Golden Plains Shire Council  
Development of Council Plan 2017-2021  
Key Findings Paper

Introduction and Purpose of this Paper

Mach 2 Consulting has been engaged by Golden Plains Shire (GPS) to work with Council to develop the 2017-2021 Golden Plains Shire Council Plan and to undertake a comprehensive stakeholder engagement process to inform the development of the Plan. The proposed framework for the Council Plan is outlined in Attachment A to this Paper. Focusing on this objective, research and community engagement processes have been undertaken to provide the opportunity for the community to express their thoughts and ideas on aspirations, values, key issues and priorities for Golden Plains Shire moving forward and to ensure the Plan is responsive to and reflective of the identified needs of the community.

Over recent weeks a community survey has been distributed to households across the Shire, to relevant stakeholders, and has also been made available on Council’s website and at specific locations across the municipality. Council received 263 survey responses from across the Shire. A series of direct consultation activities has also been undertaken engaging some 82 people including:

- Teesdale Country Market  
- Bannockburn Farmers Market  
- Meredith Community Centre  
- Smythesdale Country Market  
- Teesdale Twilight Carols

Throughout the consultation process the community were asked what they liked about living and/or working in the Shire, their perspective on a future vision and values for the Shire, and what they thought should be the priorities for Council over the next four years. Feedback on key issues and priorities through other recent relevant community consultation processes has been incorporated in this paper: this includes focus group discussions (2015) to inform the 2016/2017 Council Budget; a community consultation process (2015) to inform the development of the Community Engagement Strategy; and the 2016 Golden Plains Business Survey.

A Community Reference Group will provide a further community context as the planning process continues. Alongside the consultation activities, a review of relevant data sources has been undertaken to identify the evidence based characteristics, strengths and issues of concern for the Shire including the preparation of a Municipal Scan.

Purpose of this Paper

This Paper provides a summary of the findings of the research process and the views expressed by the community through all consultation processes. It is intended that the Paper provides a context and framework and promotes thought and discussion as the planning process for the development of the Council Plan evolves. It does NOT provide answers or opinions as to how Council should respond or what role Council might be able to play (advocate, influencer, planner etc.). Nor should the Paper be seen as covering all of the issues that may need to be addressed – other issues will inevitably be raised as the planning process evolves.
1. Vision for the future

1.1 Vision and mission

The Council Plan sets out a vision and mission for the Shire identifying where the community is heading in the future and what Council will do to realise the established vision.

It is recommended that vision and mission statements that are positive, vibrant, use plain language and are easily understood are developed for the Council Plan. This is supported by feedback from the organisation and staff.

To gather a community perspective on developing a new vision and mission for the future, the community were asked for their views on what they like and value about living and working in the Shire and the kind of place they would like Golden Plains to be in the future.

What the community told us

Community responses to the question ‘what are the top three things you like and value about living and/or working in Golden Plain Shire?’ reflect the following consistent themes:

- **Rural/country feel and lifestyle (S-36%, W)***
  
The most consistent message on what the community like and value about the Shire. For a number of people there is a concern around balancing the protection of the rural nature of the Shire and encouraging growth and development.

- **Sense of community (S-33%, W)***
  
People like and value the community focus and spirit of the Shire, the family oriented and ‘friendly’ nature of the community.

- **Natural environment (S-30%, W)***
  
The natural bushland, flora and fauna, clear air and environment are highly valued.

- **Peace and quiet (S-29%, W)***
  
The tranquil, quiet nature of the shire is appealing to many people.

- **Proximity to regional centres (S-22%, W)***
  
Proximity and access to services and facilities in Geelong and Ballarat, and Melbourne, combined with the benefits of a rural environment are important to many people.

- **Space (S-17%, W)***
  
Larger housing blocks, access to open space for recreation and leisure are highly valued.

- **Local facilities and services (S-16%, W)***
  
Access to local services and facilities (retail, sporting, recreation) is high on the agenda for a number of people.

- **Undeveloped nature of the Shire (S-9%, W)***
  
Smaller communities, lower density housing, farmlands, and the rural nature of the Shire are appeal factors.

- **Safe and healthy community (S-6%, W)***
  
Low crime levels, bushfire protection, and a healthy community are amongst the factors appreciated.

*(Source – S-percentage of Survey responses, W-Workshops)*

For some people, this question prompted a negative response regarding the potential impact of a changing demographic across the Shire and conflicts of interest between traditional rural and farming interests and a growing number of new residents.
Community responses to the question ‘describe the kind of place you’d like Golden Plains Shire to be in the future (next 10-20 years)?’ identified the following key themes:

- **Safe** - a focus on community and road safety (S-17%,W)*
- **Rural** - priority for retaining the rural nature of the Shire (S-13%,W)*
- **Community focus** - accessible, connected, community spirit, healthy (S-9%,W)*
- **Clean** (S-8%,W)*
- **Peaceful** (S-8%,W)*
- **Friendly, welcoming** (S-6%,W)*
- **Better roads** (S-6%,W)*
- **Environmentally sustainable/friendly** (S-5%,W)*
- **Quiet** (S-5%,W)*

Other responses include:

- Affordable
- Financially sustainable
- Economically viable, thriving
- Access to services, facilities, education

*(Source – S-number of Survey responses, W-Workshops)

### 1.2 Values

The Council Plan also identifies the values that will guide the organisation in the future and the Community Survey sought community feedback on organisational values for the future.

**What the community told us**

The community were asked ‘what values do you think should guide Golden Plains Shire Council in the future?’ with the emerging themes focused on:

- **Honesty** (S-16%,W)*
- **Transparency** (S-13%,W)*
- **Sense of community** (S-13%,W)*
- **Consultative and listening** (S-12%,W)*
- **Integrity** (S-11%,W)*
- **Environmentally aware** (S-10%,W)*
- **Respect** (S-8%,W)*
- **Sustainability** (S-8%,W)*
- **Fairness** (S-8%,W)*
- **Accountability** (S-7%,W)*

*(Source – S-percentage of Survey responses, W-Workshops)
1.3 Priority issues for the Shire in the next 10-20 years
To provide a context on the issues and challenges for the Shire in the future, the community were asked ‘what do you believe will be the highest priority issues within the Shire in the future (next 10-20 years?)’.

What the community told us
Community feedback reflected the following consistent themes with evident links to the priorities identified for future action by Council (see Section 3). The mood of the Bannockburn workshop that included participants from across the Shire was characterised by anger and frustration for a number of people around key issues and priorities that are reflected in the key findings.

- **Roads** – (S-38%, W)*
  The most consistently reported issue with strong community support, and linked to a consensus as a top priority for future action in relation to the built environment and promoting healthy and connected communities. Road and roadside maintenance, improvements to the road network and improved connectivity are noted as priority issues.

