

# **Quarterly Report**

July - September 2023

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#### General Managers Message



#### Greg **McDonald**

I am pleased to share with you the strides we have made towards achieving our community's strategic objectives.

The Scone CBD Revitalisation has been a focal point of our efforts during this quarter, reflecting our commitment to enhancing the heart of Scone into a more vibrant, accessible, and aesthetically pleasing town centre. The work completed over the last quarter, including infrastructure upgrades, service installations, traffic and pedestrian management improvements, and landscaping enhancements. Understandably there has been quite a bit of community interest in Council executing a project of this significance, but I am pleased to report that we are on schedule.

We understand the importance of minimising the impact of such extensive works on our community, and I commend the efforts made to maintain communication with affected residents and businesses. Our goal is not only to transform the physical landscape of Scone but to foster a sense of pride and ownership among its residents and visitors.

Beyond the bricks and mortar of infrastructure projects, our community's spirit has been on full display. The Aberdeen Highland Games and the King of the Ranges Bush Festival brought vibrancy and cultural celebration to our region, drawing visitors and locals alike. Similarly, NAIDOC Week activities provided meaningful opportunities to honour and learn from our First-Nations people, enriching our community's understanding and appreciation of Indigenous culture.

These events and projects are but a few examples of how we are working to meet the aspirations outlined in our Community Strategic Plan. They underscore our commitment to creating a safe, healthy, and pleasant place to live, with opportunities for social interaction, education, employment, and reliable infrastructure.

As we look ahead. I am enthusiastic about the opportunities that lie before us. The Scone CBD Revitalisation Project will continue to unfold, promising further enhancements to our town's core.

I am immensely proud of what we have achieved together over the past quarter and am grateful for the hard work, dedication, and community spirit that have been evident at every turn.

Upper Hunter Shire Council Quarterly Report July - September 2023

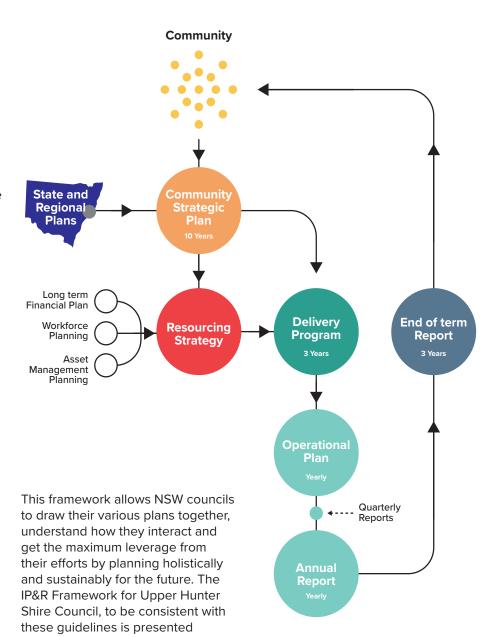


in the diagram.

#### **Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework**

Local Governments in NSW are required to undertake their planning and reporting activities in accordance with the Local Government Act 1993 and the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005. In 2009, the Local Government Act was amended to create an Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) requirement. A greater emphasis is placed on longer term planning with key elements including a Community Strategic Plan setting out the strategic directions (minimum of 10 years), Delivery Program outlining how Council will deliver on these directions (4-year period) and an annual Operational Plan. As at June 30, 2012, NSW councils are required to be working within the IP&R Framework.

The Office of Local Government provides guidelines and information to assist councils in meeting their requirements. The IP&R framework recognises that most communities share similar aspirations: a safe, healthy and pleasant place to live, a sustainable environment, opportunities for social interaction, opportunities for education and employment, and reliable infrastructure. The difference lies in how each Community responds to these needs. It also recognises that council plans and policies should not exist in isolation - that they are interconnected.



# **Quarterly Highlight**

**Scone CBD Revitalisation** 





The Scone CBD Revitalisation Project, a major project being undertaken by Council, has made significant strides in enhancing the heart of Scone. Over the quarter, the project focused on key areas including St Aubins Square and various blocks along Kelly Street, with an emphasis on improving infrastructure, pedestrian accessibility, and aesthetic appeal.



