark Troy.

The Mayor commented that "Margaret would have celebrated her 83rd birthday on the day and the library site was chosen by the family because of her passion for library services and her commitment to the establishment of a new branch library in Bellingen."

Margaret was a Bellingen Shire Councillor from 1999 to 2008, Citizen of the Year in 1991 and was awarded her OAM in June 2004, for service to the community of the Bellingen district through aged health care and sporting organisation.

Australian Citizenship

Australian citizenship symbolises our unity as a nation. It represents commitment to Australia and its people, the values we share and our common future. It also symbolises the sense of belonging to the country where we have been born or where we have decided to make our home.

Citizenship ceremonies are often presided over by officials including the Australian Governor General, Prime Minister, Government Ministers and local government Mayors.

Citizenship brings with it significant rights and responsibilities, including the right to vote, stand for public office, and travel on an Australian passport. Our rich heritage stems from the contributions made by all who chose to live here.

Council welcomes its 10 new Citizens who received their Australian Citizenship

30 September 2011	Suzanne Cormack	Peregrine Glover	Iona MacDonald
	Taylor MacDonald		
30 January 2012	Wanda Auch		
27 April 2012	Dina Loos	Marc Loos	Anita Menhofer
26 June 2012	Anne Davies	Magali Mantoux	

Statutory Disclosures

Condition of Public Works [Section 428(2)(d) LGA 1993]

Condition of Public Works - Special Schedule No. 7 (as at 30 June 2012)

ASSET CLASS/ASSET CATEGORY		Written Down Value 30/06/12	Asset Condition 30/06/12 (see code descriptors)	Estimated cost to bring to Satisfactory Standard \$000's	Required Annual Maintenance \$000's	Current Annual Maintenance \$000,s
		\$000's		\$000's	\$000's	\$000,s
Public Buildings	Council Offices	3,397	1	0	26	17
	Works Depot	1,578	2	725	19	3
	Emergency Services	1,351	1	0	12	6
	Museum	348	2	50	3	3
	Library	1,934	1	0	11	7
	Childcare Centres	2,936	2	54	0	0
	Parks and Reserves	4,390	3	214	175	152
	Public Halls	3,647	3	81	15	14
	Other	1,778	2	20	73	66
	Amenities and Toilets	662	3	214	50	30
Other Structures	Assets	4,148	3	300	95	66
Public Roads	Sealed Roads	249,140	3	6,387	1,750	4,004
	Unsealed Roads	77,994	3	965	437	1,510
	Bridges	20,042	3	4,010	271	211
	Footpaths	2,805	3	27	11	11
	Kerb & Gutter	7,599	3	108	0	0
	Car Parks	273	3	54	5	1
Water	Treatment Plants	2,187	2	220	60	54
	Reservoirs	7,104	3	200	20	7
	Pipelines	29,306	2	2,552	87	68
	Pump Stations	1,561	2	290	23	15
Sewerage	Pump Stations	4,877	2	1,085	120	119
	Pipelines	20,040	2	2,290	107	108
	Treatment Works	6,816	2	1,550	198	195
Drainage Works	All Drainage	14,607	3	1,012	150	50
Total - All Asset Classes		470,520		22,408	3,718	6,717

Notes

- (1) Satisfactory refers to estimated cost to bring the asset to a satisfactory condition as deemed by Council. It does not include any planned enhancements to the existing asset.
- (2) Required Annual Maintenance is what should be spent to maintain assets in a satisfactory standard.
- (3) Current Annual Maintenance is what has been spent in the current year to maintain assets.

Asset Condition Key (as per DLG Integrated Planning & Reporting Manual)

- 1** Excellent . No work required (normal maintenance)
- 2** Good . Only minor maintenance work required
- 3** Average . Maintenance work required
- 4** Poor . Renewal required
- 5** Very poor . Urgent renewal/upgrading required

In assessing the replacement rate of depreciating assets it is important to note that Special Schedule No 7, which is an unaudited statement prepared in conjunction with the financial report, discloses that the estimated cost to bring assets to a satisfactory standard is \$22.408 million including \$11.551 million for roads and bridges.

Legal Proceedings [Section 428(2)(e) LGA 1993]

In 2011/12 Council's expenditure on legal proceedings was \$60,198 compared to \$96,921 in the previous year. These expenses related to a variety of issues including the seeking of legal advice on Native Title Claims, the purchase of land, unauthorised land activities and management matters.

Matter	Costs \$
Professional Services - Native Title Claims	1,635
Professional Services - Unauthorised Dam	12,741
Professional Services . Waste Contract	9,472
Professional Services . Sale of Land Overdue Rates	3,845
Court Proceedings . Companion Animals	991
Advice . Newry Island Sewerage Works	300
Advice . Governance	4,000
Advice . Rating Anomaly	6,428
Advice . Governance . Councillor Role	10,024
Advice . Raleigh Dairy	5,360
Advice . Activity without approval under EP&A Act	2,062
Advice - Signage	3,340

Elected Members' Expenses [Section 428(2)(f) LGA 1993]

Mayor and Councillor Fees

The fees payable to the Mayor and Councillors are determined by the Local Government Remuneration Tribunal. Each year the Tribunal reviews the fees payable to the Mayor and Councillors and determines the minimum and maximum fees for each category of Councils. The Tribunal in April 2011 considered that an increase of 4.20% in the fees was appropriate

As at 1 July 2008 there were 152 General Purpose Councils and 16 County Councils. Bellingin Shire Council is classified as a Category 4 Council.

The Tribunal determined the range of fees for Category 4 Councils - Rural to be as follows:
 Mayoral fees . Minimum \$8,020 Maximum \$21,770
 Councillor fees . Minimum \$7,550 Maximum \$9,970

At its Ordinary Meeting held on 22 June 2011 Council considered the Tribunal's report and resolved that the annual fee to be paid to the Mayor be \$21,770 and the annual fee to be paid to Councillors be \$9,970.

The total fees paid to the Mayor and Councillors in 2011/12 was \$91,560 compared to \$87,880 in 2010/11.

Councillor support and expenses

Council has adopted a policy concerning the payment of expenses and provision of facilities to the Mayor and Councillors in relation to the discharging of their civic functions. The policy was reviewed in November 2011 and adopted on 30 January 2012. **[See Annexure V]**

A summary of the Councillors' expenses and facilities paid in accordance with the policy during the twelve month period ending 30 June 2012 is as follows:

Expenses	2011/12
Attendance at conferences and seminars	\$13,620
Motor Vehicle Allowances	\$1,885
Councillor support and provision of facilities	\$20,799
Mayoral vehicle operational costs and depreciation	\$23,496

Training of councillors and provision of skill development . \$371

Overseas visits by councillors, including transport, accommodation and other out of pocket expenses . Nil \$

Expenses involved in the provision of care for a child or an immediate family member of a councillor . Nil \$

Senior Staff Remuneration Packages [Section 428(2)(g)]

Council had one Senior Staff position under its structure as at 30 June 2012 that being the General Manager. The total remuneration package of \$185,000 payable to the General Manager included salary, provision of a Council owned motor vehicle and superannuation costs.

Contracts Awarded
[Section 428(2)(h) LGA 1993]

Supplier	Contract	Duration of Contract	Contract Sum \$
28 September 2011 EMS Quarries P/L Holcim (Australia) P/L Quarry Solutions P/L Thora Roadbase Quarry SD & TM Timms	Panel source supply of Quarry materials	1 October 2011 . 1 October 2013 with a 12 month extension provision	\$2,190,000
23 November 2011 Australian Hammer	Procurement of eight (8) out-front mowers under LGP Panel Contract LGP508		\$234,765
24 November 2011 Holcim (Australia) P/L Boral Resources (Country) P/L	Panel source supply and delivery of Ready Mix Concrete to participating MNC member councils	1 January 2012 . 31 December 2012 with a 12 month extension provision	\$200,000
30 January 2012 Komatsu Australia P/L	Procurement of one (1) backhoe loader under LGP Panel Contract LGP707-2		\$165,256
30 January 2012 Mono Pumps Australia P/L	Supply of Low Pressure Sewer Package Pump Stations		\$191,158
22 February 2012 Hastings Co-Operative Ltd	Supply of Bulk Fuels to participating MNC member councils	1 March 2012 . 30 June 2013 with a 12 month extension provision	\$1,250,000
Castrol Lubricants	Supply of Lubricants to participating MNC member councils	1 March 2012 . 30 June 2013 with a 12 month extension provision	\$23,100
28 March 2012 ERM Power	Supply of electricity to Council's contestable sites	1 July 2012 . 31 December 2015	\$433,070
Simply Energy	Supply of electricity for the two (2) unmetered street lighting NMI's	1 July 2012 . 31 December 2015	\$113,300
25 April 2012 Site Group Men At Work Midcoast Traffic Dialtone Traffic Control	Panel source supply of Traffic Control Services to participating MNC member councils	1 May 2012 . 31 March 2014 with a 12 month extension provision	\$1,362,000
23 May 2012 K&J Trucks	Purchase of two (2) crew cab trucks under NSW Procurement Contract 653		\$166,093
27 June 2012 Origin Energy	Supply of electricity to Council's small sites	1 July 2012 . 30 June 2014	\$407,506

Bushfire Hazard Reduction Activities [Section 428(2)(I) LGA 1993]

NSW Rural Fire Service – Mid North Coast Team

A Service Level Agreement between the Councils and the RFS provides the basis for the management and administration of the RFS and the Bellingen and Coffs Harbour Rural Fire Districts.

As a result of the restructuring and integration of the rural fire districts into a single management area, the activity reports and statistics compiled since 1 July 2005 reflect the performance of the team and all the rural fire brigades collectively.

The team incorporates the local government areas of Bellingen and Coffs Harbour and embraces a total area of 2,779 square kms and encompasses the following areas of fire protection responsibility and jurisdiction:

LGA	Total Area	Rural Fire District	NSW Fire Brigade District
Coffs Harbour	1,176 km ²	1,129.46 km ² (96.04%)	46.54 km ² (3.96%)
Bellingen	1,603 km ²	1,588.88 km ² (99.12%)	14.12 km ² (0.88%)

The team is staffed by 7 full-time paid staff. There are thirty eight (38) Rural Fire Brigades (17 in Bellingen and 21 in Coffs Harbour) that service the rural areas and villages of the Mid North Coast Team.