- **Community service and infrastructure needs** – (S-37%, W)*
  Consistently supported as a priority issue (and priority for action) in regard to a range of community service and infrastructure requirements including aged care services; childcare; health and emergency services, recreation facilities; and technology/telecommunications to support connectivity, education and employment. A higher proportion of survey responses on this issue from residents in areas outside the main service centre of Bannockburn reflects solid support for improved community services and infrastructure across the Shire.

- **Population and housing growth** – (S-23%, W)*
  Planning and managing the competing interests of a growing population and the development of additional housing (subdivision) with maintaining the Shire’s highly valued rural character are concerns for many people. Other issues include the potential for overdevelopment in Bannockburn, and more broadly around planning and funding for service and infrastructure requirements for future growth.

- **Rate levels** – (S-18%, W)*
  Lowering rate levels is an issue for a number of people and for some there are concerns around a reliance on rate income as a funding source.

- **Infrastructure** – (S-15%, W)*
  Maintaining existing infrastructure and keeping pace with the requirements of a growing population for essential infrastructure (natural gas, water, NBN, telecommunications) is an issue for many people that is also reflected in feedback on the priorities for action by Council – including calls for asset planning to meet future requirements.

- **Environment** – (S-13%, W)*
  Environmental protection, climate change and water security are amongst the key issues recognised as a priority for the future.

- **Economic growth** – (S-11%, W)*
  Growth in employment and job opportunities, developing tourism/natural attractions/home based businesses, and supporting food production are issues noted by many people with a focus on encouraging investment, innovation and new industries.

- **Retail facilities** – (S-11%, W)*
  Access to shops, retail centres, and supermarkets to support a growing community into the future is a recognised priority issue.

*(Source – S-percentage of Survey responses, W-Workshops, LP-Listening Posts)
• **Public transport** – (S-10%, W)*
  Public transport (including community transport) is an issue reflected here and consistent with a high level of support around priorities for action in the future. Survey findings indicate a higher proportion of Bannockburn residents identifying public transport as an issue than those residing across the rest of the Shire.

• **Rubbish** – (S-10%, W)*
  Managing waste and rubbish across the Shire is an ongoing issue for a number of people.

• **Community engagement** – (S-3%, W)
  Whilst the number of survey responses identifying community engagement as an issue for the future is not high, it is a strong emerging theme around priorities for future action and from workshop discussions. Calls for improved consultation, communication, and Council responsiveness are key issues.

Other issues noted include:
• Youth - addressing longer term unemployment and disengagement
• Community health - healthy eating, alleviating chronic illness
• Community connections - keeping people local
• Volunteering - retaining current levels of volunteering
• Family violence - related to gender equity
• Education - lower levels of education
• Equitable funding allocation - across the Shire
• Leadership - opportunities to develop leadership
• Financial sustainability - delivering essential services, avoiding service duplication

*(Source – S-percentage of Survey responses, W-Workshops, LP-Listening Posts)*
2. **Incorporating health and wellbeing in the Council Plan**


*There are many aspects that contribute to an individual’s health and wellbeing including access to quality education, stable employment and good working conditions, secure housing, freedom from violence, safe and sustainable natural and built environments, food affordability, respectful relationships, supportive social networks and services and opportunities to participate in community.*

*The Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2015-2019*

### The Victorian context for health and wellbeing

In preparing a plan for public health and wellbeing, local Councils are required to consider the priorities of the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2015-2019 (VPHWP 2015). The VPHWP 2015 sets out a long-term agenda for improving health and social outcomes in Victoria setting high level strategic directions focused on prevention, health promotion and protection, and reducing inequalities in health and wellbeing. The priorities identified in the Plan are:

- healthier eating and active living
- tobacco-free living
- reducing harmful alcohol and drug use
- improving mental health
- preventing violence and injury
- improving sexual and reproductive health

Addressing the risks and determinants of avoidable chronic disease is a major focus of the plan and the Victorian Government is also very concerned about family violence as a leading cause of ill health, disability and premature death in women aged 15-44.

The Plan acknowledges the following three platforms for implementation:

- healthy and sustainable environments which includes actions to mitigate the impacts of climate change that are recognised as presenting serious environmental, economic and health challenges
- place-based approaches that focus on all of the key settings where people live, learn, work and play – recognising the importance of local integrated action and the key role played by local government in community health and wellbeing
- person-centred approaches – incudes the opportunities to strengthen the provision of integrated, preventive health services to individuals and families at all levels of the health care system

The plan specifically acknowledges that ‘health and wellbeing is everyone’s responsibility’ and this is reflected in the GPS approach to embracing health and wellbeing matters across all pillars of the Council Plan.

The provisions of the Climate Change Act 2010 (s14) require that Council has regard to the potential impacts of climate as part of the health and wellbeing planning process.
Regional health and wellbeing planning context
The GPS approach to health and wellbeing is part of and contributes to a broader Geelong Region Alliance (G21) approach that delivers a regional level health and wellbeing strategy to address the agreed priority issues that are common for the five G21 municipalities - Colac Otway, Greater Geelong, Queenscliff, Surf Coast and Golden Plains. The G21 regional plan strengthens the region’s capacity to address complex issues that impact on health and wellbeing. The G21 group has determined that for the period 2017-2021 the priority issue for a regional approach is ‘healthy eating and active living’.

Golden Plains Shire is also a member agency of the Central Highlands Primary Care Partnership (CHPCP) which, in addition to Golden Plains, includes Moorabool, Hepburn and the City of Ballarat municipalities. CHPCP is a voluntary alliance of 40 health, local government, welfare and human service agencies working together to improve the health and wellbeing of the Central Highlands region by better coordination of planning and service delivery, and promoting health messages, in response to locally identified needs. The CHPCP membership has determined that the shared health priority for the Central Highlands Catchment for 2017-21 is ‘healthier eating and active living’.

Local health and wellbeing planning
Council has recognised the significance of health and wellbeing as an integrated responsibility across all Council areas and this is reflected in the framework of the Council Plan where health and wellbeing matters are incorporated across all areas of Council activity. The findings of the research and consultation processes undertaken in relation to health and wellbeing matters as part of the planning process for the Council Plan are reported in sections 1 and 3 of this Paper.
3. Strategic considerations and priorities

3.1 Overview

The Victorian context for local government

Victorian local government is facing a range of ‘universal’ issues and challenges that will continue to place pressure on Council decision making, good governance and administration into the medium term.

Victorian local government manages infrastructure valued at more than $60bn, it has responsibility for enforcing a broad range of State and local laws covering public health, planning, traffic, transport and animal management. It delivers a broad range of community services across all life stages – from birth to ageing. It employees over 42,000 employees and collectively spends more than $7.2bn per annum.

