

DIRECTOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SERVICES REPORT

14 June 2005

DSDS11	STAFFING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
	FILE: S10-13 RBP

SUMMARY:

Reporting that due to several vacancies in Council's Sustainable Development Department, a number of programs are likely to be delayed and reorganisation of staff responsibilities has been necessary.



Due to a nation-wide shortage of qualified and experienced Town Planners, Engineers and Building Surveyors and other regional and local factors, Council has been unable to attract and retain staff in several key positions.

As a result, a number of measures aimed at addressing these shortages are being implemented that have shorter term implications for the provision of services that Council should be aware of.

Health and Building Services

Council's Health and Building Services section is responsible to provide a range of environmental health and building services, including: -

- Processing DAs for single dwellings and sheds
- Processing Construction Certificates for all building developments
- Issuing Building Certificates
- Responding to environmental complaints/enquiries
- Renewing annual Caravan Park Licenses
- Renewing Public Entertainment Licenses
- Issuing Annual Fire Safety Certificates
- Processing Onsite Sewerage Management System applications
- Ensuring food shops are operating in accordance with regulations
- Ensuring development application conditions are enforced
- Processing Tree Preservation Order applications
- Acting as Principal Certifying Authority on developments
- Carrying out building inspections
- Issuing approvals under Section 68 of the Local Government Act

- Issuing of Occupation Certificates

To deliver these services Council employs the following staff resources:-

- 4 X Health and Building Surveyors
- 1 X Complying Development Officer
- 1 X On-site Sewerage Management Systems Officer
- 1 X Manager (also responsible for Ranger Services)
- 1 X Contractor - Building Inspections -Part time
- 1 X Contractor - Food Shop Inspections – Part Time (funded from inspection fees)

Vacancies

Since September 2004, one of the Health and Building Surveyor positions has been vacant and Council was unable to attract any suitably qualified and experienced applicants within the salary range being offered.

The On-Site Sewerage Management Systems Officer recently resigned and applications for a replacement are being called.

Management Response

In order to address these vacancies, the following measures are being implemented:-

- Two (2) Assistant Building Surveyors have been appointed to replace the Health and Building Surveyor position.
- A Clerical Support Officer has been appointed to one of the Assistant Building Surveyor positions and the clerical position will not be replaced. **Note:** Due to the resignation of the Strategic Planner, the responsibilities of one of the Assistant Building Surveyors will not be met until a replacement can be found as the appointed officer is assisting in a number of Strategic Planning projects.
- The loss of the clerical position will be offset by including most of the clerical duties in the new roles. **Note:** This has resulted in a nett saving to Council in both salaries and by the fact that no vehicles have been offered with the new positions.
- The Complying Development Officer has been utilised to approve Local Development Applications and Construction Certificates
- *DCP30 – Exempt and Complying Development* is being reviewed to encourage compliance with predetermined standards to reduce the resources required to assess minor development proposals.

- The three (3) remaining Health and Building Surveyors have been utilised to inspect and approve the operation of on-site sewerage management systems, in addition to their other duties.

Implications for Health and Building Services

- 1 Service levels in all functions of the section, including response to correspondence, are likely to continue to be restricted until the Assistant Building Surveyors are able to be trained and utilised for building inspections and application assessment procedures.
- 2 The increased utilisation of Complying Development is likely to slow, compounding the effect of reduced resources by increasing the number of minor developments requiring the same level of assessment as more significant developments.

Planning Services

Council's Planning Services Section is responsible to provide the following services:-

- Processing of DAs for all developments (other than single dwellings and sheds).
- Responding to complaints/enquiries relating to land use.
- Ensuring Development Application conditions are enforced.
- Issuing Planning Certificates
- Undertaking Strategic Planning
- Carrying out subdivision inspections
- Issuing of Roads Act Approvals
- Issuing approvals under Section 68 of the Local Government Act
- Release of Subdivision Certificates

To deliver these services Council employs the following staff resources:-

- 2 x Development Control Planners
- 1 x Town Planning Compliance Officer
- 2 x Development Engineers
- 1 x Strategic Planner
- 1 x Planning Manager

Vacancies

As Council would be aware, the Strategic Planner position is currently vacant. Despite extensive advertising, no suitable replacement has been found.

Although vacant for some time, the Town Planning Compliance Officer position has recently been filled, however, training in relevant procedures will be necessary.