Volunteer Strength	Bellingen	Coffs Harbour
Total RFS Volunteers	991	1,218
Total Active Volunteer Fire Fighters	434	530
Total Probationary members	23	22

Fire Mitigation and Prevention Activities

Activity	Bellingen	Coffs Harbour
Community Education Activities	8 (742 hours)	32 (2,944 hours)
79BA Development Applications	11	29
S96 Amendments	0	0
Hazard Complaints	1	7
Fire Permits Issued	329	740
Fire Permit Escapes	0	0
Hazard Reduction Works	13 burns, 3 mechanical & 9 Aider	10 burns, 3 mechanical & 15 Aider
Area of HR work, Burning or Mechanical	859.63 ha	431.8 ha
Linear kms of Trail Works	215km	285km

Note that changes in the assessment process, whereby councils are required to carry out the initial assessment, together with 79BA now being done by the customer service centre group (RFS) has significantly reduced the number of Development Applications referred to the RFS. Also in the previous year Bellingen District was concentrated on for Community Education Activities whereas this year Coffs Harbour received priority.

The prolonged wet weather reduced the hazard reduction burning across the team area. Whilst there are many hazard reductions planned, the emphasis during the year again was on properties and their preparation for and prevention of bush fire. This included awareness in whether to stay and defend property or to leave early. Street walks were undertaken in some highly fire prone areas and these were carried out in conjunction and co-operation with the NSW Fire Brigade.

The Bushfire Danger Period was evoked on the 1 September 2012 therefore next years reported incidences maybe higher

Fire incidents and brigade responses

Incident	Bellingen	Coffs Harbour
Fire Responses	32	110
Motor Vehicle Accident Responses	24	60
Other Responses	30	35
Total Incident Responses	86	205
Volunteer Hours	3,010 hours	7,175 hours

Training and Development

	Bellingen	Coffs Harbour
Training Courses / Activities	48	48
Volunteer Participants	205	505
Volunteer Man Hours	27,880	68,680

The training courses were carried out by a combined training group across the two council areas. Training hours remained approximately the same as last year

Capital Works Program – Stations and Vehicles

With the completion of the Fernmount station, all Bellingen District stations have now been upgraded to a minimum level of 2 bay stations. Glennifer and Hydes Creek stations are work in progress to provide minor extensions and improvements to amenities. It is anticipated that Glennifer works will be completed by November 2012 and Hydes Creek in March 2013. Improvements to the Bostobrick station will occur in 2012/13 due to budget restraints.

Bellingen Stations	Station Type	Completion Date
Fernmount	Amenities & Improvements	October 2011
Hydes Creek	Amenities	80% completed
Glennifer	Extension	Delayed - commenced October 2012

New vehicles received for Bellingen were:

Valery . New Cat 7 dual cab medium tanker and Bostobrick . new Cat 9 light tanker

Community Development and Planning Multicultural Services [Section 428(2)(j) LGA 1993]

Based on the 2011 Census statistics, 90% of the Shire's population were born in English speaking countries and 94% of persons over the age of 5, speak English only at home. The population of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent is 3%.

While there appears to be no significant need or demand for multicultural programs at the local level, Council does acknowledge that the Shire has some cultural diversity and frames its policies and practices to be flexible enough to accommodate all of its citizens.

Annual financial assistance and in kind support was provided to the Bellinghen Global Carnival, a world music, dance, theatre, electronica and arts festival conducted in Bellinghen over the October long weekend.

Council has not undertaken any specific programs in the period to promote services and access to services for people with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Services for the needs of Children and Young People

Council provides the buildings occupied by the Dorrigo Pre-School, Bellinghen Pre-School, Urunga Pre-School, North Bellinghen Children's Centre and the Mylestom Play Group. It is also responsible for the Urunga Neighbourhood Centre, which is the home for some children's services in the town and provides financial assistance to the Dorrigo Playgroup to assist with rent and insurances.

Council provides premises for the Bellinghen Neighbourhood Centre Inc, auspice of the Bellinghen Shire Youth Service (BSYS). Council secured a grant to build a new Youth Development Centre and the facility now accommodates a number of youth services and programs including the BSYS.

Council owns and operates branch libraries at Dorrigo, Bellinghen and Urunga which provide extensive services and resources for children, particularly during the annual Book Week. The public have free access to computers and the internet at each of the libraries and library staff encourage children to use these facilities through the provision of training and the use of volunteers to help young people make best use of the facilities available.

Small donations are made to each of the schools in the Shire to assist with the provision of prizes for annual school presentation functions. Financial assistance is also provided to the Boy Scouts, Girl Guides and the local Surf Life Saving Clubs on an annual basis.

Council provides playing fields and children's playgrounds in each of the towns in the Shire and in some of the larger rural residential localities. Strategies are also in place to progressively improve children's playgrounds by removal of dangerous equipment and provision of soft-fall areas. Public swimming pools are operated in Dorrigo and Bellinghen and are used regularly by young people.

Youth Week is supported through a financial contribution for an Art Competition and the co-ordination of some of the activities held during the week by the Community Planning Officer. A contribution is also made to match Commonwealth funding for Youth Week activities.

Council's Community Planning Officer secured a Shuttle Bus grant & organised transport for young people from the Dorrigo Plateau and the Urunga Seaboard to attend Youth Week activities in Bellingen.

All branch libraries offered colour-in and write a book review competitions for all ages as part of Children's Book Week which ran from 21-27 August 2011.

During the year Council's Social Plan Advisory Committee also made small contributions to the Dorrigo Youth Clinic. Council is supporting the establishment of a similar clinic in the Bellingen Shire Youth Hub. The Social Plan Advisory Committee also provides financial support to Y2A, (Youth 2 Adult) a program for young people.

\$2,000 is also set aside annually from the Social Plan Advisory Committee budget for the refurbishment of playground equipment.

Council supported and promoted a community Sleep-out event to raise awareness of youth homelessness in the Shire.

In July Bellingen library hosted the ever popular Baby Bounce, which is a program developed by libraries that focuses on providing a fun environment for both baby and parents/carers. Together with library staff, parents/carers introduce their child to a world of words, books, songs, bounces, tickles and finger play, all designed to engage and delight whilst providing the child with essential pre reading skills. The Urunga branch library hosted the program in August before moving to the Dorrigo library in September.

Programs to promote services & access for residents

Council provides administrative support to the Council's Access Advisory Committee and an annual budget to finance the Committee's access projects.

Council's Access Advisory Committee has provided additional street benches within the Shire's central business districts (CBD) for people with mobility difficulties.

Council's Community Planning Officer will undertake a review of the Disability Discrimination Act Action (DDAA) Plan and will establish a Mobility Map, in partnership with the Mid-North Coast Regional Council of Social Development (MNCRCSD). The DDA Plan will be renamed The Bellingen Shire Access and Inclusion Plan 2030. The Access and Inclusion Plan will identify barriers preventing the equitable access to all Council services and facilities. The Plan's comprehensive strategies will be incorporated into Council's Community Strategic Plan 2030 to ensure removal those barriers.

The Church Street public toilet facility in Bellingen's CBD includes an accessible toilet and baby change facilities. An accessible toilet for people with disabilities is located in the Bellingen, Urunga and Dorrigo branch libraries and accessible toilets are also located in Council buildings and parks throughout the Shire.

Council also auspices the activities of the Dorrigo Support Centre, which provides services to frail aged and people with a disability on the Dorrigo Plateau.

A mini bus continues to operate on the Dorrigo Plateau for transportation of disadvantaged residents and to ensure that Dorrigo's elderly people and those with disabilities have access to services and social activities.

The Mayor participates in a weekly radio session at the local community radio station 2BBB and Council encourages public participation in its meetings. Hearing loops have been installed in the Council Chambers to assist people with hearing difficulties and the Chambers are accessible by wheel chair.

Council is a participant in the Local Government & Shires Associations Local-e+ project that is providing Council with tools that enable staff to manage the content of the web site more effectively. Council hosts the Community Directory on its website which is prepared by the Bellingen Neighbourhood Centre with annual financial assistance being provided by the Council.

Access and Equity Activities

Council is committed to developing a Social Plan every 5 years in co-operation with key stakeholder groups and residents to identify the needs of its community and provide or advocate for appropriate and accessible services and facilities for their benefit. Council can then respond to many of the issues identified in the plan, particularly in the building of partnerships, understanding population and demographic trends, ensuring access and equity and improvements to infrastructure and service provision.

Council's Disability Discrimination Act Action (DDAA) Plan identifies barriers preventing the equitable access to all Council services and facilities. The Plan will be reviewed in 2012/13 and will be renamed Bellingen Shire Access and Inclusion Plan 2030. Its strategies will be incorporated into the Council's Delivery Program and Operational Plan.

A summary of the proposed activities and initiatives in relation to access and equity activities to assist identified groups within the community is undertaken every 12 months and is outlined in Council's Management Plan.

An access and equity activity is defined as one which assists Council to:

- promote fairness in the distribution of resources, particularly for those most in need
- recognise and promote people's rights and improve the accountability of decision makers
- ensure that people have fairer access to the economic resources and services essential to meeting their basic needs and improving their quality of life
- give people better opportunities for genuine participation and consultation about decisions affecting their lives.

Council continued to facilitate and provide administrative support for the Bellingen Shire Access Advisory Committee through its Community Planning Officer. The Advisory Committee meets every month with the meetings being facilitated by the Community Planning Officer. The Committee also includes councillor representation and Council's planning professionals consult with the committee regarding access requirements for various Development Applications, when a request is made to waive or modify access provision requirements, as indicated in Council's Development Control Plan.

Another planning initiative has been the development of a Development Control Plan to ensure reasonable access for disabled persons to public facilities, developments and open spaces.

Council's Community Planning Officer organises activities that raise awareness of issues and needs faced by people with a disability and to celebrate International Day of People with Disability. A Disability Tea morning was held in Bellingen library and a Scooter Safety Awareness day conducted in Dorrigo in partnership with the NRMA.

The Ian J Cooper Awards are held every two years by the Access Advisory Committee during May. The Awards recognise local businesses for their consideration of people with disabilities.

Community Development Activities

Council's Community Planning Officer promotes and co-ordinates the Community Builders Funding Program and provides information, assistance and support to applicants.

Relevant community development and service information is distributed to Non-Government Organisations and community groups.

Community edible street gardens were established in Bellingen.

The construction of the Bellingen Shire Youth Hub in Bellingen was completed in May 2012.

Funding of \$10,000 is allocated annually to the Social Plan Advisory Committee to implement Social Action Plan strategies.

The Social Plan Advisory Committee allocated funds to the Dorrigo Youth Clinic, and to the Men's Sheds in Bellingen, Dorrigo and Urunga.

Support and financial contributions were provided to NAIDOC events and other Indigenous projects throughout the Shire

The free use of Council banner poles is promoted to event organisers

Council maintains ongoing partnerships with the Red Cross and the Constable Care & NSW Cancer Council to promote health and safety awareness in the community

A MLAK key system remains in place for accessible toilet facilities

Works Subsidised on Private Land [Section 428 (2)(k) LGA 1993]

No Council resolutions were made during the year that have Section 67 of the NSW Local Government Act 1993 implications involving the completion of work on private land either partly or fully subsidised by Council.