It is the tier of government closest to the community and is therefore the public-sector organisation that people turn to when they want something done or have a problem.

Issues and challenges facing all Victorian local governments include:

Rate Capping and Financial Assistance Grants

The Fair Go Rates system has now impacted on budget setting for two years and the gap between real costs for labour and materials and the allowable rates increase is having a material impact on financial viability and sustainability. Councils with few alternative revenue streams and already tight financial positions will be progressively impacted by the cap on rates and charges and will need to make difficult decisions regarding distribution of increasingly scarce resources.

The three-year pause on indexation of Commonwealth Financial Assistance Grants will end as from 1 July 2017. The lack of indexation has placed increasing pressure on Council finances.

Integrity – Fraud and Corruption

The focus of the Victorian Auditor General’s Office in recent times and the establishment of an Independent Broad-based Anti-Corruption Commission signal an intention to place much greater emphasis on prevention and identification of fraud and corruption in the public sector. IBAC conducted a review of Integrity Frameworks in six Councils during 2015 and made a series of recommendations that should be seen as minimum standards.

Effective Complaint Handling

In 2014, the Victorian Ombudsman examined the way in which local government handles complaints and made a range of recommendations regarding better definition of complaints, that they have efficient and timely processes in place for the effective handling of complaints and that there will be increased scrutiny and oversight from the Ombudsman.

2015 Local Government Ministerial Statement

In 2015 the Minister for Local Government released a statement which outlined the objectives of the Victorian Local Government Reform Agenda. The Fair Go Rates system (rate capping) is only one of the broader reform initiatives. There are three categories (Integrity & Good Governance, Capacity & Performance and Delivering for Communities) that contain a broad range of initiatives that will have an enduring impact for how local government operates into the future, these include:

- modernisation of the Local Government Act;
- improvements to councillor governance;
- a new performance reporting framework;
- changed emergency management arrangements;
- common funding agreements;
- integrated service and infrastructure planning;
- a focus on employment and economic outcomes; and
- increased focus on diversity.
Aged Care and Disability Reform
The introduction of very significant reforms to the aged care and disability support systems will completely disrupt the role that local government has played in this space for over 30 years. All Victorian Councils will need to make very significant decisions over the coming two to three years regarding fundamental changes to the service system.

National Competition Policy
There will be an increased focus on competition policy and the Commonwealth Government will introduce a range of measures to improve efficiency and effectiveness of government services. Council service delivery will need to be based on the principles of ‘competitive neutrality’ – there should be no advantage from government ownership – and this will impact how services are commissioned and delivered.

Innovation, Technology and Productivity
All Victorian Councils will be looking to how services and programs can be delivered in a more efficient and effective manner. Shared services, new ways of working and competition from not-for-profit and for-profit enterprises will challenge the form and shape of local government organisations in the coming decade.

Councils will need to increase skills, contain costs through working smarter and deliver priority services through partnerships with other levels of government. There are significant opportunities in shared procurement, delivery of services through technology and improved engagement with communities.

Asset Renewal Gap
The Victorian Auditor-General has identified that community assets are deteriorating faster than councils can fund their maintenance, renewal and replacement. The AG predicts that councils’ $225 million asset renewal gap will grow to $2.6 billion by 2026 unless drastic action is taken to invest more in capital works programs.

Climate Change – Extreme Weather Events
The Victorian Government has recognised that climate change presents serious environmental, economic and health challenges for all Victorian communities (Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2015-2019). The provisions of the Climate Change Act 2010 (s14) require that all Councils have regard to the potential impacts of climate as part of their planning and decision making processes.

The increasing incidence of extreme weather events will impact on communities and industries and place greater pressure on Councils and emergency response agencies. Council’s role in emergency management response and post-event support will change because of the current legislative reforms and community expectation will grow.

State Government Reforms
The Victorian Government are currently introducing a broad range of reforms that have the potential to significantly change the relationship with local government. The creation or re-naming of a range of statutory bodies: Victorian School Building Authority, Development Victoria, the Victorian Planning Authority, new Regional Partnership Models, significant changes to health and human service planning, Family Violence reforms and many more significant changes are creating the conditions for reform and change.

All Victorian Councils will need to identify and seek to understand the changes and look for opportunities or threats that might result from the reforms.
Emerging themes for Golden Plains

The key findings of the research and consultation processes undertaken to inform the planning process around the following four pillars for the Council Plan are outlined in sections 3.2 to 3.5:

- 3.2 Promoting Healthy and Connected Communities
- 3.3 Enhancing Local Economies
- 3.4 Maintaining Natural and Built Environments
- 3.5 Delivering Good Governance and Leadership

The findings relate to current strengths and areas of concern indicated by the data research, and the key themes emerging from the consultation process around priorities for action by Council in the next four years.

The key emerging themes across all areas of Council activity include:

**Infrastructure - roads, transport, technology**

The Shire has a shared responsibility (with the Victorian Government) for a substantial road network that is clearly a significant concern for many people in terms of facilitating access to services and facilities, community connectivity and road safety. There are strong calls for the maintenance and improvement of existing roads and roadside areas and the further development of the road network as a top priority. A lack of public transport is evident across the Shire with just 2.4% of the population near to transport, providing a clear opportunity for Council to advocate for /facilitate improved services. Telecommunication connectivity and reliability to support community, business and industry connections are amongst the key priorities.

**Community health and social infrastructure**

There is a community consensus, supported by health and wellbeing data indicators, around the need for improved community health and social infrastructure to support community health and wellbeing. Limited access to medical and allied health services and calls for increased programs, activities and facilities to support health and wellbeing, particularly for vulnerable people (older/young people) are noted priorities. Utilising and consolidating existing infrastructure and an integrated and longer term approach to planning and facilitating service availability and access are key considerations, together with opportunities for alliances, partnerships and regional approaches.

**Longer term community planning**

A longer term and evidence based planning focus across all areas of Council activity has community support. For many people, there is a need to move beyond the medium-term focus of the Council Plan period to planning for a longer-term vision that is evidence based and acknowledges the Shire’s changing demographic profile. Predicted future population growth will add further pressure to limited services and infrastructure and supports the opportunity for longer term planning to meet current and future health and social infrastructure requirements.

**Community engagement**

A solid consensus from the community on the need for improved engagement and responsiveness by Council. This issue is entirely within the ambit of Council and with the recent development of a Community Engagement Strategy, a focus on implementation that centres on an integrated and multi-faceted approach to engaging both existing and emerging communities and increased citizen participation is of critical importance.