The Strategic Planner position is responsible for the following functions:-

- Coordination of Council's
 - Heritage Committee,
 - Kempsey Town Centre Master Plan Committee
 - South West Rocks Town Centre Master Plan Committee
 - Land Release Taskforce Committee and
 - DCP 22 Review Committee
- Issuing of Planning Certificates
- Processing rezoning applications for
 - Saltwater Developments, South West Rocks
 - Ex Oil Terminal site, South West Rocks
 - Beranghi Road Community Title Subdivision, Crescent Head
 - Millards, Gladstone
 - Mitre 10 – Commercial Smith Street
 - Thurgoods – Industrial land, South Kempsey
 - Crescent Head Expansion
 - Amendment for DCP 30
 - Frederickton expansion
- KLEP 2005 Major Amendment
- Parking Study
- Point Plomer Road LEP
- Open Space Strategy for SWR
- Residential Land Release Strategy review
- Rural Land Release Strategy review
- Spencerville/New Entrance Master Plan (Distributor Road)
- Shire Heritage Study
- Review of Kempsey Town Centre Master Plan
- South Kempsey Industrial Land Strategy
- Section 94 plan preparation and review

Management Response

In order to address this vacancy, the following measures are being implemented:-

- With the exception of a number of minor LEPs which have been handed to the Development Control Officers, the Planning Manager has taken over all responsibilities and projects previously undertaken by the Strategic Planner.
- One of the Assistant Building Surveyors is being utilised to finalise the demographic modelling required for the Residential and Rural Land Release Land Release Strategies.

Implications for Planning Services

- 1 As there are insufficient resources to absorb the functions of the Strategic Planner, prioritisation has been necessary on the basis of the expectations of the community and of the need to ensure that the economic development of the Shire does not suffer. Accordingly, with the exception of the DCP 22 Review Committee, no meetings of the other Committees of Council for which the Strategic Planner is responsible to coordinate will be scheduled unless an item of urgency arises.
- 2 The rezonings for Saltwater Developments and the ex Oil Terminal Site at South West Rocks are likely to be delayed as both require consideration of draft Local Environmental Studies which have been prepared by consultants to ensure integration with the draft Saltwater Creek Estuary Management Plan and Flood Study, all of which are interrelated.
- 3 Coordination of the Shire Heritage Study will be undertaken by the Economic Development Manager which, in turn, will impact on other activities related to economic development.
- 4 The rezoning applications for Thurgood, Beranghi Road and Crescent Head expansion will be stalled
- 5 No progress will be made on the Parking Study, Residential or Rural Land Release Strategy reviews
- 6 All other functions and projects will continue, however, delays can be expected.

Environmental Project Services

Council's Environmental Projects Services section is responsible to provide the following services:-

- Coordination of the Macleay River Flood Plain Project, including preparation of plans of management related to rehabilitation of the Macleay River Flood Plain.
- Coordination of works required by the various plans of management.
- Monitoring of the environment to meet Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) requirements and to ensure water quality parameters are met.
- Preparation and implementation of Council's State of the Environment Report.
- Coordination of environmental works related to Council's infrastructure.

- Coordination and implementation of Council's Ecologically Sustainable Development Policy.

Vacancies

On the 25th May 2005, Council's Environmental Projects Coordinator ceased employment with Council to take up a position with an environmental consultancy.

The Environmental Projects Coordinator's position involves:-

- Preparation and implementation of Council's State of the Environment Report.
- Coordination of environmental works to improve environmental conditions at Council's current and ex landfill sites, saleyards and depot.
- Gills Creek Restoration program.
- Environmental auditing of Council facilities to meet DEC requirements.
- Coordination and implementation of Council's Ecologically Sustainable Development Policy.
- Co-ordinating Council's Ecologically Sustainable Development Committee (Agenda 21 Committee).

Management Response

It should be noted that the current position responsibilities have altered significantly with environmental projects relating to Council's infrastructure having been either completed or nearing completion. As a result of completion of these environmental works, the role will involve -

- Coordination of environmental projects,
- Monitoring of the State of the Environment indicators,
- Preparation of the annual State of Environment Report,
- Environmental auditing, and
- Coordination of the Agenda 21 Committee.

As a temporary measure the monitoring and reporting component of the position will be undertaken by the Waste Management Coordinator or by consultants.

Implications for Environmental Project Services

- 1 With this resignation and the current vacancy of the Strategic Planner's position, Council does not have the capacity to service the Agenda 21 Committee which may be delayed pending appointment of a suitable replacement.
- 2 Depending on the qualification and experience of applicants, other environmental reporting functions of the role may need to be undertaken by consultants in order to meet Council's obligations to the DEC.

REPORT IMPLICATIONS:

- *Environmental*

The level of environmental services provided is likely to be restricted pending replacement of several key positions within the Sustainable Development Services Department.

- *Social*

Nil

- *Economic (Financial)*

If the position of Strategic Planner remains vacant for an extended period, opportunities for economic development may be reduced.

- *Policy or Statutory*

Council's ability to satisfy statutory obligations may also be reduced due to the shortage of staff resources.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the information be noted.

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R B Pitt
DIRECTOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SERVICES