

4.3 Council Plan Action Plan 2021-2025 Status Update

Ref: 1493865563-399

Robert Barber – Acting Chief Executive Officer

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report presents an update on the *Council Plan 2021-2025 Action Plan to 30 June 2025* as at 31 December 2024.

BACKGROUND

At its meeting on 27 October 2021 the Council adopted the *Council Plan 2021-2025*.

At its meeting on 13 December 2023 the Council adopted the *Council Plan 2021-2025 Action Plan to 30 June 2025*.

The Action Plan detailed projects and programs to be delivered to achieve the Council Plan strategies under its five themes: Community, Liveability, Economy, Environment and Leadership.

DISCUSSION

For a status update on actions from the *Council Plan 2021-2025* refer to **Appendix 1**.

Regular updates on the actions are also provided via quarterly departmental activity reports.

COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025 IMPLICATIONS

Leadership

- *Good governance.*
- *Engaged and informed community.*

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In accordance with the Council's *Community Engagement Policy* it is proposed that community engagement be undertaken at the 'Inform' level under the International Association for Public Participation's IAP2 public participation spectrum as detailed in the table below:

Level of Public Participation	Promise to the community	Techniques to be used
Inform	We will provide information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Public report presented to the Council▪ Action plan published on the Council's website.▪ Quarterly status updates reported to the Council.▪ Status updates regularly promoted to the community.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Costs associated with the development of actions for the *Council Plan 2021-2025 Action Plan To 30 June 2025* have been met from existing budget allocations.

Funding allocations will be required to deliver many of the actions. Funding requests will be considered by the Council during development of the *2025/26 Budget*.

Delivery of actions from *Council Plan 2021-2025* formed the basis of the *2024/25 Budget*.

LEGISLATIVE STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

It is considered that the report is consistent with section 90 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, where the Council must develop or review the Council Plan in accordance with its deliberate engagement practices.

The *Council Plan Action Plan 2021-2025 to 30 June 2025* Status Update report is a reportable measure for the yearly *Local Government Performance Indicators*. Indicators are also published in the Council's annual report.

OFFICER DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any general or material conflicts of interest in this matter.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

Theme 1: Community

Objective 1.1: A healthy, safe and resilient community

Strategy	Action	Responsibility	Status as at 31 December 2024
<p>Work closely with community and key stakeholders to plan for emergencies and build community resilience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate Benalla Rural City’s preparedness to respond to emergencies. 	<p>Manager Development</p>	<p>Working with partner agencies in preparing for emergencies.</p>
<p>With our community and key stakeholders address the priorities of the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-2023: healthy eating and active living; mental wellbeing, sexual and reproductive health, reducing tobacco related harm and harmful alcohol and drug use and preventing violence and injury, drug-resistant infections and climate change and its impact on health.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement and monitor Benalla Rural City Municipal Health and Wellbeing Action Plan. 	<p>Manager Community</p>	<p>Manager Community resourced one meeting of the Benalla Health and Wellbeing Partnership Group focusing on the theme of mental health, with five services overviewing their programs. The partnership continues to attract new service providers keen to link in with other providers servicing the Benalla area.</p> <p>Manager Community attended a number of sessions offered by VicHealth’s six-month Innovation Lab program. This initiative provides participants with insights, ideas, motivation and resources to boost Public Health and Wellbeing (PHW) across the council’s core business. Also attending online sessions offered by GVPHU.</p>

Strategy	Action	Responsibility	Status as at 31 December 2024
<p>Work together with key health, welfare and community organisations and networks to support better learning, development and wellbeing outcomes for community members.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the State Government to plan for future Benalla Rural City kindergarten infrastructure and workforce needs. 	<p>Manager Community</p>	<p>Manager Community attended a meeting in October 2024 to discuss the draft Kindergarten Infrastructure Services Plan (KISP). The final <i>Workforce Plan for Early Childhood Education Centres</i> was submitted in early May to the Department of Education.</p>
<p>Offer programs, services, activities and events that support, develop and connect community members of all abilities and lead the community in being age friendly and child and Covid safe.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt and implement the Disability Action Plan. 	<p>Manager Community</p>	<p>The draft <i>Disability Action Plan</i> will be presented to the Accessibility Reference Group (ARG) and submitted to the graphic designer in 2025.</p> <p>Child Safe Working Group continues to meet, with majority of staff having received training from Child Safe Strategies. Follow-up sessions were given to several teams across Council facilitated by members of the working group.</p> <p>Age Well in Benalla Info Hub still operates promoting services and activities available in Benalla for older people.</p>