Contributions and Donations [Section 428(2)(l) LGA 1993]

Section 356 of the NSW Local Government Act 1993 enables Council to make donations or provide financial assistance to community groups. In 2011/12 contributions to community organisations totalled \$42,754.

Council also contributed financially towards the emergency services, surf lifesaving clubs and sports fund.

NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS)	\$276,143
State Emergency Service (SES)	\$60,850
NSW Fire Brigades	\$44,933
North Beach and Urunga SLSC	\$24,800
Go Bello Go Sporting Fund	\$1,000
	\$407,726

Human Resource Activities

[Section 428(2)(m) LGA 1993]

Overview

Council has a passionate and committed group of employees who value the opportunity to work locally and contribute in a meaningful way to their community. Council commenced development of a Workforce Management Plan early in 2011 as part of the Integrated Planning and Reporting framework. The consultation and review undertaken to inform our Workforce Management Plan, which was finalised in early 2012, highlighted a wide range of workforce related challenges ahead. Some of these challenges are common to all industries and organisations, some are unique to local government and some are very specific to our locality and our workplace.

In addition, in October 2011, Council initiated an organisational review designed to enable Council to:

- meet the expectations of the Shire of Bellingen 2030 Community Strategic Plan
- meet the challenges of future government reforms
- fulfil its core functions as well as deliver services in the most efficient way

An external consultant, Blackadder Associates, was engaged to assist with this review and as part of this process met with Councillors and staff to discuss a wide range of issues related to the shape and size of our organisation including service standards, processes and procedures, work flow, roles and structure. A significant number of staff contributed their views via group meetings and forums, one on one discussion with the consultant or via written submissions. Feedback from a Staff Reference Group, formed to provide input to the structural review, was also taken into account.

The outcome of the organisational review is the subject of a separate report, %Organisation Structure Review Report+by Blackadder Consultants (February 2012). At a meeting in June 2012, Council endorsed the recommendations made regarding the above review. Since then an implementation plan has been developed in order to transition Council to the new structure and work will continue on these activities into the next reporting year.

The development of the Workforce Management Plan and the outcomes of the organisational review confirmed that if Council is to attract, develop and maintain a workforce that is capable of meeting the aspirations and goals of our community, keep pace with changing expectations, plus address some of the long-standing concerns held by staff then we must invest in, support and motivate our employees in significantly different ways to the past.

Strategies to be adopted in order to address these challenges and the actions and initiatives that underpin these are outlined within Council's Workforce Management Plan. The key priorities for all human resources and organisational development activities are therefore being driven by this Plan.

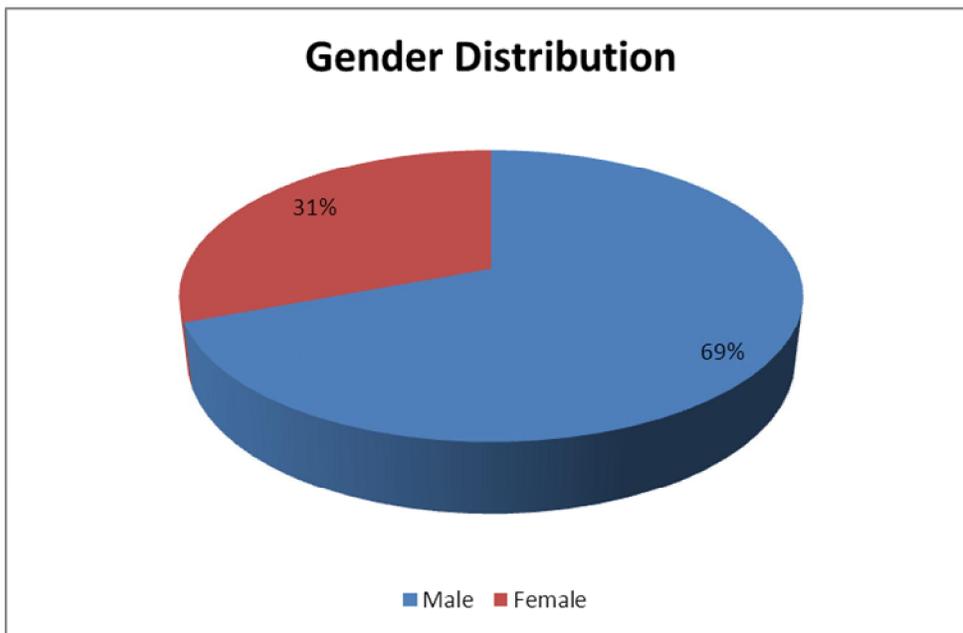
Staff Employment Statistics as at end June 2012

Headcount

Gender	Full Time*	Part Time*	Regular Casual**	Day Labour***	Total
Female	20	18	6	8	52
Male	94	1	4	11	110
Total	114	19	10	19	162
*Staff on fixed term contracts included in above numbers: 10					
**Casuals on Council payroll (predominantly library services)					
***Engaged through third party providers (predominantly outdoor relief)					

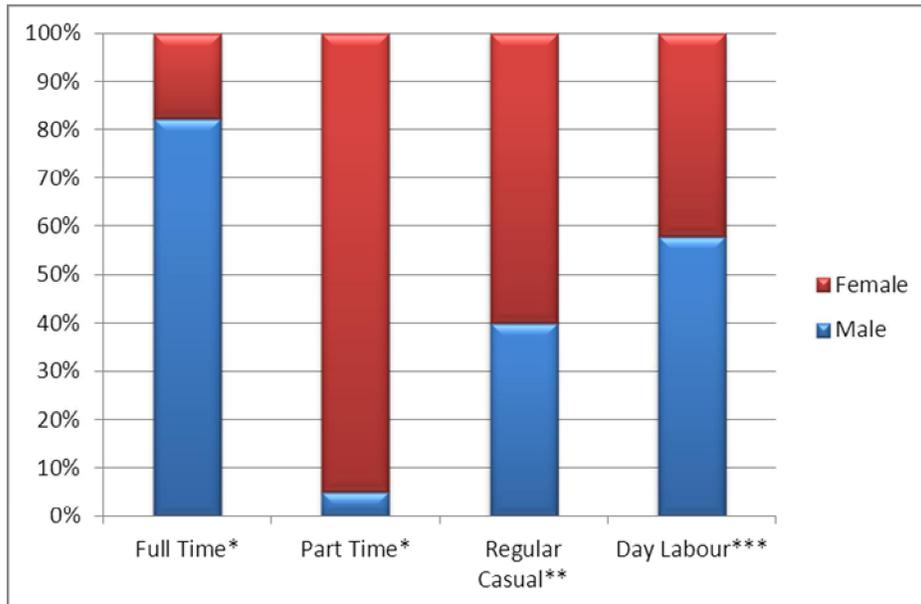
Gender distribution

As at the reporting date Council employed 44 females and 99 males*.



*The above excludes day labour contracted from third party providers, but includes regular casuals and staff on fixed term contracts.

% Female/Male distribution per employment type



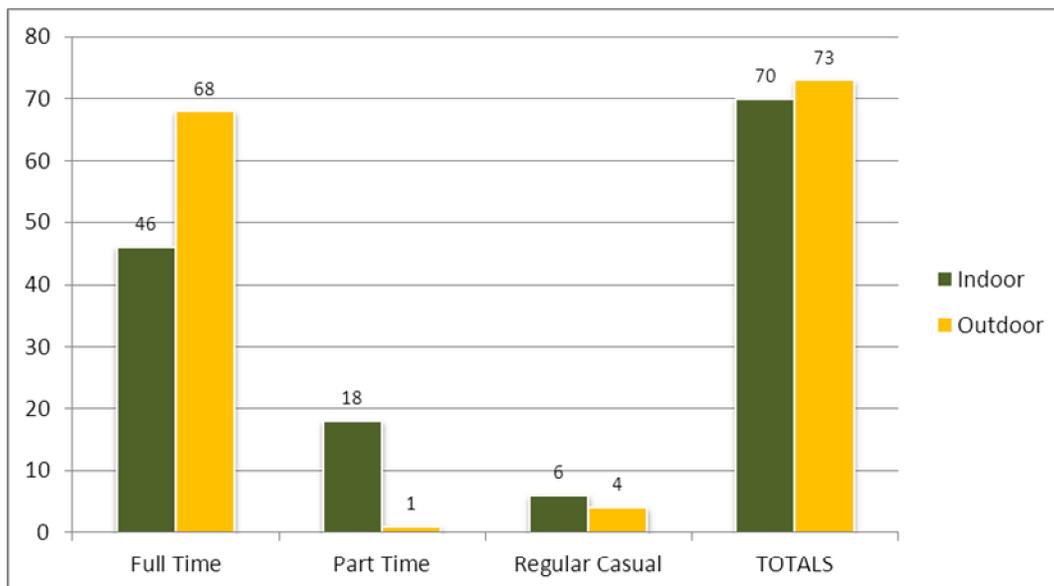
*Staff on fixed term contracts included in above numbers: 10

**Regular Casuals on Council payroll (predominantly library services)

***Engaged through third party providers (predominantly outdoor relief)

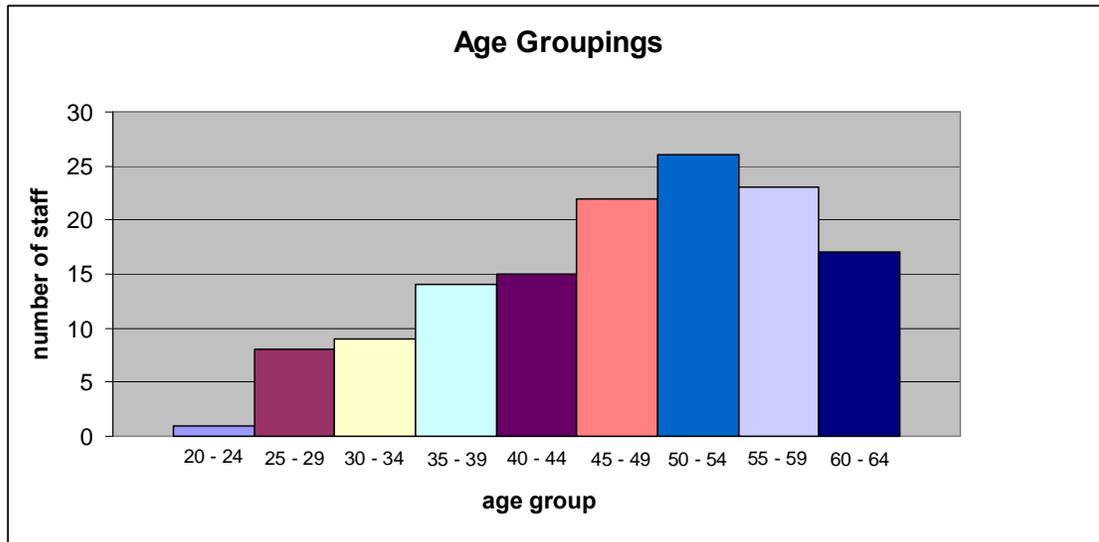
Analysis of Indoor and Outdoor staff numbers*

As at the reporting date, there were 73 (51%) outdoor staff and 70 (49%) indoor staff.