Kelly Street (Between Kingdon and Liverpool Streets) - September 2023



#### **Key Developments**

- Infrastructure Upgrades: The project saw comprehensive infrastructure enhancements, notably the installation of roll-kerb, concrete paving, and the commencement of a distinctive Trellis structure at St Aubins Square. Kelly Street witnessed extensive improvements with the reinstatement of kerb and gutter, road paving, and the beginning of footpath works adjacent to buildings.
- Service Installations: A crucial aspect of the revitalisation involved upgrading essential services such as electrical, street lighting, and communications infrastructure. This included the installation and cutover of a new 150mm water main, ensuring the sustainability of Scone's utility services.
- Traffic and Pedestrian Management: Adaptations to traffic flow were implemented to facilitate construction activities. This included lane reductions on Kelly Street, installation of a temporary roundabout, and alterations to pedestrian pathways to maintain access to businesses during the upgrade of the electrical network and telecommunications infrastructure.

- Landscaping and Aesthetic Enhancements: The project embraced aesthetic improvements through the construction of landscape walls, removal of median islands, and preparation for future beautification efforts. These changes aim to enrich the visual appeal of Scone's CBD and create a welcoming environment for residents and visitors.
- Community Impact: Despite the extensive nature of the works, efforts were made to minimise disruption to the community. Direct communication with affected residents and businesses ensured that the impact was managed effectively, with temporary changes implemented to maintain accessibility and safety.

The quarter marked a period of robust activity for the Scone CBD Revitalisation Project, laying down a foundation for a more vibrant, accessible, and visually appealing town centre. As the project moves forward, Upper Hunter Shire Council remains committed to delivering a revitalised CBD that reflects the community's needs and aspirations, symbolising a bright future for Scone.



# Community Priorities Report

Council has identified five community priorities to guide Council's agenda.



## A connected community

Developing and deepening connections of people to each other and their community.



#### **Strategic Objective**

1.1 Advocate for and increase the availability and affordability of health services

1.2 Work collaboratively to address social disadvantage.

1.3 Increase promotion of healthy lifestyle.

- Through active participation in women's health consultations and working parties for events like the Merriwa Health Expo, we aim to promote and enhance local health services. Additionally, reviewing actions in the Disability Inclusion Action Plan ensures our strategies are precisely tailored to meet the community's needs, demonstrating our commitment to accessibility and inclusion in healthcare.
- In tackling social disadvantage, we've leveraged partnerships and direct service initiatives. Youth services have been pivotal, offering skills groups and training sessions in schools and youth centres tailored to young people's needs. Our collaboration with local schools for events like Merriwa Little Sprouts Day and strengthening partnerships with organisations such as Upper Hunter Homeless Support, showcases our dedication to supporting vulnerable groups. Furthermore, hosting supported playgroups and actively participating in committees underline our comprehensive approach to social support.
- Our collaborative efforts with Where there's a Will in providing mental health training opportunities for young people are significant. Hosting a range of school holiday sporting activities and advancing the mountain bike trail project at Scone Mountain National Park not only encourage physical activity but also mental well-being, underscoring our commitment to a holistic approach to health.



## A connected community

**Developing and deepening** connections of people to each other and their community.



#### **Strategic Objective**

Enhance partnerships to maintain a safe community.

- Advocate for, support and provide services and facilities for the community.
- Provide and support a range of community events, festivals and celebrations.
- Acknowledge and respect our Aboriginal culture, heritage and people.