Theme 1: Community

Objective 1.2: A connected, involved and inclusive community

Strategy	Action	Responsibility	Status as at 31 December 2024
<p>Support and promote opportunities for the community to participate in a range of social, recreational, and arts and cultural programs, activities and events.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate development of an off-leash dog park in the east of Benalla. 	<p>Manager Development</p>	<p>Locations investigated; however, parking is an issue for all the sites. The Barkly Street School site could house a dog park which is central and has the capability of on and off-site parking. To be considered as part of Barkly Street Master Plan. A grant funding application was made for a second dog park near the Saleyards. Council staff are awaiting a decision on this funding application.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the feasibility of creating a 'Barkly Street Community Precinct' at the former Benalla P-12 College campus. 	<p>General Manager Corporate</p>	<p>Negotiations with the State Government regarding potential uses of the site continue.</p>
<p>Encourage, support, value and celebrate volunteering in the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a Volunteer Engagement strategy. 	<p>Manager People and Performance</p>	<p>The Benalla Rural City Council Volunteer Development and Engagement Strategy 2023-2025 was adopted by the Leadership Team its May 2024 meeting.</p>

Strategy	Action	Responsibility	Status as at 31 December 2024
Celebrate and promote history and cultural diversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create opportunities for new culturally diverse citizens to be actively involved in Council programs and activities. 	General Manager Corporate	Council continues to support a range of culturally diverse programs and activities, including Benalla Migrant Camp pop-up exhibition launch; Benalla Migrants Association's Siva Singh book launch; North East Multicultural Association's Benalla Harmony Day celebration; and the 2024 Korean Film Festival.
Continue to respectfully engage, include, celebrate and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop and implement <i>Benalla Rural City Council Aboriginal Reconciliation Plan</i>. 	Manager Community	Manager Community resourced one meeting of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group over the December 2024 quarter. The Aboriginal Advisory Group with the support of Social Inclusion Action Group funding held a successful NAIDOC week event in July 2024. Reconciliation Australia officially endorsed the Council's first <i>Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Plans</i> underway to launch the RAP and have copies available early in 2025.
Promote, support and actively engage with smaller rural communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop and implement <i>Rural Township plans</i>. 	Manager Community	Township Plans were shared at <i>Social Inclusion Action Group</i> rural community events held during July to September 2024 to seek community feedback.

Theme 2: Liveability

Objective 2.1: Vibrant public spaces and places

Strategy	Action	Responsibility	Status as at 31 December 2024
<p>Maintain and develop sport and recreation facilities and reserves, parks, gardens, playgrounds, and walking and cycling paths to increase passive and active community participation and social connection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deliver Mitchell Street Lakeside Park project. 	<p>Manager Assets and Infrastructure</p>	<p>Mural Precent footpath works completed.</p> <p>Moria Reserve Aboriginal Park works completed.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meet agreed key milestones of the <i>Benalla Indoor Recreation Centre Redevelopment project</i>. 	<p>Manager Assets and Infrastructure</p>	<p><i>Benalla Indoor Recreation Centre Redevelopment Project</i> is currently meeting agreed milestones.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deliver <i>Benalla Art Gallery Redevelopment project</i>. 	<p>Manager Assets and Infrastructure</p>	<p>Project Control Committee has been established. Design to be finalised by 30 June 2025.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adopt and start implementation of the <i>Fawkner Drive Precinct Masterplan</i>. 	<p>General Manager Corporate</p>	<p>Contract to install a flying fox awarded. Works to be undertaken in second half of the 2024/25 financial year.</p> <p>Procurement process for the design and construction of the new pump track to be undertaken by 30 April 2025.</p>
<p>Ensure open spaces and public places in existing and developing communities are thoughtfully planned, connected up, green, sustainable, accessible, engaging and inclusive and consider the needs of an ageing community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a concept plan to link the Benalla Station Precinct and Benalla Central Business District. 	<p>Chief Executive Officer</p>	<p>Project on hold pending final design for Benalla Station Precinct.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop and adopt an <i>Open Space</i> strategy. 	<p>Manager Assets and Infrastructure</p>	<p>Consultants were appointed in November 2024 to assist with the development the draft <i>Open Space Strategy 2026-2040</i>.</p>