**Advocacy role for Council**

A strong advocacy role for Council has community support. Advocating to State and Federal Government, VicRoads and other stakeholders is seen as crucial to the further development of services and infrastructure for a growing community.
**Efficiency and effectiveness – doing more with less**

There is recognition amongst the community around finite resources together with calls for maintaining or reducing existing rate levels. A continuation of rate capping in 2017-2018 will add further pressure to already stretched resources. There is an emerging sense of doing more with less with indicators for innovative approaches to service delivery and working with the community to build community capacity, resilience and contribution. Working in partnership with other stakeholders; the increased utilisation and re-purposing of existing facilities and infrastructure; and reducing non-essential expenditure are recognised opportunities.

**Encouraging economic growth**

With a projected population growth of 56% for the period 2015-2036 and limited local employment opportunities, there is community support for encouraging economic growth and the creation of local jobs for local people. Supporting and growing the rural economy, encouraging and attracting new business and industry, and promoting and encouraging tourism are key priorities. An identified need for developing supporting infrastructure including transport, telecommunications and water security is consistent with feedback around community infrastructure requirements. Council is currently developing an Economic Development Strategy that provides an opportunity to address these priorities.

**Natural environment and open spaces**

The natural environment and open space is highly valued by the community with strong support for protecting, valuing, and caring for the environment as a shared responsibility across the community and key stakeholders. Capitalising on natural areas to connect communities (walking and bike tracks) and improved access to open space recreation opportunities are key priorities to support community health and wellbeing. There is a view that the natural environment as a significant characteristic of the Shire should be a stand-alone pillar in the Council Plan. There is support for educating the community around caring for the environment; promoting natural areas through a variety of methods (newspapers, workshops for kids); and supporting the farming community on environmental matters.

**Managing growth and development with rural interests**

The rural nature and lifestyle that characterise Golden Plains is highly valued across the community. Fast population growth in recent years has seen the development of new and emerging communities with many new residents relocating from highly urbanised Councils with high expectations for service infrastructure. There are concerns for many people around maintaining the inherent character of the Shire and managing the level of housing development and density. This has implications for Council regarding strategic planning for future development (zoning, subdivision).

**Partnerships and working with others**

Across all areas of Council activity there is community support for working with others and developing partnership approaches with local and regional stakeholders and more broadly. The opportunity to build community capacity and resilience is also noted in terms of encouraging, supporting and partnering with community and volunteer groups and townships for community outcomes.

**Climate change – extreme weather events**

The initial phase of the Climate Resilient Communities of the Barwon South West project which includes 10 local governments (including GPS) and the Victorian Department of Primary Industries included a regional vulnerability assessment. Key findings of the assessment identify that overall Golden Plains Shire is getting warmer with a significant increase in extreme weather events, and also getting drier with a decrease in extreme rainfall events. The findings indicate that the Shire will have the greatest change in extreme temperature for single days over 40°C across the region. This will pose a risk for areas with high economic sensitivities across central parts of the Shire potentially reducing land productivity, and high social sensitivities with potential for heatwaves and bushfires affecting vulnerable groups such as the elderly. Specific identified risk factors are indicated as areas of concern across the four key areas of Council activity outlined in Sections 3.2-3.5 of this report.
Population growth and changing demographic profile

With an estimated resident population of 20,809 (2015), Golden Plains Shire has been amongst the fastest growing regional local government areas in Victoria in recent years, with population growth at 1.3% in 2015. Population growth has centred in Bannockburn as the largest town in the Shire with 56 communities and 16 townships also located in the Shire. The current population profile reflects a high proportion of younger people; a higher proportion of young families than the Victorian average; and fewer older people than the average for Victoria. The GPS population is expected to increase over the next twenty years by an additional 11,566 people to a forecast population of 32,375 in 2036 – a 56% increase over 2015. The growth in population will reflect a changing demographic profile for GPS with forecasts for:

- increase in the population aged over 65 years (10.7% in 2011 increasing to 16.2% in 2036);
- decrease in the proportion of younger people aged 0-29 years (30.7% in 2011 falling to 27.9% in 2036);
- increase in the proportion of young adults aged 20-34 years (14.1% in 2011 increasing to 15.3% in 2036); and,
- decrease in the proportion of the population aged 35-64 years (45.0% in 2011 falling to 40.4% in 2036).

The number of dwellings in Golden Plains Shire is forecast to grow from 7,356 in 2011 to 12,696 in 2036 (an increase of 72.6%) with the average household size falling from 2.87 persons in 2011 to 2.77 persons by 2036.
3.2 Promoting Healthy and Connected Communities

This theme focuses on the things Council can do to promote good health and wellbeing and support communities to feel more connected.

GPS Snapshot

- Estimated resident population of 20,809 (2015)
- Growth rate of 1.3% in 2015 - one of the fastest growing regional municipalities in Victoria over recent years
- Population projected to increase by 11,566 people to 32,375 by 2036 (56% over 2015).
- 56 communities and 16 townships
- Population growth is centred in Bannockburn as the largest town in the Shire
- High proportion of younger people - 30.7% of the population aged between 0-19 years (2011)
- Higher proportion of families with 2 children than the Victorian average
- Lower proportion of older people than the Victorian average
- Local Community Plans (22) set out the needs, aspirations and priorities identified by communities across the Shire

Strengths and areas of concern...what the data tell us

The Golden Plains Health and Wellbeing Data Profile (16/11/2016) and other sources indicate the following key strengths and areas of concern for the Shire when compared to Victorian averages.

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<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>GPS performance/higher or lower in relation to Victorian averages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community safety</td>
<td>- Lower crime rates including family violence incidences</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Higher proportion of people feeling safe to walk at night</td>
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<td>- Higher proportion of people feeling in their neighbourhood can be trusted</td>
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<td>Some health conditions</td>
<td>- Lower proportions of people with some health conditions including diabetes</td>
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<td>- Fewer ambulance attendances</td>
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<td>Volunteering</td>
<td>- High levels of volunteering</td>
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<td>Early childhood development</td>
<td>- Lower vulnerability based on the Australian Early Development Index</td>
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<td>Organised physical activity</td>
<td>- Higher proportion of people participating in organised physical activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Areas of concern</td>
<td>GPS performance/higher or lower in relation to Victorian averages</td>
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<tr>
<td>Access to health and other services</td>
<td>- Fewer GPS, clinics, allied health and dental services, no hospital</td>
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<td>- Fewer shops, childcare, schools, libraries</td>
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<td>- Higher incidence of cancer amongst females, whooping cough and asthma</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Higher death rate from suicide and self-inflicted injuries</td>
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<td>Some health behaviours (risk factors)</td>
<td>- Higher number of people smoking</td>
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<td>- Higher risk of harm from single occasion use of alcohol</td>
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<td>- Higher proportion of people not eating enough fruit and vegetables</td>
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<td>- Higher proportion of people who are obese</td>
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<td>- Lower proportion of people undertaking physical activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public transport</td>
<td>- Only 2.4% of the population are near to public transport</td>
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<td>Older people</td>
<td>- Higher rate of HACC clients aged 65+</td>
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<td>- Higher rate of over 85s with a disability.</td>
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<td>- Higher proportion of men aged over 75 living alone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Young people</td>
<td>- Higher proportion of young people not engaged in employment or education</td>
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<td>- Higher proportion of youth with a disability</td>
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<td>- Lower secondary and tertiary education completion levels</td>
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<td>- Limited regional youth services</td>
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<td>- All secondary/tertiary students currently travel out of the Shire for education</td>
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<td>Extreme weather events</td>
<td>- Risk of increased pressure on health, emergency management, recovery services</td>
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<td>- Potential Impact on community wellbeing - health, social hardship, outdoor activity</td>
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</tbody>
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Draft Barwon South West Adaptation Plan - Golden Plains Shire
Priorities for the future ... what the community told us