*The above excludes day labour contracted from third party providers, but includes regular casuals and staff on fixed term contracts.

Age Distribution – Full Time & Part Time Employees



A number of initiatives to assist the organisation deal with the challenges of an aging workplace have been initiated, or are proposed, as part of the Workforce Management Plan. These include the expansion of our trainee and student work experience programs, strengthening relationships with local schools, universities and TAFE, participation in the Bellingen Shire Learning initiative, extending the variety of flexible working arrangements available to staff, developing retirement transition plans, reviewing work/task design to minimise injury/strain risks and maintaining staff health management programs.

Recruitment & Selection

A number of labour trends and influences have and will continue to affect Council's ability to recruit to a wide range of positions. These trends and influences include skills shortages in a range of professions and technical specialities, the ageing population, the trend away from full time to part time work, competition from the private sector where wages are, or perceived to be, higher, and the poor image of the local government sector as a desirable career option. To assist Council in recruiting staff required to service the needs of the community a number of strategies have been initiated, or are proposed, as part of the Workforce Management Plan including the expansion of media types to attract candidates, use of online recruitment processes and enhanced pre-employment assessments, and the development of the Bellingen Shire Council on-line careers site. These initiatives have improved efficiencies and time to hire as well as Council's reputation as an employer of choice.

During the year 23 positions were advertised with 20 filled or in the final stages of recruitment. All vacant positions within the structure were advertised and filled in accordance with the merit principle, the NSW Local Government Act 1993, the Bellingen Shire Council Recruitment and Selection Policy and the EEO Management Plan.

In the previous reporting year (2010/2011) Council's average time to hire (i.e. from application closing date to job offer) was 8 weeks. For the financial year ending June 2012, the average time to hire decreased to 7 weeks. It is expected that this rate will at least be maintained or improved upon due to the enhancements introduced to the recruitment process.

Staff Turnover

From 2011/12 Council will be reporting the voluntary turnover rate in line with the definitions contained within the Local Government and Shires Association Annual Human Resources Metrics Benchmarking Survey.

Number of voluntary separations	11	8.3% of headcount	Separations exclude casual and day labour hire, contracts reaching the end of their term, and agreed exits (deed of release, redundancy, medical retirement, death)
Number of retirements	2	1.5% of headcount	Retirements exclude all types of phased retirement (flexible work and leave arrangements)

Headcount in the above analysis is defined as permanent employees (both full time and part time) plus those staff on fixed term contracts.

The main drivers for staff exits, unrelated to retirements or ill-health, are:

- Lack of career opportunity
- Uncompetitive salary
- No reward/recognition for performance

Policy Development

The following employee-related policies were reviewed and updated in consultation with staff:

- Equal Employment Policy
- Public Interest Disclosures . Internal Reporting
- Public Interest Disclosures . Guidelines and Procedures
- Responding to Workplace Bullying and Harassment
- Grievance Handling Procedures
- Internet, Email and Computer Use

Council has commenced integrating into employee related activities the competency profiles developed in consultation with staff in 2010. These profiles set out the standards of behaviour expected consistent with our desired culture and strategic priorities and increases shared understanding and accountability among employees at all levels. The profiles have now been included in position descriptions and incorporated into Council's hiring processes. Work will commence to integrate these competencies into Council's new performance management processes during the next reporting period.

Training and Development

Council continued its commitment to employee learning and development throughout the year. In September 2011 all staff were required to attend Code of Conduct training which was provided by Fraud Prevention and Governance Pty Ltd. In November a program focused on dealing with challenging customer service situations was conducted and in December all Managers and Supervisors underwent training related to the changes to Workplace Health and Safety legislation. In June 2012 training on Council's job evaluation system was provided for managers.

Twelve employees completed their traineeships/apprenticeships with external service providers for the following qualifications:

Civil Construction Supervision Certificate IV	5
Business Services - Frontline Management Certificate IV	2
Civil Construction (Road Construction and Maintenance) Certificate III	1
Water Industry Operations - Water Operations Certificate III	4
TOTAL	12

A program of training for outdoor staff was maintained to keep licences and tickets current including First Aid, traffic control, crane and plant operation, bridge inspection and working in confined spaces.

Employee Relations

Staff maintained their involvement in a number of communication and engagement activities conducted throughout the year including regular Leadership Forums, Staff Consultative Committee meetings and Occupational Health and Safety Committee meetings. In addition, the organisation review was supported by the formation of a Staff Representative Group formed to provide input to the review process and comment on the options and recommendations. Over 50% of staff provided input to the review process either via individual or group submissions.

Employee Health & Safety

Council's Work Health and Safety Management System provides a systematic approach to developing and maintaining a safe and healthy work environment for staff. This approach supports Council's core value of 'Safety First+'. A number of initiatives have been undertaken this year including skin cancer checks for staff, men's health program during November and the hearing conservation training for staff exposed to noise. The hearing program, designed by Bellingen, Gloucester and Port Macquarie/Hastings Councils, was a finalist in the 2011 WorkCover Safe Work Awards. Ongoing review of Council's Safe Work Method Statements helps to reinforce the safest and most efficient work methods.

January 2012 saw the commencement of the new Work Health and Safety Act and Regulations. Council's Work Health and Safety Management System was well placed meet the changes outlined by the Act. Briefings were held for all levels of Council to ensure that each member of staff understood the changes and their responsibilities under the new legislation.

Council is partnering with StateCover Mutual, our workers compensation insurer, in developing and implementing strategies to reduce the cost and impact of injury, through a joint Workers Compensation Improvement Plan. This plan includes a range of activities to focus on prevention of injury and the proactive management of injured workers. In addition, the provision of in-house specialist return to work support means that Council staff have access to effective and sustainable work post illness or injury.

The number of workers compensation claims for the year and time lost to injury is outlined below along with comparative data for the previous three years.

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Number of Workers Compensation Claims	24	26	21	19
Number of claims resulting in %days lost+	13	14	12	11
Number of %days lost+	540	377	181	170

During the year Council's OHS Committee met on a monthly basis, promoting and monitoring OHS across the organisation. The OHS Committee provided incident and accident review, and work place inspections across all work areas. The new Work Health and Safety legislation requires Council to change the way consultation is undertaken with staff. These changes are currently being planned and discussed with employees.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Council provides an Employee Assistance Program to staff. This service provides confidential professional advice, support or counselling on a wide range of issues that can be either personal or work related including conflict at work or home, stress and pressure, family or parenting concerns, relationship difficulties, grief or loss, drug or alcohol problems etc. Staff accessed 47 hours of EAP services this reporting year. This was approximately 20% less hours than the prior reporting year.

Risk Management

The annual external Audit of Public Liability was conducted on the following work processes:

- roads and footpath planning and monitoring
- building certificates and applications
- information gathering
- tree management
- signage
- swimming pools
- playground equipment

Overall, Council's performance in the above areas is trending upwards year on year. Continued focus is required on the management of signs, playground equipment and trees.

Public liability claim costs were lower in comparison to prior years.

	2008-09	2009. 10	2010. 11	2011. 12
Public liability claim costs	\$25,524	\$16,927	\$9,096	\$5,971

Activities undertaken to implement Council's Equal Opportunity Management Plan [Section 428 (2)(n) LGA 1993]

Council's Workplace Equity and Diversity Plan was developed and adopted in September 2009 and remains in place until June 2013. This plan is designed to assist Council to meet its EEO requirements.

Activities undertaken in support of Council's Workplace Equity and Diversity Plan include:

- Updating and re-launching our Equal Employment Policy, Responding to Workplace Bullying and Harassment Guidelines and Grievance Handling Procedures;
- Continuing coverage of the above in Council's employee induction program;
- Maintaining relationships with various employment support services who specialise in recruitment and training strategies for indigenous people and those with a disability;
- Continuing a work experience program for local youth as part of a transition to work support program for people of varying abilities;
- Outsourcing the shredding of confidential documents to Coffs Harbour Challenge, a business staffed by people with disabilities;
- Accommodating requests for flexible work options for a variety of reasons including:
 - temporary part time work post maternity leave;
 - reduced hours due to either family or health reasons;
 - flexible start and finish times based on personal requirements.

External Bodies Exercising Council Functions [Section 428(2)(o) LGA 1993]

The following external bodies exercised functions delegated by Council during the period.

BODY	FUNCTION
EXTERNAL BODIES	
Clarence Regional Library Committee	Library Service
NSW Rural Fire Service	Rural Fire Services
ADVISORY COMMITTEES	
Local Heritage Advisory Committee	Management of local heritage matters
Environment Advisory Committee	Advise Council on environmental matters
Dorrigo Community Services Advisory Committee	Management of Community Service programs on the plateau
Access Advisory Committee	Advise Council on access matters
Arts & Cultural Advisory Committee	Advise Council on cultural matters
Social Plan Advisory Committee	Preparation of Social Plan and advise Council on matters pertaining to the Plan
Local Traffic Advisory Committee	Advise Council on traffic matters
Coastline & Estuary Management Advisory Committee	Advise Council on environmental matters

COMMUNITY COMMITTEES (SECTION 355 NSW LGA 1993)	
Australia Day Committee	Australia Day Activities
Dorrigo Community Centre	Care, Control and Management of the Centre
Brierfield Hall	Care, Control and Management of the Hall
Urunga Literary Institute & Senior Citizens Centre	Care, Control and Management of the Centre and the Literary Institute Hall
Dorrigo Saleyards	Care, Control and Management of the Saleyards
Burdett Park, Fernmount	Care, Control and Management of the Park
Urunga Recreation Reserve	Care, Control and Management of the Reserve
Bellinghen Island Reserve	Care, Control and Management of the Reserve
Mylestom Hall	Care, Control and Management of the Hall
Deervale Hall & Recreation Reserve	Care, Control and Management of the Hall & Reserve
Thora Hall	Care, Control and Management of the Hall
Bellinghen Memorial Hall	Care, Control and Management of the Hall
Megan Hall and Recreation Reserve	Care, Control and Management of the Hall and Reserve
Hickory House	Care, Control and Management of the Centre
Bellinghen Citizens Centre	Care, Control and Management of the Centre
Dorrigo Recreation Reserve	Care, Control and Management of the Reserve
North Dorrigo Recreation Reserve	Care, Control and Management of the Reserve
Raleigh Hall & Recreation Reserve	Care, Control and Management of the Hall & Reserve
North Bellinghen Children's Centre	Care, Control and Management of the Centre
Bellinghen Shire Visitor Information Centre, Urunga	Care, Control & Management of the Centre
Bellinghen/Connell Parks	Care, Control & Management of the Parks
Bellinghen Valley Historical Society	Care, Control & Management of the Bellinghen and Urunga Museums
Bellinghen Youth Development Centre	Care, Control & Management of the Bellinghen Shire Youth Hub

Controlling Interest in Companies [Section 428(2)(p) LGA 1993]

Southern Phone Company Limited

Council is a shareholder in the company, a local government-owned telecommunications provider. There are 41 councils that hold two shares each in the unlisted Public Company, purchased for \$1 each. The company is a national full-service telecommunications provider offering fixed line, mobile and internet services to customers in all states of Australia.