- Enhancing community safety involves supporting a variety of community and cultural groups in project planning and funding applications, participating in local Crime Prevention Networks and Community Drug Action Teams, and facilitating Community Advisory Committees. These efforts ensure safety remains a communal priority, engaging diverse stakeholders in maintaining a secure environment.
- Our advocacy and provision of community services and facilities span from children's services, such as Family Day Care and a long day care centre in Scone, to cultural and educational programs through our libraries. Collaborating with local schools to address childcare needs and providing a range of affordable housing options highlight our comprehensive approach to service provision, aimed at meeting the diverse needs of our community.
- Council's support for community events, from the Mayor for a Day competition to preparing for the NSW Keep Australia Beautiful awards in Scone, reflects our belief in the power of community engagement and celebration. The Upper Hunter Youth Council's active role in planning and implementing activities further exemplifies our commitment to youth leadership and participation in community life.
- Our dedication to acknowledging and respecting Aboriginal culture and heritage is evident through our support for NAIDOC celebrations and cultural events. These initiatives promote community connections and foster a deeper understanding and respect for Aboriginal culture and heritage, underscoring our commitment to inclusivity and cultural recognition.



## **Protected Environment**

Ensuring the ongoing protection of our environment and natural resources.



#### **Strategic Objective**

- 2.1 Advocate for, facilitate and support programs that protect and sustain our diverse environment for future generations.
- 2.2 Encourage and support community participation to care for our environment.
- 2.3 Ensure all actions, decisions and policy response to natural hazards and climate change remain current.
- 2.4 Implement and regularly review Strategic Land Use Plans, Environmental Planning Instruments and Development Controls, which reflect the needs and expectations of the broad Community.

- Council makes available sustainability education programs for members of the general community as well as for schools. Ongoing social media communications are posted multiple times each month on a range of sustainability topics. Council has also undertaken incursions into pre-schools and high schools informing students on waste programs and how kerbside services work.
- Council subscribes to online sustainability education programs that include Good for the Hood (open to all community members) and the Get Grubby program for schools. In addition ongoing social media communications are posted multiple times each month on a range of sustainability topics. Council has also undertaken incursions into pre-schools and high schools informing students on waste programs and how kerbside services work.
- Council is an ongoing participant in Hunter Joint Organisation programs to develop strategies aimed at building community resilience and disaster recovery capacity at a local level. This is in response to an increasing frequency of natural disasters such as floods and bushfires across the environment.
- Work has been progressing on a review of the Upper Hunter Land Use Strategy. The draft revised strategy will be presented to Council and placed on public exhibition in the coming months. An Upper Hunter Region Employment Lands Strategy is also being prepared in partnership with Muswellbrook, Singleton and Dungog Shire Councils. The Upper Hunter LEP 2013 and Upper Hunter DCP 2023 continue to be applied in the assessment of every development application. Work has commenced on a housekeeping amendment to the Upper Hunter LEP 2013.



### **Protected Environment**

Ensuring the ongoing protection of our environment and natural resources.



#### **Strategic Objective**

- 2.5 Provide efficient and effective advisory, assessment and regulatory services focused on being customer 'friendly', responsive and environmentally responsible.
- 2.6 Plan, facilitate and provide for a changing population for current and future generations.

- 2.7 Provide efficient and effective waste and recycling services and support improved waste minimisation and recycling practices.
- 2.8 Implement policies to ensure the protection of strategic agricultural lands, equine critical industry clusters, natural resources and heritage.

- As reflected in the monthly KPI's for the July to September quarter, Council continues to provide efficient and effective advisory, development assessment and regulatory services. Development assessment and building certification timeframes, inspection programs and responses to customer complaints have been tracking reasonably well.
- Work has been progressing on a review of the Upper Hunter Land Use Strategy. The Strategy aims to provide clear direction for decisions taken by Council and NSW Government agencies relating to the future use of land within the Upper Hunter Local Government Area (LGA). The Strategy states land use planning objectives and strategies to guide growth and change, and identifies where growth and change are expected to occur. It also identifies infrastructure requirements to support development and will help inform local and state government budget processes. Council's Housing and Land Supply Monitor (which is maintained and updated annually) indicates that the current supply of lands for urban and rural residential development is generally considered to be sufficient to meet anticipated demands.
- The results of the FOGO service one year after introduction were reviewed and disseminated to the community highlighting the success of the program in reducing waste going to landfill by approximately 1,000 tonnes in the past year. A radio interview was also conducted on the topic of FOGO. Council, in conjunction with AGL, supported presentations by Resourceful Living at three local schools on the topic of plastics recycling.
- Council continues to apply the provisions of the Upper Hunter LEP and DCP when assessing development applications to ensure the protection of strategic agricultural lands, equine critical industry clusters, natural resources and heritage. Work has been progressing on a review of the Upper Hunter Land Use Strategy. The Strategy contains a range of strategic directions to protect strategic agricultural lands, equine critical industry clusters, natural resources and heritage.