Responding to the question ‘what do you think should be the priorities (top 3) for Golden Plains Shire over the next four years?’ consistent messages from the community include:

- **Sporting and community facilities** – (S-19%, W, LP)*
  
The maintenance, improvement and increased utilisation of existing sporting and community facilities and the development of additional facilities is a consistently reported priority. A myriad of suggestions relate to extended opening hours; new facilities; consolidating and capitalising on existing infrastructure; and the opportunity for multi-use/collaborative approaches for sporting and other community facilities (sharing resources and costs). A focus on opportunities for partnerships, alliances and regional facilities is also suggested.

- **Health and wellbeing promotion and education** – (S-19%, W)*
  
  Amongst the most consistently reported priorities with a range of suggestions for promotion and education initiatives and activities targeting all age groups across a variety of topics including: key health issues; healthy eating and active living; and drug education. Low cost/no cost initiatives are suggested together with support for Council advocacy for grant funding to support Council’s work in this space. A collaborative approach to developing an integrated promotional strategy at the local level is a further suggestion.

- **Health and wellbeing programs and activities** – (S-15%, W)*
  
  Recognised as a top priority for many people with suggestions relating to a range of projects, programs and activities around physical activity; healthy eating; social and educational activities; and with specific support for engaging older people. Supporting evidence based health issues and programs are an indicated priority.

- **More health services** – (S-11%, W, LP)*
  
  Consistently rated as a priority across consultation processes with support for improved access to medical, dental and allied health services; maternal and child health services; district nursing services; child care services; and services to support vulnerable groups including young and older people. A need for extended ambulance services to respond to population growth and increasing demand is also recognised. There is a view that the priorities for Council should focus on community care (HACC, vaccination, maternal and child health, childcare) and supporting local medical services.

- **Cycling and walking paths** – (S-15%, W)*
  
  A consistently reported priority in relation to healthy and connected communities and also managing the natural and built environment with support for the development and expansion of cycling and walking paths and a variety of suggestions for specific locations and features (e.g. exercise stations, maps and signage).

- **Supporting sporting and community groups** – (S-13%, W)*
  
  Support for sponsorships and grants to local sporting clubs and groups catering to a variety of community cohorts (young people, older people) is a noted priority. There are also calls for support for volunteer support services (CFA and SES) and building on the volunteering effort across the Shire to connect communities. Consistent with feedback around other initiatives, there is support for sourcing grant funding to assist with supporting sporting and community groups...

- **Communicate, consult and listen** – (S-13%, W)*
  
  A top priority reported by many people in regard to health and wellbeing and more broadly for other areas of Council activity is for Council to communicate, consult, listen, engage and respond to the community.

*(Source – S-percentage of Survey responses, W-Workshops, LP-Listening Posts)
• **Planning and advocating for services – (W)***

A number of people, including the stakeholder group, identified a priority for an evidence based approach to planning for the development of community health services and social infrastructure that recognises the changing demographic profile for the Shire and the requirements for new and growing communities. Other suggestions relate to considering the impact of the extending service boundaries and potential linkages with neighbouring Geelong and Ballarat, and collaborative approaches to gathering health and information data and information to support service planning. Consistent with responses around other priorities, there is support for an advocacy role by Council to source funding to support existing and attract and develop new services and facilities.

• **Roads, traffic and connections – (S-9%, W, LP)***

A priority emerging from all consultation processes and focused on the need for improvements to the road system (sealing, road and footpath connections) to facilitate connectivity across the Shire and community access to services, sporting and recreation facilities. This is consistent with feedback for priorities for the built environment and enhancing local economies.

• **Open space development – (S-13%, W, LP)***

The development and maintenance of open spaces is supported with suggestions around the development of existing and new playgrounds/play spaces; open spaces; parks and recreation facilities (BBQs, exercise equipment, dog/owners exercise). This presents an opportunity for engagement with local communities to master plan for local facilities.

• **Supporting community events, markets, activities – (S-13%, W)***

Amongst the top priorities for a number of people with a focus on supporting existing and developing new community events, markets and activities to foster community connections and participation.

• **Public transport – (S-13%, W)***

A recognised priority for improved public transport services to support community connections and access to services, facilities and activities within the Shire. This links with similar feedback for managing the built environment and enhancing local economies. Community transport services are particularly important to older people for accessing health and other services and supporting community connections.

• **Supporting older people – (S, LP, W)***

There is general support for better planning and availability of services for older people across a range of areas including: availability and access to medical, health and aged care services and facilities; activities and services to provide engagement and interaction opportunities; community transport services; and home maintenance support.

• **Supporting young people – (S, LP, W)***

Planning and delivering services to meet the needs of young people is a noted priority with suggestions for more services and activities to positively engage and support young people of all ages (health services, youth centres, after school programs); facilitating employment opportunities for young people (part-time work, career pathways, community programs, partnerships with schools); support for families with young people; and leadership strategies that engage young people across all age groups.

*(Source – S-percentage of Survey responses, W-Workshops, LP-Listening Posts)*
Other reported priorities for Council action include:

- Improving telecommunications – integrated online communication strategies, improved phone/internet connectivity.
- Community safety - advocating for increased policing to support community safety, particularly in smaller towns; developing safe places for families to gather.
- Service delivery - innovative approaches and working with others to maintain and enhance service provision.
- Supporting gender equity - family oriented approaches (e.g. Baby Makes 3).