In November 2002 Council resolved to make application to the Southern Phone Company for two shares at \$1 each, being one A Class share and one share in the B to ZZ class. Council's liability is limited to the value of its shares. Should the venture fail there can be no call on shareholders for funds.

The company declared a dividend of \$1,350,000 for 2011/12 with a dividend of \$19,214.03 being distributed to Council. The dividend is based on a formula where 20% (\$270,000) is split equally among all 41 shareholders and 80% (\$1,080,000) is determined by the proportion of revenues generated from each council area. The total revenue was \$3,458,935.36 and the revenue from the Bellingen area was \$40,446.08 or 1.17%.

Partnerships, Co-operatives and Joint Ventures [Section 428(2)(q) LGA 1993]

Coffs Coast Regional Waste Services

In July 2004 Council resolved to participate in the Coffs Coast Regional Resource Recovery Scheme with Coffs Harbour City Council and Nambucca Shire Council.

The project involves the full recovery and treatment of waste from the three Council areas including collection, recycling and disposal. Putrescible waste from the region is collected and processed at a waste processing facility at Englands Road, Coffs Harbour. The strategy, although maintaining each Council as a separate entity, enables a consistent, sustainable and economical approach to waste management in the area.

In accordance with the signed agreement Coffs Harbour City Council administers the contract on behalf of the Councils.

Mid North Weight of Loads Group

Member of the Group which enforces vehicle weight limits to reduce damage to council classified roads and thereby decreasing road maintenance costs.

Regional Procurement Initiative

Council is a participating member with other North coast councils in the Hunter Valley Councils initiative.

Statewide Mutual Limited

A self-insurance mutual liability scheme aimed at providing members with cost effective public liability, professional indemnity, fidelity guarantee and property insurances and to promote good risk management practices to minimise the occurrence and effect of claims.

StateCover

A self-insurance mutual providing workers compensation insurance for Council.

Amount of Rates & Charges Written Off [Section 428(2)(r) LGA 1993]

The total value of rates and charges written off for the year 2011/12 was \$547,727.62 compared to \$500,838.71 in 2010/11.

ITEM	AMOUNT
Pension Rebates	504,367.15
Rates	19,098.89
Water Rates	147.37
Water Usage	17,636.14
Sewerage Rate	266.87
Sewerage Usage	2,986.10
Domestic/Commercial Waste	691.22
Legal Fees	424.86
Interest	1,878.26
Interest . Water Usage	230.76

The total amount of rates and charges written off as pensioner rebates during 2011/12 was \$504,367.15 compared to \$487,873.37 in 2010/11, \$488,970.97 in 2009/10 and \$480,198.08 in 2008/09.

Overseas Visits by Councillors, Staff and Other Persons While Representing Council [General Regulation 2005 Clause 217(1)(a)]

Council was not represented at any overseas events in 2011/12.

Planning Agreements Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 Section 93G(5)

Council did not enter into any planning agreements during 2011/12.

National Competition Policy (NCP) [General Regulation 2005 Clause 217(1)(d)]

National competition policy is being applied to government businesses at all levels throughout Australia and Council has adopted the principle of 'competitive neutrality' to its business activities as part of the NCP program.

Competitive neutrality is based on the concept of a 'level playing field' between persons competing in a market place, particularly between private and public sector competitors.

Essentially, the principle is that government businesses, whether Commonwealth, State or Local, should operate without net competitive advantages over other businesses as a result of their public ownership.

The underlying philosophy is that a 'level playing field' will enhance competition. Competition can promote greater efficiency and lower costs to government and the community. The government recognises that policies to enhance competition may have social impacts. However, if the application of competition policy is thought to impose net costs on the community, and this is supported by a benefit/cost analysis, then an exemption from the application will be allowed.

In relation to local government, it is accepted that some business activities will have a significant economic impact. The threshold of \$2M annual sales turnover/annual gross operating income has been chosen, in consultation with local government, as a reasonable measure of economic significance for the purpose of applying a corporatisation model and pricing requirements. In these cases, the benefits of applying competitive neutrality are expected to outweigh the costs.

Category 1 Business Activities (Annual Turnover > \$2M)

Bellingen Shire Council Water Supply and Sewerage Services are established as separate Special Rate Funds. As the total annual operating revenues exceed \$2M they are both defined as a 'Category 1' Business Unit.

Local Government Water Supply and Sewerage Businesses are permitted to pay an annual dividend from its water supply or sewerage business surplus. The maximum dividend payable for the Water Supply Business in 2011/12 was \$116,262 although no dividend was actually paid, as council does not satisfy the criteria in the Guidelines for Best Practice Management of Water Supply and Sewerage. No maximum dividend was applicable for the Sewerage Business.

Category 2 Business Activities (annual Turnover < \$2M)

Council has identified its quarry operations as Category 2 Business Activities as this business has an annual turnover of less than \$2M but the activities are considered to be significant in a local context.

The implementation and application of the NCP guidelines are reviewed annually as part of the process of preparing the financial reports.

NCP Complaints Handling Mechanism

In 1994 a Complaints Policy was adopted and the policy statement was updated in January 1998 to make special reference to Competitive Neutrality Complaints. No Competitive Neutrality complaints were received in the year ended 30 June 2012.

Stormwater Management Services [General Regulation 2005 Clause 217 (1)(e)]

This requirement applies where a Council has levied an annual charge for stormwater management services. It requires a comparison of the actual services made available by the Council during the year (measured in accordance with the criteria set out in the relevant management plan) with the projected services that were proposed to be made available (outlined in the management plan relating to the year concerned), together with a statement of the reasons for any difference between them.

Council did not levy an annual charge for stormwater management services in 2011/12.

Companion Animals Act – Compliance Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 Clause 217(1)(f)

Companion Animals registered in 2011/12 was 159 compared to 267 in 2010/11.

Companion Animal Management Funding

Registration commissions	2,688
Impounding fees, charges & fines	3,715
Total Income	\$ 6,403

State Emergency Services

Introduction

The SES is a community based rescue organisation dedicated to helping the community in times of need following floods, storms and other emergencies. The SES provides qualified volunteers to respond to flood and storm threats, minimise damage to properties, and rescue people who are endangered, trapped or injured. In addition the SES provides assistance to other emergency service agencies including the NSW Police, NSW Fire Brigades, NSW Ambulance Service and the Rural Fire Service.

Membership

Unit	Established	Unit Controller	Membership
Dorrigo – Railway St	1983	Ellie Luhr	25
Bellingen – 19 South St	1960	Toby Cuthel	20
Urunga – 7 Orara St	1970	Merv Rose	26

Training

Training was conducted on all core combat roles throughout the year with members contributing numerous hours towards maintaining their qualifications and skills.

Training Course	Urunga	Bellingen	Dorrigo	Total
Swim Test		9		9
Senior First Aid		7	4	11
Storm and Water Damage	6			6
Chain Saw Cross Cut and Limping			1	1
Chain Saw Felling		2		2
Traffic Control for Emergency Services			3	3
Introduction to Safe Driving	16	14	11	41
Total Number of Volunteers	22	32	19	73

Operations

The local units were involved in 168 operational activities (2010/11 . 76 activities) and provided a total of 3,736 operational hours service to the community during 2011/12 (2010/11 . 2,487 hours).

Unit	Tasks	Personnel	Hours
Urunga	41	189	515
Bellingen	108	62	2,952
Dorrigo	27	95	269

Activities	Number	Activities	Number
Road Crash Rescue	27	Ambulance Assist	1
Storm	6	General Rescue	10
Rescue - Flood	3	Rescue - Animal	3
Flood	108	Other	10

Community Service Activities

Support to Council	35
Community Tasks	22
Meetings	28
Working Bees	15
Training	150
First Aid (Training & support to community activities)	20
Total	270

Equipment and Accommodation

The Shire has three updated SES buildings that are at a level of operational capability that can handle future emergency situations.

Flood Boats & Road Crash Rescue Equipment

The Units now maintain and operate five (5) flood rescue boats. In addition, the Shire has two (2) road rescue Units to support.

Vehicles

The NSW SES has invested large amounts of time standardising plans for purpose built vehicles to better meet the operational needs of the community, the service and the volunteers. The Shire currently has two (2) Category 1 heavy road rescue vehicles and four (4) Category 3 vehicles which it operates in the Shire as well as Out of Area operational support.

Currently there are three (3) vehicles due for replacement under the SES/Bellingen Shire Replacement Program. As from 1 July 2012 all SES vehicle replacements will be under the SES Strategic Disaster Readiness Package.

Unit	Make	Type	Purchase Date	Replacement Date
Dorrigo	Ford Courier	3	July 2005	2013/14
Dorrigo	Isuzu NPR 450	1	January 2009	2019/20
Bellingen	Toyota Landcruiser	3	March 2003	2011/12
Bellingen	Toyota Hilux	3	March 2003	2012/13
Urunga	Toyota Landcruiser	3	October 2001	2010/11
Urunga	Isuzu FRR500	1	October 2000	2010/11

Flood Planning

The Unit has a current Flood Plan for the Bellingen Local Government Area which was endorsed by the Local Emergency Management Committee in July 2006. The SES is currently reviewing the Flood Plan with the draft plan to be submitted to the LEMC in 2012/13.

Other Activities

The Units currently assist the local community with activities such as the Bellinghen Jazz Festival, Lions Club Fire Works display, Anzac Day Ceremonies, ToastUrunga, Carols by Candle Light, Relay for Life, Dragon Boat Races, Dorrigo Blue Grass Festival, Bellinghen & Dorrigo Shows, Camp Creative, Council Banners, Westpac Helicopter, local schools and Cycle Racing.