Strategy	Action	Responsibility	Status as at 31 December 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Install all abilities playground equipment. 	Manager Assets and Infrastructure	Completed. An all abilities playground was installed at the McKellar Street Park in Benalla.
<p>Beautify streetscapes, landscaping, signage and town entrances.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deliver the Bridge Street Streetscape project. 	Chief Executive Officer	Currently planning to redevelop Bridge Street, Benalla through landscape and streetscape improvements. Ongoing focus with maintaining and improving entrances to townships through improved signage and streetscape work.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Upgrade town signage and entry gateways. 	Manager Economic Development and Sustainability	Branding strategy to be developed in the 24/25 financial year and put out for community consultation.
<p>Enhance and maintain key places of significance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Update <i>Benalla Airport Master Plan</i>. 	Manager Facilities and Information Technology	<p>Extensive works underway to conserve BARC Hut 65.</p> <p><i>Draft Airport Masterplan Review</i>, under final review prior to stakeholder engagement.</p>
<p>Advocate for and act on opportunities to protect, maintain and preserve heritage assets.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adopt <i>Benalla Rural City Heritage Study</i>. 	Manager Development	Consultant is working on the extension of the existing precinct's and creation of new areas.

Theme: Liveability

Objective 2.2: Connected and accessible roads, footpaths, transport and parking

Strategy	Action	Responsibility	Status as at 31 December 2024
<p>Deliver and maintain accessible and safe footpaths and cycle paths in existing and new neighbourhoods.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and update <i>Pathways to the Future – Shared Path Project</i> strategy. 	<p>Manager Assets and Infrastructure</p>	<p>Remaining priorities from strategy have been identified and expected to be delivered in 2024/2025.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver Kerb and Channel Replacement program. 	<p>Manager Assets and Infrastructure</p>	<p>Program commenced and will be completed in 2024/225 Financial year.</p>
<p>Maintain and improve drainage, bridges, parking and road networks to meet the needs of the current and future population.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement <i>Benalla Rural City Council Drainage</i> strategy. 	<p>Manager Assets and Infrastructure</p>	<p>Priority projects from the strategy identified and planning and scoping commenced, with early stage works expected to be completed in 2024/2025.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalise <i>Devenish Drainage Upgrade project</i>. 	<p>Manager Assets and Infrastructure</p>	<p>Devenish Drain Upgrade Project has been completed.</p>
<p>Plan for population growth and accessibility for all.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop <i>Benalla Rural City Growth</i> strategy. 	<p>Chief Executive Officer</p>	<p>Funding opportunities continue to be investigated.</p>

Theme 3: Economy

Objective 3.1: Thriving business and industry

Strategy	Action	Responsibility	Status as at 31 December 2024
Work together with key stakeholders to engage, support, strengthen, enhance and diversify local business.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the <i>Economic Diversification</i> plan. 	Manager Economic Development and Sustainability	Final Draft of the Local Development Strategy (LDS) completed. Second stage funding applied for to support the projects out of the LDS.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a <i>Benalla Rural City Small Business Attraction and Assistance</i> program. 	Manager Economic Development and Sustainability	This will be an outcome of the Economic Development Strategy to be delivered in 24/25 Financial Year.
Attract new investment, business and industry to the Benalla Rural City to facilitate business growth and job creation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an <i>Economic Diversification</i> plan. 	Manager Economic Development and Sustainability	The development of the Local Development Strategy will support and assist and attracting growth to Benalla.

Theme 3: Economy

Objective 3.2: Flourishing tourism

Strategy	Action	Responsibility	Status as at 31 December 2024
Strengthen the visitor economy through growth of events and promotion of unique assets and experiences and visitor attractions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and update the <i>Events and Tourism</i> strategy. 	Manager Economic Development and Sustainability	The draft <i>Destination Management Plan</i> has been completed. The draft <i>Destination Management Plan</i> will be placed on public exhibition in mid-2025.
Grow, enhance and promote sports, arts and culture tourism opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reinvigorate and deliver the Benalla Street Art Festival. 	Manager Economic Development and Sustainability	Completed. The <i>Benalla Street Art Festival</i> was held in 2024 after a three-year hiatus due to COVID-19. Planning for the <i>2025 Benalla Street Art Festival</i> is underway. The Festival will be held in April 2025.

Theme 3: Economy

Objective: 3.4 Population growth

Strategy	Action	Responsibility	Status as at 31 December 2024
Proactively plan for new residential development to support increased population and growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate to the State Government to complete the Benalla West masterplan. 	Chief Executive Officer	Advocacy continues.