Council initiatives and projects

- Council has recognised the needs of young people in the community with a commitment in the Council Plan 2013-2017 to support the development of young people in the Shire. Council has endorsed a Youth Development Strategy 2015-2019 that outlines the core principles, key focus areas, actions and resource allocation to guide Council’s youth development work through to 2019.
- GPS has developed the Community Development Strategy 2015-2019 identifying a vision, key focus areas and a series of actions to guide the community development work undertaken by the Shire. The Strategy seeks to deliver on a Vision for GPS communities as ‘great places to live and visit because of community members’ active contribution’. Council’s community development activities focus on encouraging and assisting common interest groups to take action in their community for the overall benefit of that community and its members.
- The Municipal Early Years Plan 2014-2018 is also in place to support the development of the growing number of younger children in the Shire.
- A range of other plans including the Recreation Strategy 2015-2019 guide the work of Council to promote healthy and connected communities.
- Council works with government and a range of external agencies to implement health and wellbeing strategies and actions.
- As outlined in Section 3.4 Council is a joint collaborative member of the Climate Resilient Communities of the Barwon South West project with a view to understanding and responding to the risks and opportunities presented by future climatic changes and extreme weather events and the development of a Climate Adaptation Plan for Golden Plains Shire.

**What will be Council’s role in this space in the future?**

**What are the objectives for the next four years?**

**What are the priority strategies for implementation by Council?**
3.3 Enhancing Local Economies

This theme focuses on the things Council can do to support local business and build the local economy.

GPS Snapshot

- History of fast population growth with a projected population increase of 56% for 2015-2036
- Agriculture is the largest industry sector followed by rental, hiring & real estate services
- Broad acre farming, intensive agriculture and vineyards are important industries
- Around 2,750 jobs in the Shire
- Around 10,000 employed residents
- 88% of land is in rural zones
- Bannockburn is the main service centre
- 16 townships and 56 communities - outside Bannockburn only 10 townships have a shop
- No large industry employer/s in the Shire

Strengths and areas of concern...what the data tells us

The Golden Plains Health and Wellbeing Data Profile (16/11/2016) and other sources indicate the following key strengths and areas of concern for the Shire when compared to Victorian averages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>GPS performance-higher/lower in relation to Victorian averages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>Lower unemployment rate (3.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational qualifications</td>
<td>Higher proportion of people with vocational qualifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordable housing for purchase/rent</td>
<td>Lower median house price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Higher percentage of affordable rental housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing population</td>
<td>Forecast population growth into the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Areas of concern</td>
<td>GPS performance-higher/lower In relation to Victorian averages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of local employment opportunities</td>
<td>64% of people travel out of the Shire for work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic circumstances</td>
<td>Fewer households in the highest income quartile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Higher proportion of people under mortgage stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower education levels</td>
<td>Higher proportion of people not completing secondary or higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>education qualifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water security</td>
<td>Lower rainfall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate change risk factors</td>
<td>Draft Barwon South West Adaptation Plan –Golden Plains Shire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increase in household and industry expenses (water prices, electricity consumption for cooling)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decrease in agricultural productivity through lower yields from less favourable climate conditions and land viability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Potential impact on future investment in agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increased pressure for high profile events to manage the risk of extreme weather events</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Priorities for the next four years … what the community told us

Responding to the question ‘what do you think should be the priorities (top 3) for Golden Plains Shire over the next four years?’ consistent messages from the community include:

- **Encourage business growth** – (S=30%, LP,W, BS)*
  The most consistently reported priority by the community and local business for Council action to enhance local economies with support for identifying service gaps; encouraging and attracting small and new businesses, industries and services to generate employment; business promotion and advertising; and business education and training. Suggestions include working with strategic partners (State Government) to attract business; encouraging innovation and a value add approach; clarifying and advocating around the GPS point of difference; and recognising environmental constraints for business opportunities (e.g. water).

- **Increase/create local jobs ... buy local** – (S=24%, W, BS) *
  A priority theme for many people and local businesses. A focus on buying local and promoting, developing and utilising local contractors and trade services is supported. Priority initiatives include facilitating youth employment (linkages to vocational opportunities by the new secondary school); jobs for all skill levels; and community oriented volunteer employment. The opportunity for Council to model supportive and innovative approaches to employment is a suggested initiative.

- **Grow the built environment/facilities** – (S=23%, LP, W) *
  Amongst the most consistently reported priorities and linked with similar feedback for promoting healthy and connected communities and managing the built environment. Support for the development of retail facilities, community facilities, built infrastructure for business (e.g. arts precinct, business centre for excellence, new/expanded industrial estate) and improved urban design to attract new businesses.

- **Infrastructure improvements – roads, transport, technology** – (S=23%, LP,W, BS)*
  Recognised as a top priority by many people and the business sector and consistent with feedback for priorities across other Council areas with calls for ongoing maintenance of existing infrastructure (roads, streetscapes); improved public transport services; water security; and improved technology and telecommunication infrastructure (NBN, improved mobile phone/internet service) to support business and community connectivity.

- **Financial incentives for business** 39 – (S=15%, W)*
  Priorities for the community and local business include affordable (discounted) rates to attract and support business (including farmland) and reduced start-up costs for business (fees and charges).

- **Support the rural economy and tourism** – (S=13%, LP,W,BS)*
  Community and business support for promoting, encouraging and supporting farming (intensive/non-intensive agriculture, niche crops, sustainable living). Encouraging tourism is also supported with suggested opportunities around eco-tourism; building on existing events and activities; developing small towns as tourist attractions; and providing small business or tourism grants.

- **Reduce red tape** – (S=11%,W,BS)*
  Streamlining planning and permit processes and reducing red tape is supported by the business sector and the broader community with calls for easier access for priority industries (food production) and an integrated, cross-council approach to strategic development planning.

- **Attract and develop markets/events** – (S=11%,W)*
  Support for attracting sporting, cultural festivals and events and promoting and expanding farmers and community markets is consistent with feedback for supporting tourism and community connections.

*(Source – S-percentage of Survey responses, W-Workshops, LP-Listening Posts, BS- Business Survey)
Other reported priorities for Council action include:

- More promotion and business networking opportunities – across the Shire (business seminars/expos/business advice and support).
- Education initiatives - including planning for population growth, advocating for a vocational focus for the new secondary school, and a community outreach role for local schools.
- Encourage environmentally sustainable businesses and approaches - efficient water usage/collection.
- Longer term planning timeframes - to support planning continuity and project completion.
- Communicate and consult - including recording, responding and following up on community requests and providing sufficient opportunity for community feedback on planning and other issues.
- Opportunities for international trade.
- Climate and access to water.

**Council initiatives and projects**

- Council is developing an Economic Development Strategy to be completed mid-2017.
- The Golden Plains Food Production Precinct has been established encompassing more than 4,000 hectares of land zoned for agriculture. Golden Plains has established an Investment Taskforce to work with investors in taking up the opportunity.
- Council works and collaborates with strategic partners including Regional Development Victoria, Small Business Victoria, G21, local business groups and regional tourism associations.

*What will be Council's role in this space in the future?*

*What are the objectives for the next four years?*

*What are the priority strategies for implementation by Council?*
3.4 Managing Natural and Built Environments

This theme focuses on the things Council can do to look after townships, farmlands, natural areas and roads and bridges.