Funding and Council Support

In order for the Bellinghen Shire SES to continue to service the growing community, as it has for the past 55 years during times of natural and man-made incidents or emergencies, particularly flood and storm responses, the SES requires council funding and support to be maintained. The assistance from Council is greatly appreciated and as such the Units are proud to be able to service the Council and community of the Bellinghen Shire.

Financial Management

Financial Statements 2011/12

The Audited 2011/12 Financial Statements and Auditor's Report were presented to the public at the Ordinary Meeting of Council held on 28 November 2012. A copy of the reports can be viewed on Council's website.

Income Statement

The operating result from all activities was a deficit of \$2.1 million in 2011/12 compared to a surplus of \$1.071 million in 2010/11. This result includes grants for capital purposes of \$3.6 million. The expenditure of these grants is not recorded in this Statement but in the Balance Sheet and when excluded for comparative purposes, the deficit increases to \$5.728 million compared to a deficit in the previous year of \$3.683 million.

Total income increased by \$1.164 million (3.90%) primarily due to a \$1.97 million (23.00%) increase in operating grants and contributions. Contributing to this increase was the receipt of the first instalment of the 2012/13 Financial Assistance Grants (FAGs).

Expenses increased by \$4.349 million (15.10%), resulting from increases in materials and contracts of \$3.115 million (38.20%) and depreciation of \$1.013 million (12.50%). The increase in materials and contracts was mainly due to the flood restoration works and the increase in depreciation expense was due to the full year impact of the revaluation of infrastructure and the change in depreciation calculations resulting from the condition assessment measurements.

Council Functions/Activities – Financial Information [Financial Statements Note 2(a)]

Activity	Revenues \$'000		Expenses \$'000		Operating Result \$'000		Assets Held \$'000
	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	
Governance	0	0	215	158	(215)	(158)	20,727
Administration	225	591	2,391	4,796	(2,166)	(4,205)	27,493
Public Order & Safety	1,126	542	1,257	1,272	(131)	(730)	4,936
Health	166	11	691	476	(525)	(465)	447
Environment	498	2,909	919	3,920	(421)	(1,011)	1
Community Services & Education	288	1,781	1,145	488	(857)	1,293	6,108
Housing & Community Amenities	2,581	188	3,683	1,479	(1,102)	(1,291)	18,803
Water Supplies	2,839	2,733	2,248	2,239	591	494	45,209
Sewerage Services	2,127	2,348	2,350	2,617	(223)	(269)	35,696
Recreation & Culture	31	(298)	927	1,814	(896)	(2,112)	25,797
Mining, Manufacturing & Construction	93	78	166	180	(73)	(102)	236
Transport & Communication	5,100	9,717	8,090	13,382	(2,990)	(3,665)	364,329
Economic Affairs	329	186	378	326	(49)	(140)	8,536
Total - Functions	15,403	20,786	24,460	33,147	(9,057)	(12,361)	558,318
General Purpose Revenues	8,961	10,247			8,961	10,247	
Total	24,364	31,033	24,460	33,147	(96)	(2,114)	558,318

Balance Sheet

Cash and Investments as at 30 June 2012 totalled \$32.789 million compared to \$32.01 million in 2010/11 due to the positive cash flow results from operations (which excludes non-cash expenses such as depreciation and amortisation). Receivables decreased by \$3.207 million due to RMS grants receivable at the end of the prior year relating to flood damage work activity.

Infrastructure, property, plant and equipment increased by \$20.697 million due to the revaluation of water and sewer network assets of \$19.0 million and additions of \$10.8 million offset by depreciation of \$9.144 million.

Working Capital

The Net Current Asset position at year-end of \$33.450 million is an important financial indicator as it discloses the working capital available to Council to fund day to day operations and finance infrastructure and new community projects.

However included in Current Assets are assets of \$14.029 million which are restricted by regulation or other externally imposed requirements and therefore are not available for other than their restricted purpose.

After funding General Fund (\$12.051M), Water (\$13.065M), Sewerage (\$6.488M) and Domestic Waste (\$993,000) internal and external restrictions, Council has General Funds of \$853,000 to finance working capital needs. This compares to unrestricted funds of \$2.948 million in the previous financial year.

[Note: the working funds balance included an outstanding accounts receivable balance which mainly related to flood repair and State Road works. As a result of the accounts receivable balance, a transfer of \$1,494,078 from the Infrastructure Replacement Reserve to the General Fund was required to accommodate the day to day operations. Upon receipt of the funds relating to the flood repair and State Road works, the \$1,494,078 was reinstated back into the Infrastructure Replacement Reserve. As a result of the transfer, the adjusted working funds at 30 June 2011 was \$1,453,922]

The reduction in working funds in 2011/12 of \$600,922 can be largely attributable to the year-end transfers to Internal Reserves of \$50,000 (Information Technology), \$128,662 (Employee Leave Entitlements) and \$293,754 (Raleigh Works Depot Upgrade).

	Water \$'000	Sewer \$'000	Waste \$'000	Gen \$'000	Total \$'000
Current Assets	13,133	6,543	993	17,711	38,380
Current Liabilities	68	55	0	6,312	6,435
Add back ELE	0	0	0	1,505	1,505
Less: Restrictions (External)	3,935	2,335	0	7,759	14,029
Less: Restrictions (Internal)	0	0	0	4,292	4,292
Net Funds	9,130	4,153	993	853	15,129

Council has internally restricted \$896,000 to fund non-current employee leave entitlements, which represents 34% of current leave entitlements, compared to 28% as at 30 June 2011. This funding is considered adequate given that the annual leave component is traditionally provided for in Council's current year budget.

Financial Indicators

The key indicators disclosed in the Financial Statements are:

RATIO	PURPOSE	2012	2011	2010	2009
Unrestricted Ratio	To assess the adequacy of working capital after excluding all restricted assets and liabilities	2.13	2.93	4.16	3.83
Debt Service Ratio	To assess the degree to which revenues are committed to the repayment of debt	2.9%	0.9%	1.2%	1.8%
Rate Coverage Ratio	To assess the degree of dependence upon revenues from rates and annual charges	31.0%	32.4%	32.9%	34.8%
Outstanding Rates %	To assess the impact of uncollected rates and charges on liquidity and the adequacy of recovery efforts	9.4%	7.2%	9.1%	12.3%
Asset Renewals Ratio	To assess the rate at which assets are being renewed against the rate they are being depreciated.	0.79	0.51	0.69	0.61

The Unrestricted Ratio excludes all current assets and liabilities that are restricted for specific purposes such as water, sewer, domestic waste management and specific purpose unexpended grants & contributions. This ratio is before setting aside cash to fund internal restrictions relative to the general function. The ratio of 2.13 compares to the Group 11 Councils average ratio of 3.84 and a State average of 2.71 for 2010. A ratio of 2 or better is generally viewed by the industry as good.

The Debt Service Ratio has increased due to an increase in debt servicing costs. The ratio of 2.90% compares with the average of 3.97% for Group 11 Councils and a State average of 4.99% in 2009/10.

The Rate Coverage Ratio shows that 31.00% of the Council's income is derived from rates and charges. This compares to the average of 37.28% for Group 11 Councils and a NSW State average of 47.26% in 2009/10.

The Outstanding Rates and Charges Ratio of 9.40% has increased on the previous year and is considered too high and reflects the delay in debt recovery action. The Group 11 Councils ratio was 8.26% and the NSW State average was 5.31% for 2009/10.

The Asset Renewals Ratio is a new ratio established by the Division of Local Government from 2006/07 and is aimed at assisting readers of the financial statements to assess Council's performance in respect to the renewal of its infrastructure assets against the level of infrastructure asset deterioration, as represented by the depreciation expense.

The ratio for 2011/12 highlights that Council expended about 79 cents on asset renewals for every \$1 of estimated reduction in asset condition for the same period. In essence the overall infrastructure has deteriorated during the year. This compares to the average of 94 cents for Group 11 Councils and a NSW State average of 84 cents in 2009/10.

Overall the financial indicators show that Council's short term financial position is sound.

Special Variations in General Income

Road Levy

The ordinary rates include a 5.00% Road Levy which was approved by the Minister in 1996/97. The Levy applies to all rateable land within the Shire. The income generated in 2011/12 amounted to \$274,938 and the balance of the internal restriction as at 30 June 2012 was \$385,780.

Projects funded in 2011/12 were the Hammond Street, Bellingen Retaining Wall \$82,364, the Shire Bridges Maintenance Program \$192,574 and an allocation to the Roads to Recovery Program of \$275,753.

Your Environmental Levy at Work

In July 2005 Council received Ministerial approval for a special variation in general income of 4.0% to introduce an Environmental Levy to help fund environmental projects. The income generated in 2011/12 amounted to \$219,950 and the balance of the internal restriction as at 30 June 2012 was \$268,292.

Projects	Expend 2011/12	Expend 2010/11
Water Quality monitoring and assessment of Bellinger and Kalang Rivers		
Funding program for community groups to undertake environmental projects	1,691	21,440
Pedestrian and Mobility Plan (PAMP)	30,000	30,000
Bellingen Island Reserve – bush regeneration		27,387
Estuary Action Plan Stage 2 Lower Bellingen	1,276	
Ecosystem Health Monitoring	12,947	18,939
Dangar Falls Pathway Upgrade	6,060	218
Sustainability Projects	8,696	15,171
Coastal Planning	6,535	14,440
Rock Fillets	1,003	
Improving Stormwater Management	29,200	24,915
Noxious Weeds Action Program	50,000	50,000
River Oysters Program		34,513
Dangar Falls Vegetation Management (Stage 1)		6,518
Dangar Falls Biodiversity and Management Plan	12,507	
Healthy Rivers Program	27,641	
Connect With Your River	19,772	
Total	\$207,328	\$243,541

Public's Right to Access Government Information

Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (GIPA Act)

The GIPA Act came into effect on 1 July 2010 and replaced the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) and Section 12 of the NSW Local Government Act 1993.

The aim of the GIPA Act is to provide an open, accountable, fair and effective government. This means that all government agencies in NSW are required to make more information freely available and more processes and documents of Government will be available following an application process.

The right to information reforms mean that formal applications for access to information are a last resort.

To access information from Council:

- search our website for information including our policy documents, current publication guide (May 2011), disclosure log and register of government contracts.
- ask us what information we will proactively make available to the public, in addition to the information contained on our website. We are encouraged to release as much government information as possible, in an appropriate way and free of charge (or at the lowest reasonable cost).
- ask for specific information, for example where no third party personal information is involved
- lodge a formal application for access to information as a last resort, if you haven't been able to get the information you need in any other way.