Theme 4: Environment

Objective 4.1: Healthy and protected natural environment

Strategy	Action	Responsibility	Status as at 31 December 2024
Partner with agencies and the community to manage and enhance our natural environmental assets, water quality and river health across Benalla Rural City and support the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority Regional Catchment Strategy and other regional environmental strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review, update and adopt the <i>Environment Strategy</i>. 	Manager Economic Development and Sustainability	The draft <i>Benalla Rural City Climate and Environment Strategy</i> has been developed and will be presented to the Council in March 2025.

Theme 4: Environment

Objective 4.2: High quality, efficient and sustainable waste management

Strategy	Action	Responsibility	Status as at 31 December 2024
Actively promote responsible behaviours to reduce waste.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement recommendations from the Waste Reduction Working group. 	Manager Assets and Infrastructure	Review and Adoption of <i>Waste Policy</i> complete.
Provide efficient and sustainable waste management services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalise disposal arrangements for environmentally sustainable disposal of kerbside-collected food organics and garden organics. 	Manager Assets and Infrastructure	New Contract with Rural City of Wangaratta for the disposal of kerbside – collected food organics and garden organics has been executed.

Theme 4: Environment
Objective 4.3: Sustainable practices

Strategy	Action	Responsibility	Status as at 31 December 2024
Partner with business, industry and community to plan and implement local approaches and initiatives that respond to climate change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review, update and adopt <i>Environment Strategy</i>. 	Manager Economic Development and Sustainability	The draft <i>Benalla Rural City Climate and Environment Strategy</i> has been developed and will be presented to the Council in March 2025.
Advocate, promote, support and encourage the use of renewable and clean energy and technology.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage and facilitate the installation of more electric vehicle chargers in and around the Benalla CBD. 	Manager Economic Development and Sustainability	Council is continuing to work with businesses to provide Electric Vehicle charging infrastructure within the municipality. Currently the Denny Street carpark has two charging stations.

Theme 5: Leadership
Objective 5.1: Good governance

Strategy	Action	Responsibility	Status as at 31 December 2024
Deliver responsible budget outcomes linked to strategy that maintain financial sustainability and deliver value for money and rating fairness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annually review, update and adopt the <i>Benalla Rural City Council Long-term Financial Plan</i>. 	Manager Finance	Preparation of BRCC Financial Statements as at 30 June 2025.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a Project Management framework. 	Manager Assets and Infrastructure	Recruitment of Project Management Officer underway.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a best practice asset management approach. 	Manager Assets and Infrastructure	Recruitment of Asset Management Officer underway.

Theme 5: Leadership

Objective 5.2: High performance culture

Strategy	Action	Responsibility	Status as at 31 December 2024
<p>Improve customer experience through timely, efficient, well planned, and accessible services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and update the <i>Customer Relations</i> strategy. 	<p>Manager People and Performance</p>	<p>The <i>Benalla Rural City Council Customer Experience Strategy 2023-2025</i> was adopted by the Leadership Team at its May 2024 meeting.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review, update and implement the <i>Benalla Rural City Council Information Technology and Communications</i> strategy. 	<p>Manager Facilities and Information Technology</p>	<p>Finalisation of computing hardware replacement complete at all Council sites.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in the Lower North Eastern Digital Transformation Partnership (CODI). 	<p>Manager Facilities and Information Technology</p>	<p>Preparation of training and computer network configuration to accommodate Records Hub has been complete.</p>
<p>Develop a skilled, efficient and high performing customer focussed workforce.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt and implement a <i>Benalla Rural City Council Workforce</i> plan. 	<p>Manager People and Performance</p>	<p>The <i>Benalla Rural City Council Workforce Plan 2021-2025</i> is current. Workforce planning workshops have been held with the Leadership Team and all managers are now developing their department plans.</p>

Theme 5: leadership

Objective 5.3: Engaged and informed community

Strategy	Action	Responsibility	Status as at 31 December 2024
<p>Create opportunities for deliberative engagement prior to decision making and actively improve and enhance Council's community engagement practices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to improve community engagement processes and new ways to engage. 	<p>Manager Community</p>	<p>Focus on smaller rural communities over the quarter continued with remaining rural community events funded through SIAG. In total over 700 people attended the 11 events. Preparation for extensive engagement to be undertaken in the development of the <i>Council Plan 2025-2029</i> is underway.</p>