# **Thriving Economy**

Strengthening our vibrant industries and economy while seizing emerging opportunities.



#### **Strategic Objective**

- Broaden and promote the range of business and industry sectors.
- Encourage retail and commercial business to increase local employment opportunities.
- Provide attractive and functional town centres and support revitalisation of the towns and villages including investment in built heritage and improvement of existing buildings.
- Provide diversity in tourist attractions and experiences.
- Promote the Upper Hunter's unique brand identity.
- Facilitate and support increased and innovative tourism and marketing opportunities.

- Council supports the local business industry through development of commercial spaces, leasing commercial premises to business owners and planning for land use.
- Council's focus on business growth has been on events that promote the area and generate tourism and attraction to the Shire.
- Council is investing in its town centres. Both Merriwa and Scone have seen capital upgrades in 2023/24 have seen capital upgrades in 2023/24.
- Council continued to improve visitation of Hunter Warbirds aviation facility. Council also supported both the Aberdeen Highland Games and King of the Ranges Festival.
- Council has received funding to prepare a brand identity. This project will be undertaken over the 2023/24 and 24/25 financial years to promote the area, drive economic development and foster community pride.
- Council will continue to support tourism through the four main events across the shire each year as well as contributing to events through its donations policy which provides financial support to local groups.

## 1:4

## **Quality Infrastructure**

Maintaining and developing our infrastructure network to meet the ongoing needs of our population.



#### **Strategic Objective**

- 4.1 Provide for replacement, improvement and additional Community and open space infrastructure through investment, best practice and risk management.
- 4.2 Provide inviting public spaces that are clean, green, properly maintained, well designed, encourage active participation, family friendly and accessible to all.
- 4.3 Provide safe and reliable water and sewerage services to meet the demands of current and future generations.
- 4.4 Upgrade and maintain the road network and bridges.
- 4.5 Advocate and improve access to communication services.

- Council provided additional public space in the form of St Aubins Square as part of the Scone CBD Revitalisation project. In addition the Scone CBD Revitalisation has provided additional community space with wider footpaths and more opportunity to use the street as a place making destination.
- The upgrade to the Kelly Street (Scone CBD) has resulted in better active participation in the commercial district of our largest centre.
- Council continues to provide water and sewer services that ensure safe and healthy access to essential services
- Council's focused investment in infrastructure, with a total expenditure of \$1,135,649 across bridges, footpaths, and roads, reflects our commitment to enhancing community connectivity and safety. Key expenditures include \$210,429 on regional roads and \$588,519 on rural unsealed roads.
- Council meets regularly with Telstra representatives to advocate for improved telecommunication services. Council leased land to Telstra to ensure improved coverage in Bunnan.



# Responsible Governance

Providing efficient and responsible governance in order to effectively serve the community.



#### **Strategic Objective**

- 5.1 Effectively and efficiently manage the business of Council, while encouraging an open and participatory Council with an emphasis on transparency, community engagement, action and response.
- 5.2 Council is focused on innovation and continuous improvement to ensure a high quality of service which is aligned with business needs and community priorities.
- 5.3 Effective financial and asset management to ensure council's long-term sustainability.

- 5.4 Open and effective communication methods and technology are utilised to share information about Council plans, intentions, actions and progress.
- 5.5 Community is effectively engaged, can provide opinion and contribute to decisions that plan for the present and future of the Upper Hunter Shire.