To find out more about the public's rights to accessing government information, visit the Council's website or the NSW Office of the Information Commissioner (OIC) at www.oic.nsw.gov.au

The OIC is an independent statutory authority and promotes awareness of the new law, provides assistance and training to government agencies and the public, and handles complaints.

In 2011/12 nine (9) formal applications for access to information were determined compared to two (2) formal applications in 2010/11.

Privacy & Personal Information Protection Act (PPIPA)

When accessing council documents you need to be aware of the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998, which helps to protect personal information and the privacy of individuals. Council has complied with the Act by developing a Privacy Management Plan and ensuring that staff are aware of the requirements regarding public access to information.

No reviews were conducted as provided for under Part 5 of the Act.

Privacy & Health Information Protection

Access to information will also be limited in accordance with the Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002. This Act provides for the protection of health information.

Part II

Audited Financial Reports [Section 428(2)(a) LGA 1993]

The Reports were adopted on 28 November 2012 and a copy of the Financial Statements, including the Auditor's Report, can be accessed on Council's website.

Part III

Principal Activities [Section 428(2)(b) LGA 1993]

In accordance with the NSW Local Government Act 1993, quarterly Management Plan reviews are presented to Council on each Principal Activity. The Year in Review section provides a snapshot of the achievements during the reported year.

Part IV

State of the Environment Report 2011/12 [Section 428(2)(c) LGA 1993] [General Regulation 2005 Clauses 217(2) and 218-226]

The Regional State of the Environment 2012 (Regional SoE) is the first prepared for the Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority (CMA) Region of NSW. It involved collaboration between the twelve (12) general purpose councils along the Region's coast, from Port Macquarie-Hastings Council in the south to Tweed Shire Council in the north and included three (3) county councils and the Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority (CMA).

It aims to:

- report on environmental condition at both a regional level and a local level for the 2011/12 Financial Year
- satisfy the requirements of the NSW Local Government Act 1993, which requires a State of the Environment (SoE) report in the year of an ordinary election
- provide environmental benchmarks for councils and natural resource managers to make informed decisions.

The Regional SoE utilises both state and local data. The State data is used to report on the Northern Rivers CMA Region and the local-level data is used to report on the council region which is made up of the twelve (12) participating local government areas.

Initiated by the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet and brokered by the Northern Rivers CMA, the Regional SoE Report Project commenced in 2009, with a project working group developing a set of indicators specifically for the reporting region. The report is funded by the fifteen (15) participating councils with in-kind support from the Northern Rivers CMA who host the project officer. By working together, the councils in partnership with the CMA are of the view that this report will inform not only communities, but also local and state government, and provide a regional perspective on the current environmental state while also providing locally-relevant information.

Part V

Payment of Expenses and Provision of Facilities For Mayors and Councillors Policy [Section 252 LGA 1993]

Objective

The objective of the policy is to ensure Council complies with the provisions of Sections 252 and 253 of the NSW Local Government Act 1993, Clause 403 of the NSW Local Government (General) Regulation 2005, Councils Code of Conduct and the Guidelines released by the Department of Local Government (October 2009) concerning the payment of expenses incurred or to be incurred by, and the provision of facilities to, the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor and Councillors in relation to discharging the functions of civic office.

[Note: This policy excludes annual fees paid to the Mayor and Councillors under sections 248-251 inclusive of the NSW Local Government Act 1993]

Policy Statement

In accordance with Section 252 of the NSW Local Government Act 1993, Council will pay expenses incurred or to be incurred, and provide facilities for, the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor and Councillors to enable them to discharge their functions of civic office.

The purpose of the policy is to ensure that there is accountability and transparency in the reimbursement of expenses incurred or to be incurred by Councillors. The policy also ensures that the facilities provided to assist Councillors to carry out their civic duties are reasonable.

Application

This policy applies to the Mayor and Councillors of Bellingen Shire Council.

General Conduct

Councillors must act lawfully, honestly and exercise a reasonable degree of care and diligence in carrying out their functions under the NSW Local Government Act 1993 or any other Act. This is required under section 439 of the NSW Local Government Act 1993 and reinforced in the Model Code of Conduct made under section 440.

Use of Councils Resources

Councillors should be mindful of the provisions in the Bellingen Shire Council Code of Conduct about the use of council resources to ensure that councillor expenses and facilities are not used inappropriately.

The Code of Conduct provides that council resources must be used ethically, effectively, efficiently and carefully. Council property including intellectual property, official services and facilities must not be misused by any person or body for private benefit or gain. Councillors must also avoid any action or situation that could create the appearance that council resources are being used inappropriately.

A person's re-election is considered to be a personal interest. Official council material such as letterhead, publications, websites as well as council services and forums must not be used for such personal interests. Situations in which the appearance may be given that these are being used for such purposes are also to be avoided.

The fundraising activities of political parties, including political fundraising events, are considered to be personal interests. In accordance with the Division of Local Government Guidelines Councils should not pay expenses or provide facilities to councillors in relation to supporting and/or attending such activities and events.

In circumstances where it is appropriate for councillors to give a gift or benefit (for example, on a council business related trip or when receiving visitors), these gifts and benefits should be of token value and in accordance with the Bellingen Shire Council Code of Conduct.

Private Benefit

Councillors should not obtain private benefit from the provision of equipment and facilities, nor from travel bonuses such as frequent flyer schemes or any other such loyalty programs while on council business. However it is acknowledged that incidental use of council equipment and facilities may occur from time to time. Such incidental private use is not subject to a compensatory payment back to council. Councillors should not obtain more than incidental private use of facilities.

Where more substantial private use does occur the Act provides that a payment may be made to cover the level of that private use (refer s252 (2)).

Approval and Dispute Resolution Processes

Approval arrangements for the payment of expenses for Councillor attendance at conferences will be:

- (a) The Council, through resolution passed at a Council Meeting;
- (b) The Mayor and General Manager, where such conferences are in accordance with this policy
- (c) If the Mayor requires approval, this can be done jointly by the Deputy Mayor or another Councillor and the General Manager.

The Mayor, in consultation with the General Manager, is responsible for authorising payment of expenses and the provision of facilities (not relating to attendance at conferences as above) in accordance with this policy.

Should a dispute arise about the provision of expenses and facilities, or when an expense claim is not approved by the Mayor and General Manager, then the disputed decision is to be reviewed by the Public Officer.

General Provisions for Payment of Expenses

General expense allowances

In accordance with clause 403 of the Regulation councillor expenses and facilities policies must not include provision for a general expense allowance. A general expense allowance is a sum of money paid by a council to a councillor to expend on an item or a service that is not required to be receipted and/or otherwise reconciled according to a set procedure and within a specific timeframe.

It is not appropriate or lawful for council to pay general allowances unrelated to actual expenses incurred and which are designed to supplement councillors' annual fees

Payment of expenses generally allowances and expenses

Expenses and costs incurred by Councillors will only be reimbursed in accordance with this policy. Councillors must make a claim for reimbursement of expenses in accordance with this policy within **one** month following the incurrence of the expense. In the event that no expenses have been incurred a NIL return is to be completed for record keeping purposes.

Reimbursement and reconciliation of expenses

Where all the expenses of discharging the functions of Civic Office on approved Council business are not paid for in advance by Council, in accordance with this Policy, the Councillor shall:

1. Retain all documentation substantiating the incurring of such expenses.
2. Complete claim forms for all expenses incurred and attach all documentation.
3. Lodge claim form for payment with the Director of Corporate Services within one month after the completion of the specific Council business.

Incidental expenses may not require specific receipts provided it can be demonstrated that expenditure was incurred and is not general in nature. Where receipts are not required it would be appropriate for councillors to certify that the expenditure was for the purpose intended. The level of supporting documentation should be commensurate with the nature of expenditure. For example expenditure on parking, tolls, refreshments and the like may only require a signed statement listing the payments.

[Note: Councillors can only receive reimbursement for expenses when the expense is identified by this policy. No general expense is allowed]

Payment in advance

Councillors may request payment in advance in anticipation of expenses to be incurred in attending conferences, seminars and training away from home. Councillors may also request an advance payment for the cost of any other service or facility covered by this policy. However, Councillors must fully reconcile all expenses against the cost of the advance as soon as possible following the incurrence of the expense.

Requests for payment in advance should be made to the General Manager or the Director of Corporate Services.

Establishment of monetary limits and standards

Identifying and publishing monetary limits allows members of the public to know the expected cost of providing services to Councillors and to make comment during the public consultation phase of making or amending the policy. It also avoids situations where Councillors incur costs that are unforeseen or considered unreasonable by other Councillors and the public.

Subsequently, where practical and appropriate, this policy sets out the monetary limits for all the expense provisions available to Councillors, as well as the standards for the provision of equipment and facilities provided to Councillors. The total costs associated with the implementation of this Policy are set out in the Annual Management Plan and the Annual Report.

Approval arrangements

Approval for discretionary trips and attendance at conferences and the like, should be where possible, approved by a resolution of the Council. If this is not practicable then the approval should be given jointly by the Mayor and the General Manager. If the Mayor requires approval it should be given by the General Manager.

Spouse and partner expenses

Council will, in limited circumstances, reimburse Councillors for expenses incurred by the Councillor for their spouse, partner or accompanying person in the performance of his or her official duties. An accompanying person is considered to be a person who has a close personal relationship with the Councillor and/or provides carer support to the Councillor.

Council will reimburse the reasonable costs of spouses and partners or an accompanying person for attendance at official council functions that are of a formal and ceremonial nature, are within the local government area, and where there is a reasonable community expectation that the Councillor's spouse, partner or accompanying person will attend. Examples could include Australia Day ceremonies, Citizenship ceremonies, civic receptions and charitable functions for charities formally supported by Council, service club annual changeover functions, awards nights, such as business awards, and debutant balls where generally partners are invited and the Mayor or Councillor attends as representatives of the Council.

Council will also reimburse the reasonable expenses incurred by the spouse, partner or accompanying person of the Mayor, or a Councillor when they are representing the Mayor, when they are called on to attend an official function of Council or carry out an official ceremonial duty while accompanying the Mayor outside of the Council area, but within the State. Examples could include charitable functions to which the Mayor has been invited and award ceremonies and other functions to which the Mayor is invited to represent the Council.

Council will not reimburse any expenses incurred by a Councillor's spouse, partner or accompanying person when they are accompanying a Councillor to a conference, seminar or the like. An exception to this is the NSW Shires Association (LGSA) annual conference, where Council will reimburse the cost of registration and the official conference dinner incurred by Council's elected delegates's spouse, partner or accompanying person when accompanying a Councillor to this conference. Expenses incurred by a Councillor's spouse, partner or accompanying person, where this Councillor is only attending the LGSA annual conference as an observer will not be reimbursed by Council.