GPS Snapshot
- The Shire covers an area of 2,705 square kilometers
- Road network of around 1800km including sealed roads 1,027 kms (unsealed roads 731kms)
- Around 8,500 dwellings
- Dispersed rural settlements and communities
- 88% of land is in rural zones
- Less land available for Conservation and Natural Environments
- Low proportion of medium/high density dwellings

Strengths and areas of concern ... what the data tells us

The Golden Plains Health and Wellbeing Data Profile (16/11/2016) and other sources indicate the following key strengths and areas of concern for the Shire when compared to Victorian averages.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>GPS performance-higher/lower in relation to Victorian averages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housing affordability</td>
<td>- Lower house purchase and rental prices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car ownership</td>
<td>- Few households without a car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich in biodiversity</td>
<td>- Broad range of species of flora and fauna</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of concern</th>
<th>GPS performance-higher/lower In relation to Victorian averages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rainfall</td>
<td>- Lower rainfall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bushfire risk</td>
<td>- A number of settlements on the Victorian Bushfire Risk Register</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public transport</td>
<td>- Very low proportion of population near to public transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate change risk factors</td>
<td>- Direct damage to Council assets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Increased maintenance and repair costs for Council assets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Impact on local and regional ecosystems (loss of ephemeral wetlands, decrease in biodiversity, increase in salinity, spread of pest plants and animals).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Priorities for the next four years ... what the community told us

Responding to the question 'what do you think should be the priorities (top 3) for Golden Plains Shire over the next four years?' consistent messages from the community include:

- **Roads** — (S-41%, LP,W, BS)*
  
  Amongst the most consistently reported priorities across the consultation process for all Council Plan pillars. Priorities relate to maintaining and improving local roads and bridges (surfacing, sealing, quality materials), with a focus on improving accessibility and safety for the community, local business (farming), and industry. For a number of people there are concerns around the duplication or re-working of road infrastructure and the associated costs. Footpaths are also a high priority for many people in terms of safety and connectivity for the community. There is consistent support for ensuring that funding is in place to support the development of road infrastructure with suggestions for reducing/transferring funds allocated elsewhere.

- **Preserve and enhance the natural environment and open space** — (S-24%, LP,W, BS)*
  
  Valuing, preserving and caring for the natural environment is a consistent priority reported across all consultation activities. Capitalising on natural areas for passive recreation and activating spaces as a platform for connecting communities is a suggested priority for Council with the creation of more walking and bike tracks supported by a number of people and consistent with feedback for supporting healthy communities. Maintaining waterways, restoring vegetation and tree planting are noted priorities with a range of suggestions for specific locations. There is a view that the natural environment as a significant characteristic of the Shire should be a stand-alone pillar in the new Council Plan.

- **Pest, plant and animal management** — (S-14%, LP,W, BS)*
  
  The management of gorse, other noxious weeds and plants is a noted priority, particularly in regard to bushfire risk, with suggestions for an advocacy role for Council with State Government for bushfire management and for supporting community efforts for plant management (e.g. spray units for hire, access to chemicals).

- **Mowing and roadside maintenance** — (S-13%, LP,W)*
  
  Maintaining roadside areas including mowing (particularly in bushfire areas) and managing overhanging trees is a priority for a number of people. The maintenance of grassed areas in other Council owned spaces (parks, townships) is also noted.

- **Support community/volunteer groups** — (S-13%)*
  
  Encouraging, supporting and partnering with the community to care for the environment (land-care groups, farming networks, working bees) is a priority for a number of people and consistent with feedback for other key themes around supporting and building community commitment and participation in caring for community resources. Suggestions include seeking community grants for improving the environment and recognising the contribution of the community in caring for roadsides/nature strips.

- **Rubbish/waste management** — (S-11%, LP)*
  
  Priorities focus on hard rubbish and green waste collection (disposal bins), increased recycling and cleaning up rubbish in open spaces.

- **Housing development/subdivision** — (S-10%, W,)*
  
  For many people, there is a level of concern around managing the level of housing development and density in the Shire with some suggestions for restricting development and capping subdivision requirements to avoid overdevelopment. There are also concerns around community and social infrastructure keeping pace with residential growth that is consistent with the feedback around infrastructure priorities across other areas of Council. Whilst there is support for population growth and development, this is more generally based on a requirement for appropriate planning and zoning policies to protect the rural character of the Shire and farming interests.

*(Source – S-number of Survey responses, W-Workshops, LP-Listening Posts)
• **Fire management/safety** – (S-10%, W)*
  A recognised priority with suggestions for fire prevention measures (slashing, fire breaks, preventative burning), roadside fire education, safe exit roads, and improved telecommunication connectivity and reliability (phone/internet).

• **Maintenance of existing facilities** – (S-8%, W)*
  A supported priority that links with feedback related to health and wellbeing and enhancing local economies with calls for maintaining the Shire’s existing highly valued facilities (library, recreation facilities, schools, medical centre, public toilets) and planning for the development of additional required facilities, including the opportunity for the development of aged care facilities and creating ‘all season’ sporting facilities.

• **Environmental education** – (S-8%)*
  There is support for educating the community around caring for the environment, promoting natural areas through a variety of methods (newspapers, workshops for kids), and supporting the farming community on environmental matters.

*(Source – S-percentage of Survey responses, W-Workshops, LP-Listening Posts)*

Other reported priorities for Council action include:
• Communication - information around what Council is doing (e.g. capital works).
• Investment - in renewable energies, network and distribution.
• Water security for farmers.
• Agribusiness - develop a strategy and take a leadership approach.
• Integrated approach to planning - share planning information, explore.
• Partnership opportunities - working with other groups.
• Recognise the different aspirations of different communities.

**Council initiatives and projects**
• Golden Plains Shire is a member of the Climate Resilient Communities of the Barwon South West project along with 10 local governments and the Victorian Department of Primary Industries. The project aims to assist municipalities and key partners to understand and respond to risks and opportunities presented by future climatic changes and extreme weather events. Phase One of the project has been completed including a regional vulnerability assessment and identification of key risk factors for GPS – risk factors are reported across the key activity areas for Council outlined in Sections 3.2-3.5 of this report. The next stage of the project is focused on the development of a Climate Adaptation Plan for Golden Plains Shire as part of the Barwon South West Region that is scheduled for completion in coming months.
• Council acknowledges the Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation as the Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) for Golden Plains Shire and acts in accordance with the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 to protect aboriginal cultural heritage in Golden Plains Shire.

**What will be Council’s role in this space in the future?**
**What are the objectives for the next four years?**
**What are the priority strategies for implementation by Council?**
3.5 Delivering Good Governance and Leadership

This theme focuses on the things Council can do to govern with integrity, plan for the future, and advocate for communities.