- Council ensures robust governance through monthly Council and committee meetings, plus quarterly Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings, promoting transparency and community engagement.
- Council continually reviews its processes. The Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee (ARIC) oversee Council's operations and are specifically formed to review Risk and Improvements in the organisation.
- Management keeps Council updated on financial and asset management through monthly meetings of the Corporate Services Committee and Infrastructure Services Committee, excluding January. The Corporate Services Meeting reviews financial performance, including budget variations, cash and investments, loans, and capital works spending. The Infrastructure Meeting examines work programs and major project updates for transport, water, and sewer infrastructure, identifying potential risks. Every quarter, a detailed report is provided, offering in-depth analysis of significant budget variations across service areas.
- For the quarter, Council continued to increase its digital audience and reach on social media platforms, along with steady increases in usage for its website, which was updated in 2023.
- Council published 33 public notices on its website encouraging community feedback and contribution across development applications, public space consultation, Australia Day awards and Scone Cup Public Holiday. The transition to accessible mobile responsive electronic forms to facilitate user feedback has continued, supporting greater utilisation and participation.



# Responsible Governance

Providing efficient and responsible governance in order to effectively serve the community.



#### **Strategic Objective**

- 5.6 Develop and maintain effective reporting systems that enable Council to measure and report on performance.
- 5.7 Effective management of risk underpins all Council decisions, service delivery and behaviours.
- 5.8 Develop leadership skills and build networks through a range of formal and informal opportunities.
- 5.9 Ensure Council is a great place to work by supporting Council employees in maximising their contribution.
- 5.10 Encourage and build strong partnerships between the Community, business and all levels of government to support implementation of the CSP 2032 and to deliver the Community priorities.
- 5.11 To participate and encourage regional coordination and planning between Councils and other organisations.
- 5.12 Provide timely and effective advocacy and leadership on key community issues and priorities.

- Council has effective financial, risk management, KPI reporting and other Governance tools to ensure it captures and reports relevant information to Councillors and the community.
- Council reviews its corporate risk register quarterly and reports this to ARIC.
- Council has demonstrated a strong commitment to leadership development, delivering a total of 24 group training sessions. These sessions, attended by 228 participants, were carefully designed to foster leadership skills and enhance connectivity among staff.
- Council's commitment to creating a supportive and engaging work environment is reflected in our impressive staff retention rate of 92%. This achievement underscores our success in fostering a culture where employees feel valued and empowered to maximise their contributions.
- Through our Community Advisory Committees, we ensure diverse community insights shape our strategies. Collaborations with local Chambers of Commerce and economic groups integrate business perspectives, while solid relationships with state and federal governments align our efforts with broader objectives.
- Council is member of the Hunter Joint Organisation and Committee for the Hunter. We have strong relationships with the Office of Local Government, Local Government NSW.
- Council advocated strongly for federal funding for MR358
   rehabilitation, coordinating with State and Federal local members to
   place pressure on the Government to fulfill funding commitments.



# Key Performance **Indicators**

**Council tracks its progress** through 33 Key Performance Indicators.

#### In this section

- KPI Summary
- KPI Report

# **KPI Summary**

Council is successfully meeting 79% of its 33 key performance indicators.