The payment of expenses for spouses, partners or accompanying persons for attending appropriate functions as permitted above is limited specifically to the ticket, meal and/or the direct cost of attending the function. Council will not reimburse peripheral expenses incurred by spouses, partners or accompanying persons such as transport, special clothing or grooming.

Specific Expenses for Mayors and Councillors

Conference, Seminar and Training Expenses

Council will be responsible for the expenses of the Councillors attending conferences, seminars, training, meetings and official engagements and functions, where the Councillor has been duly authorised by the Council or is deputising for the Mayor.

Council will meet the direct costs associated with the conference, seminar, training course and the like. These costs may include registration fees, travel costs, accommodation, official lunches and dinners, and associated tours where they are relevant to the business and interest of Council.

Council will also be responsible for meals not included in the conference fee for attendance by Councillors at these functions. A maximum daily allowance (refer **Table 1**) will be reimbursed for expenses claimed under this provision.

Councillors wanting to attend conferences, seminars, training courses and the like will be required to make an application for approval. Applications are to be submitted on the prescribed form. Attendance at these functions is subject to annual budget limits.

Travelling Expenses

(a) General travel arrangements

All travel by councillors should be undertaken by utilising the most direct route and the most practicable and economical mode of transport subject to any personal medical considerations.

(b) Interstate and Overseas Travel

Any travel by Councillors interstate must be approved by the Mayor.

Council may be responsible for the costs incurred by Councillors for overseas travel if the requirements of Council Policy are met. In particular such travel is subject to budgetary constraints and approval at an open Council meeting following consideration of the costs and benefits to the community.

Applications for interstate travel should include full details of the travel, including itinerary, costs and reasons for travel.

Application for overseas travel should include detailed proposals of the nomination of the Councillors undertaking the trip, purpose of the trip and expected benefits. The duration, itinerary and approximate total costs of each overseas trip should also be provided. Overseas travel must be approved on an individual trip basis by a meeting of the full Council.

(c) Council provided vehicle

Councillors will be entitled to travel to conferences, seminars, meetings and official engagements and functions, where the Councillor has been duly authorised by the Council or is deputising for the Mayor, at the expense of the Council, by Council vehicle, unless specifically authorised otherwise.

When a Council vehicle is allocated to a Councillor for use on Council business, only a Councillor, a staff member or a licensed driver authorised by the Councillor should operate the vehicle.

Where a Council vehicle is provided, Council shall reimburse the Councillor for any incurred fuel, parking fees, or similar vehicle costs.

Any traffic or parking fines incurred while travelling in a private or Council vehicle on Council business is the responsibility of the person driving at the time of the offence, Council will not reimburse any of these costs.

(d) Provision of own motor vehicle

Where a Councillor is required to utilise his/her own private vehicle in connection with approved Council business, he/she will be paid a rate per kilometre equivalent to the appropriate engine capacity rate as contained in the Local Government (State) Award 2007.

Any expenses claimed in excess of this amount require authorisation from the Mayor and the General Manager. Examples where this may be necessary are for attendance by Councillors at routine meetings, or where a Councillor is unable to access a Council vehicle and is required to utilise their private vehicle to travel long distances for conferences or training seminars.

Where a Councillor's private vehicle is utilised Council shall reimburse the Councillor for any incurred parking fees and/or RTA Tollway fees. Where a Councillor is required to use their own vehicle, they should advise their comprehensive insurance provider that the vehicle will be used on council business.

Meals and Beverage Expenses

Council will provide food and beverage at Council and Committee meetings.

Care and other related expenses

Council will reimburse Councillors the reasonable cost of carer arrangements, including childcare expenses and the care of elderly, disabled and/or sick immediate family members of Councillors, to allow Councillors to undertake their functions of Civic Office.

The provisions for these expenses are as follows:

- (a) Childcare expenses for children up to and including the age of 16 years are payable when a Councillor attends:
 - i. Council meetings, inspections, formal briefing sessions and civic or ceremonial functions convened by the Mayor or Council;
 - ii. Committee meetings,
 - iii. Meetings scheduled by Council or the Mayor;
 - iv. Meetings arising as a result of a Councillor being appointed by Council to an outside body or committee; or
 - v. A meeting or function or other official role as a representative of Council or the Mayor.
- (b) Expenses are paid to registered carers or approved child care services up to one hour before and one hour after such functions set out above (based on advertised starting time).
- (c) A maximum monthly amount as set out in **Table 1** will be paid in accordance with this provision.
- (d) Claims are to be submitted, with necessary documents such as tax invoices or where required doctor's certificate or the like, to the General Manager or the Director of Corporate Services within one month after the occurrence of expenses under this provision.

Reasonable Legal Expenses

Council may reimburse reasonable legal expenses in the following circumstances:

1. A Councillor defending an action arising from the performance in good faith of a function under the Local Government Act (section 731 refers); or

2. A Councillor defending an action in defamation provided the statements complained of were in good faith in the course of exercising a function under the Act; or
3. A Councillor for proceedings before the Local Government Pecuniary Interest and Disciplinary Tribunal or an investigative body provided the subject of the proceedings arises from the performance in good faith of a function under the Act and the Tribunal or investigative body makes a finding substantially favourable to the Councillor.

Expenses are not covered in relation to proceedings arising merely from something that a councillor has done during his or her term in office. Also Council will not meet the costs of a Councillor seeking advice in respect of the Councillor taking possible defamation action, or in seeking a non-litigious remedy for possible defamation. (DLG Circular 05/08)

Insurance

Council will provide all Councillors with Personal Accident Cover, Councillorsq & Officersq Liability Insurance and other appropriate insurance cover required in the discharge of their official duties.

Provision of Facilities

Provision of facilities generally

Council will provide facilities to support the Mayor and the Councillors to undertake their functions of Civic Office.

Use of Council resources

Use of Council resources is subject to provisions of the Code of Conduct and Councilq Policies.

Council facilities, equipment and services are not to be used to produce election material or for any other political purpose.

Return of facilities

At the end of involvement with Council, all property of the Council must be delivered to the General Manager.

Council may provide Councillors with the opportunity to purchase Council equipment previously allocated to them at the cessation of their duties. If Council makes available such an option, the item for sale should be purchased at an agreed fair market price or written down value.

Private use of equipment and facilities

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, Councillors must use Council resources ethically, effectively, efficiently and carefully in the course of Councillors undertaking their public duties, and must not use them for private purposes unless this use is lawfully authorised and proper payment is made where appropriate.

Councillors should not generally obtain private benefit from the provision of equipment and facilities, nor from travel bonus or any other loyalty schemes. This does not apply to activities undertaken for private purposes and paid for by the Councillor (For example frequent flyer points or fly-buys obtained as a result of private travel funded by the Councillor).

Provision of Equipment and Facilities for Councillors

Council will provide the following facilities to the Mayor and Councillors to support them to undertake their functions of Civic Office.

Stationery

Council will provide, upon request, the following stationery to Councillors to be used only on Council business:-

- (a) Writing Pads
- (b) Envelopes
- (c) Paper
- (d) Business Cards
- (e) Writing Pens
- (f) Diary
- (g) Postage for associated mailing of official correspondence.

Administration Services

Council will provide an administrative service to all Councillors to facilitate the discharge of functions of Civic Office.

Corporate Dress

Council will provide Councillors with a Bellingen Shire Council name badge.

Resource Centre

Council will provide an office suite, %Councillors Room+located in the Administration Centre, available to Councillors.

Information Technologies and Resources

Council may provide resources in accordance with Council Policy - Computer & Information Technology Use. The use of such equipment, if provided, is to be in accordance with the Policy.

The resources are currently defined as computer equipment, including personal computers, scanners and printers, including those connected to any council network, email, facsimiles, internet, intranet, mobile telephones, pagers, telephones, two way radios, digital cameras and blackberries.

Access to these facilities may be provided in Councils offices. Also the following items may be provided in the Councillors place of residence for use on Council business and that all associated costs/rentals be paid by Council. Such resources shall remain the property of the Council. These items include a multifunction fax/copier and internet connection.

Provision of Additional Equipment and Facilities for Councillors

In addition to the facilities, equipment and services provided to Councillors the following additional facilities will be provided to the Mayor:

Mayoral Motor Vehicle

The Mayor will be provided with a fully maintained motor vehicle to discharge the function of Civic Office and the performance of Council business. The vehicle will be of an appropriate standard as agreed by the Mayor and the General Manager.

The vehicle shall always remain the property of the Council. The Mayor will be entitled to use the motor vehicle for purposes other than the discharge of functions of the Civic Office and the performance of Council business. Fees payable to the Mayor will not be reduced for any private benefit gained from the private use of the vehicle.

The Mayor is entitled to authorise any licensed driver to drive the Mayoral vehicle. Communication facilities will be included with the vehicle for use on Council business and will remain the property of the Council. The Council will pay associated costs/rentals.

Council shall reimburse the Mayor for any incurred fuel, parking fees, or similar vehicle costs.

Resource Centre

Council will provide a furnished office suite, ~~Mayor's~~ Room+ located in the Administration Centre, available to the Mayor.

Information Technologies and Resources

The Mayor will be provided with information technologies/resource to be used at the Administration Centre, or any location, which the Mayor may decide, with all costs being paid by Council. The Mayor will be given access to all Council data and be subject to access and usage protocols observed by all users of Council's computer system.

Council will provide the Mayor with appropriate communication facilities (For example mobile phone, Blackberry or similar) with a monthly usage limit as set out in **Table 1**. Amounts exceeding this limit should be advised to the General Manager.

The use of such equipment, if provided, is to be in accordance with the guidelines set out in Council Policy - Computer & Information Technology Use.

Reporting Requirements

Clause 217 of the NSW Local Government (General) Regulations 2005 requires Council to include detailed information in its Annual Report about the payment of expenses and provision of facilities to Councillors.

Legislation

NSW Local Government Act 1993
NSW Local Government (General) Regulations 2005

Other Government Policy Provisions

- ~ DLG Guidelines for payment of expenses and provision of facilities to Mayors and Councillors (October 2009)
- ~ Code of Conduct
- ~ DLG Circulars to Councils
- ~ ICAC publication . No Excuse for Misuse, preventing the misuse of Council resources
- ~ Council Policies

Table 1

Clause	Description	Amount
8.1	Conference, Seminar and Training Expenses	\$80.00 per day
8.4(c)	Care and other related expenses	\$214.00 per month
11.3	Provision of additional information technology equipment and resources for the Mayor	\$80.00 per month (maximum)

[Note: The amounts shown in this table are to be indexed from 1 July annually in line with the current inflation rate]

[The Policy was adopted by Council on 30 January 2012]