GPS Snapshot

- 7 Councillors
- Council engages 183 staff
- Main service centre at Bannockburn – service centre at Linton
- Rate capping introduced by the Victorian Government set at 2% for the financial year 2017-2018

Strengths and areas of concern...what the data tells us

The Victorian Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey 2016 reports the following positive outcomes and areas for improvement in terms of community ratings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community rated positive outcomes</th>
<th>GPS community satisfaction ratings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customer service</td>
<td>- Highest rated area of performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community consultation</td>
<td>- Perceptions of performance improved slightly in the last year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillors</td>
<td>- Rated amongst the best things about Council</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community rated areas for improvement</th>
<th>GPS community satisfaction ratings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall council direction</td>
<td>- Amongst the three lowest ratings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making in the interest of the community</td>
<td>- Amongst the three lowest ratings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lobbying on behalf of the community</td>
<td>- Amongst the three lowest ratings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expensive rates</td>
<td>- Amongst the areas noted for improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>- Amongst the areas noted for improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial management</td>
<td>- Amongst the areas noted for improvement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Priorities for the next four years ... what the community told us

Responding to the question ‘what do you think should be the priorities (top 3) for Golden Plains Shire over the next four years?’ consistent messages from the community include:

- **Listen to the community/consult** (S-48%, W)*
  The most consistently rated priority across consultation processes and linked to similar feedback for other Council activity areas. There are some strong and consistent views around the need for genuine and effective consultation and engagement with the community and calls for Council to ‘listen’ to the broader community and act on what is heard. This is consistent with feedback provided to the Community Engagement Strategy consultation process that emphasised the need for effective planning, transparency, trust, and equity around consultation processes.

- **Transparency** – (S-23%, W)*
  An open and transparent approach by Council to reporting back to the community is a priority for many people with calls for full financial disclosure and transparency around decision making, tendering, grants and funding, and conflicts of interest.

- **Financial management** – (S-18%, LP, BS)*
  Reported priorities for financial management relate to the need for financial sustainability, the efficient use of financial resources (affordable budget/reduced expenditure), lower rates, and accountability and transparency to the community around financial management.

- **The way Council does business ... advocacy** – (S-17%, LP, W, BS)*
  Recognised consistently as a community and local business priority across all areas of Council activity in relation to the way that Council does business and works with the community and key stakeholders. Specific priorities for action include reducing red tape and improved efficiency and responsiveness in managing planning issues and community requests. There is also consistent support for an advocacy role for Council with State and Federal Government and other relevant stakeholders, particularly in relation to funding and grant opportunities to support service and infrastructure requirements.

- **Council staff/Councillor matters** – (S-17%, W)*
  For a number of people improving the level of local representation is a priority with calls for a return to a riding/ward system for the election of Councillors. For many people, there is a need for improved engagement by Councillors with the community through a variety of channels. Providing induction training for Councillors to take up a leadership role is a priority for some with other priorities including: establishing a unified approach by Council and staff as an integrated organisation; monitoring organisation performance through key performance indicators across all areas of the organisation (staff, councillors, committees); efficient staffing models and effective staff recruitment; and for Council to model a gender equity approach.

- **Planning for the long term** – (S-13%, LP, W, BS)*
  Planning for the longer term and future generations, beyond the current four-year term, is a specific priority nominated by a number of people and consistent with feedback for other Council areas. There are calls for a better practice and evidence based approach to future planning to acknowledge the Shire’s changing demographic profile.

- **Honesty/integrity** – (S-12%, W, BS)*
  A priority in terms of Council delivering on election promises and ‘doing what they say they will do’. This is reflective of feedback across other areas around the need for follow-through and completion of projects, programs and capital works within efficient timeframes.

*(Source – S-number of Survey responses, W-Workshops, LP-Listening Posts, BS – Business Survey)
Communications... customer service – (S-10%, LP,W, BS)*

A priority across the community that links with the feedback on ‘listening and consulting’ for this and across all areas of Council activity with calls for improvements in customer service, particularly responding to community requests. Communication is a high priority with suggestions around providing frequent and easy access to information; using a range of communication methods (newsletters, social media, website); consistent, user friendly and accessible reporting; and appropriate timelines for community responses. A specific request from older people was for increased information for aged care residents on the Council election process, including candidate profiles.

Governing for all – (S-8%, LP,W, BS)*

Governing for all residents and locations and equitable resource allocation across the Shire is supported here and in the feedback across all areas of Council activity. Specific comments include the need for decision making based on the ‘greater good’ and in the best interest of residents.

*(Source – S-percentage of Survey responses, W-Workshops, LP-Listening Posts)

Other reported priorities for Council action include:

- Continuous improvement and adapting to change.
- Harnessing and establishing community leadership – a key role for Council.
- Knowledge management – an integrated approach to sharing knowledge across the organisation.
- Organisational leadership – with a focus on an integrated organisation.
- Partnerships - promoting and facilitating interaction/partnerships with community groups for community outcomes.
- Community participation in decision making - citizen juries, deliberative democracy.

Council initiatives and projects

- The GPS Community First Strategy 2016 that seeks to create an organisational culture of innovation and Lean thinking has been extended for a further two years. The program is a community-centred strategy developed to foster collaboration, innovation and continuous improvement.
- The GPS Community Engagement Plan 2016-2020 has been developed to guide Council’s capacity to more effectively plan: deliver and evaluate engagement processes for the future.
- Council has implemented an Equal Employment Opportunity Program in accordance with the Equal Opportunity Act 2010.
- The Golden Plains White Ribbon Group (within Golden Plains Shire Council) aims to, in the longer term, have a positive influence on attitudes to violence against women and children in the wider Golden Plains community.

What will be Council’s role in this space in the future?
What are the objectives for the next four years?
What are the priority strategies for implementation by Council?
Attachment A: Framework for the Council Plan

The Council Plan provides the strategic blueprint for the medium-term direction for Golden Plains Shire and transparently outlines how that will be achieved. The preparation of the Council Plan is prescribed by the Local Government Act with requirements for setting out council’s strategic objectives, strategies for achieving those objectives, strategic indicators for monitoring the achievement of the objectives, and the resources for implementing the plan.

For the first time, the Council Plan 2017-2021 will incorporate the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan that identifies the broad mission, goals and priorities to enable people living in the municipality to achieve maximum health and wellbeing.

The Golden Plains Shire Council Plan 2017-2021 is intended as a high level strategic document that will identify a vision for the future and the mission and values that will guide the organisation for the next four years. The Plan will focus on strategic objectives and priorities across four key pillars that reflect the service areas of Council and the services that contribute to the health and wellbeing of the Golden Plains community.

The following diagram illustrates the strategic planning framework and the relationship between the key elements.

![Golden Plains Shire - Council Plan Framework](image-url)