on track 79%

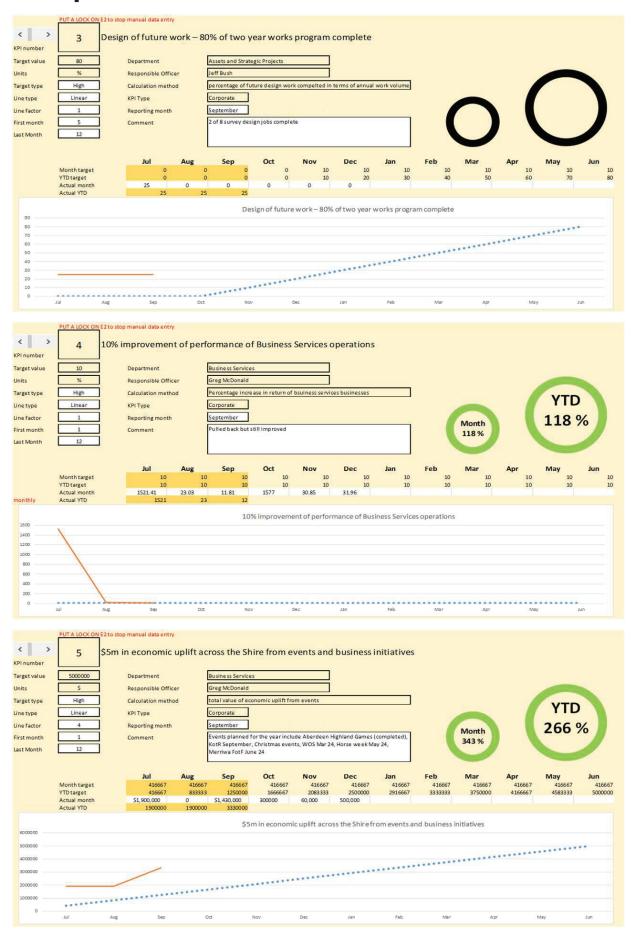
off track 21%

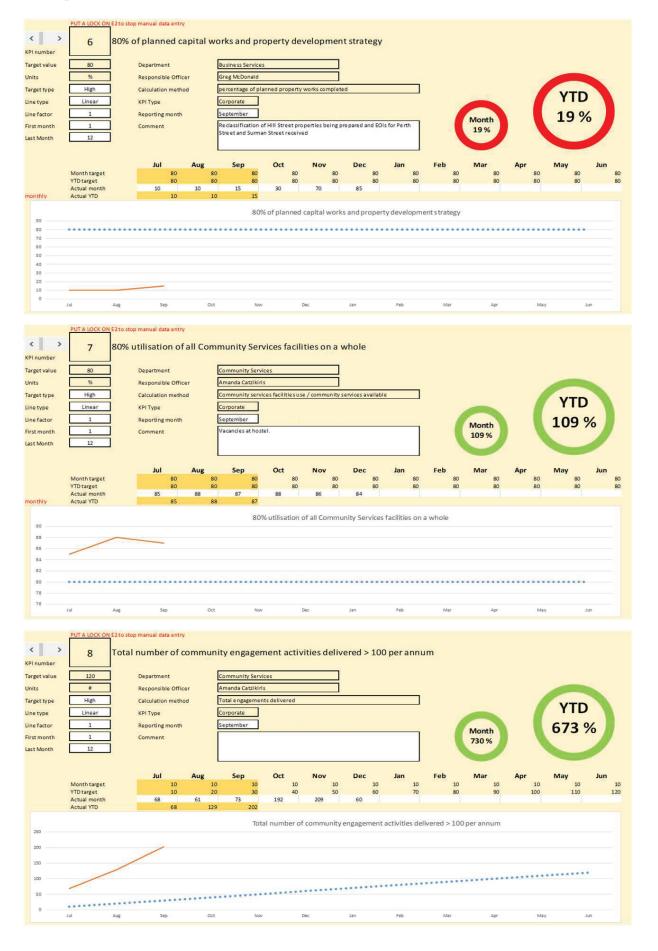
Department	KPI	Status
Assets and Strategic Projects	Infrastructure Assets – 100% renewal ratios met	•
Assets and Strategic Projects	Project Mgt Cost - 6% of total project cost	•
Assets and Strategic Projects	Design of future work – 80% of two year works program complete	•
Business Services	10% improvement of performance of Business Services operations	•
Business Services	\$5m in economic uplift across the Shire from events and business initiatives	•
Business Services	80% of planned capital works and property development strategy	•
Community Services	80% utilisation of all Community Services facilities on a whole	•
Community Services	Total number of community engagement activities delivered > 100 per annum	•
Community Services	95% compliance of all service agreement and regulated requirements.	•
Finance	Financial Audit items met on time and annual returns submitted by the due date	•
Finance	Ensure sufficient working capital is available for ongoing solvency	•
Finance	Plant utilisation greater than 70%	•
Governance	100% of all regulatory deadlines met	•
Governance	90% of Audit actions completed by target date	•
Governance	90% of Fit for the Future ratios met	•

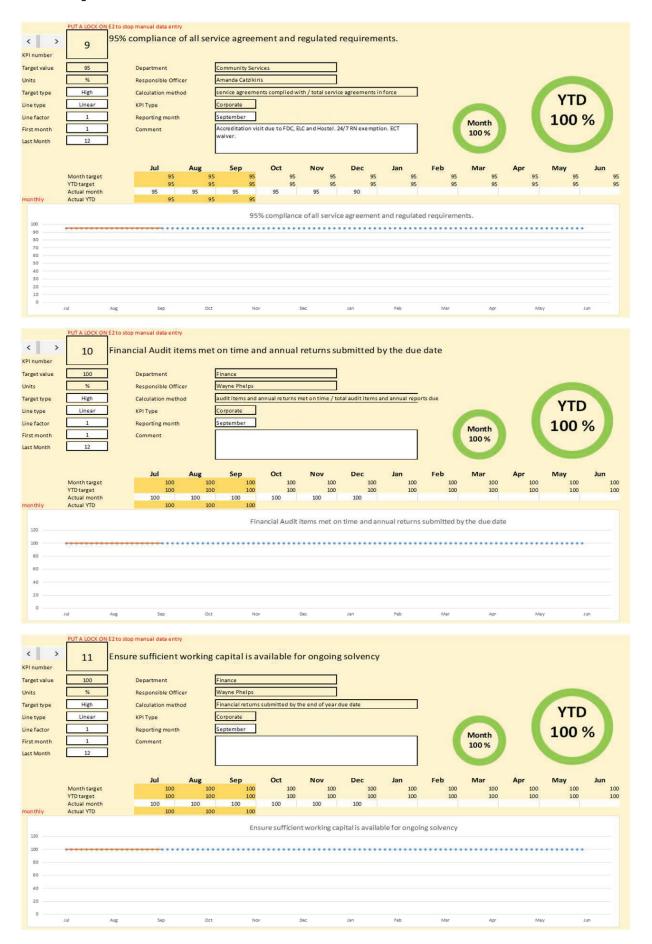
# **KPI Summary**

Department	KPI	Status
HR	85% staff retention	•
HR	Average time of recruitment measured from the date the requisition in HR Hub is approved to the date the letter of offer is signed is less than 10 weeks	•
HR	WH&S – LTIFR	•
IT	8 new process improvements undertaken with units to reduce time and improve accuracy of processes	•
IT	90% tickets completed within SLA	•
IT	95% of staff training around cyber security.	•
Planning	100% of inspection programs on target	•
Planning	Percentage of customer complaints responded to within 48 hours (95%)	•
Planning	Processing times of DAs (< 35 days)	•
Waste	25% Diversion of all waste from landfill	•
Waste	50% Kerbside diversion rates from landfill	•
Waste	Percentage of Sustainability targets met	•
Water and Sewer	100% water and sewer asset renewal as a percentage of depreciation	•
Water and Sewer	Capital Works completed	•
Water and Sewer	98% Supply of potable water for customers within Council's testing methods in the current financial year	•
Works	80% Capital Works completed	•
Works	90% Maintenance completed	•
Works	95% of Customer complaints closed within 14 days	•

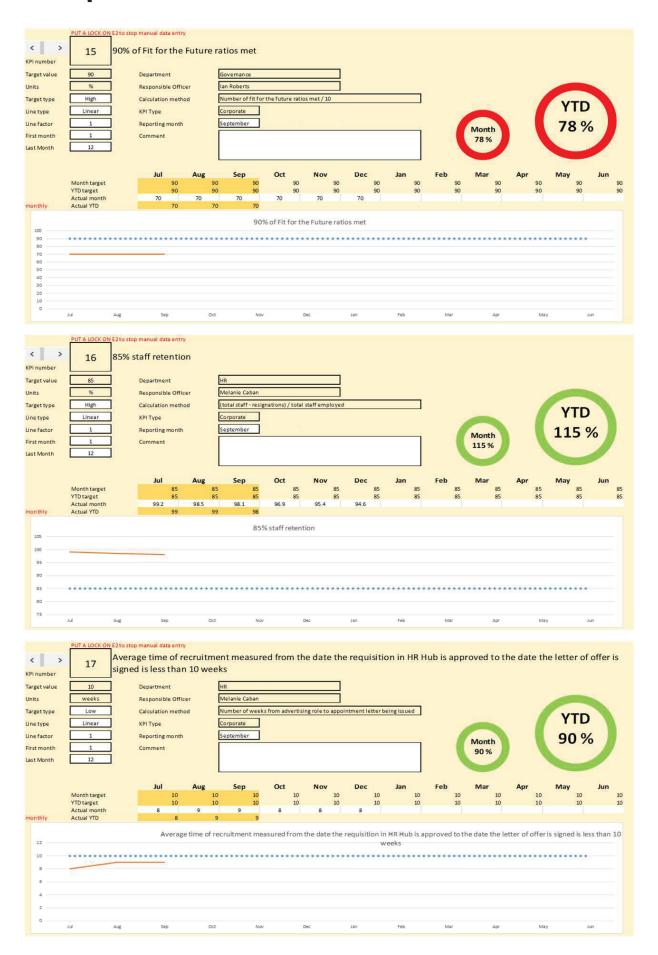








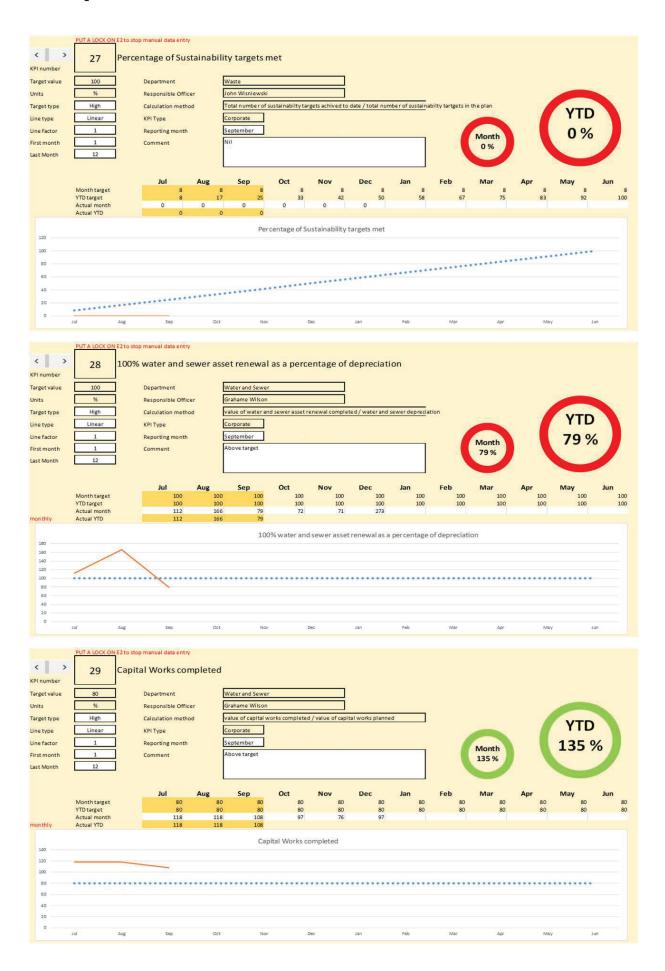




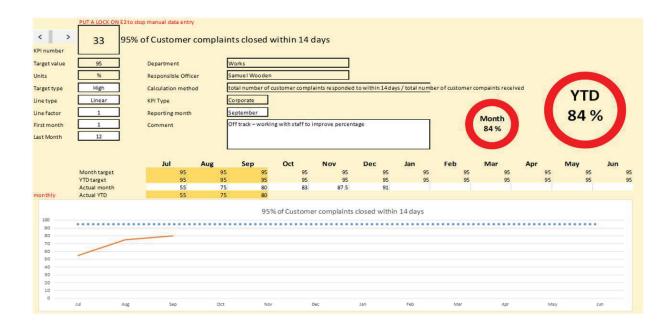












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