City of Townsville

Governance Framework

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Introduction

Purpose

The Governance Framework outlines how Townsville City Council (Council) ensures transparency, accountability, and effective decision-making. It is a practical guide—not a policy—that describes the structures, responsibilities, and practices supporting ethical leadership and community-focused service delivery.

This Framework helps Councillors, management, and workers understand their governance roles, comply with legislation, and make consistent, informed decisions aligned with Council's strategic priorities and community needs.

Principal Stakeholders

The Framework provides clarity and assurance to key stakeholders:

- **Council** – Confidence in achieving strategic priorities within acceptable risk levels.
- **Audit and Risk Committee** – Assurance of effective controls and risk management.
- **Chief Executive Officer (CEO)** – Oversight of organisational performance and community value delivery.
- **Council workers** – Clear understanding of governance principles supporting service delivery and accountability.

What Is Governance and Why It Matters

Governance refers to the systems and processes by which Council is directed, controlled, and held to account. It includes ethical leadership, legal compliance, risk management, and performance oversight. Good governance ensures decisions are made in the public interest, resources are used responsibly, and Council remains transparent and accountable.

Strong governance builds public trust, supports strategic decision-making, and enables continuous improvement—ensuring Council meets its obligations and delivers value to the community.

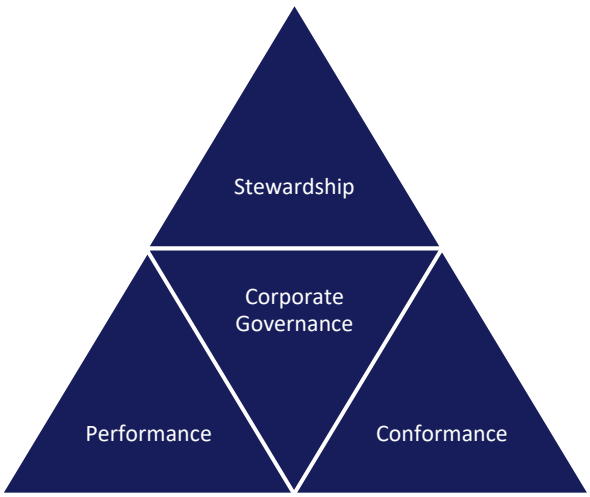

Figure 1. *The governance triangle, adapted from QAO better practice guide, Leading accountability - Governance*

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About This Framework

This Framework provides a structured approach to governance across Council operations. It outlines the systems, roles, and practices that support ethical leadership, legal compliance, and strategic planning. It promotes transparency, stakeholder engagement, and a values-based culture.

The Framework is built on five principles from the *Local Government Act 2009*:

1. transparent decision-making;
2. ethical behaviour;
3. sustainable service delivery;
4. democratic representation; and,
5. good governance.

It is supported by interconnected plans, policies, and systems that guide Council's operations and strategic direction.

Implementation and Review

Council will review the Framework every two years to ensure it remains current and effective. The review includes internal consultation, endorsement by the Audit and Risk Committee, and adoption by Council resolution. The updated Framework is published to ensure transparency and support continuous improvement.

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1. Transparent and effective processes, and decision-making in the public interest

1.1. Decision Making and Management Structure

1.1.1. The Role of Local Government

Local government plays a vital role in delivering services and infrastructure that directly impact the daily lives of residents. Council operates under the *Local Government Act 2009*, which defines local government as an elected body responsible for the good governance of its community. Council is empowered to make decisions independently, reflecting local priorities without intervention from other levels of government.

As the level of government closest to the community, Council is responsible for a wide range of functions—from urban planning and waste management to community development and environmental stewardship. Its role is to represent the interests of residents, promote sustainable growth, and ensure that public resources are managed responsibly and transparently.

1.1.2. The Composition of Townsville City Council

Council is made up of eleven elected representatives: the Mayor and ten Councillors. Each Councillor represents one of the city's ten divisions, while the Mayor is elected by the entire local government area. This structure ensures that all areas of the city have a voice in local decision-making and that the community is represented fairly and transparently.

Council elections are held every four years, in accordance with Queensland legislation. This structure ensures that all areas of the city have a voice in local decision-making and that the community is represented fairly and transparently.

Information about current Councillors and their divisions is available on Council's website. Details about the role and responsibilities of the Mayor and Councillors can be found in Section 2.2.

1.1.3. Decision Making Framework

Council's decision-making process is structured to ensure transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to community needs. Ordinary Council meetings are held at least once in each month and are open to the public unless confidential matters are being discussed. These meetings provide a formal platform for Councillors to deliberate on strategic issues, approve policies, and make decisions that guide Council's operations. A meeting schedule, agendas and minutes are published on Council's website to support public access and understanding.

Advisory Committees play a key role in informing Council decisions by providing insights and recommendations on specific areas of community interest. These committees report directly to Council, ensuring that diverse perspectives are considered in the decision-making process. The Audit and Risk Committee also reports to Council, offering independent oversight of assurance activities, financial reporting, risk management, internal controls and a range of governance activities. This integrated framework supports open governance and ensures decisions are made in the public interest.

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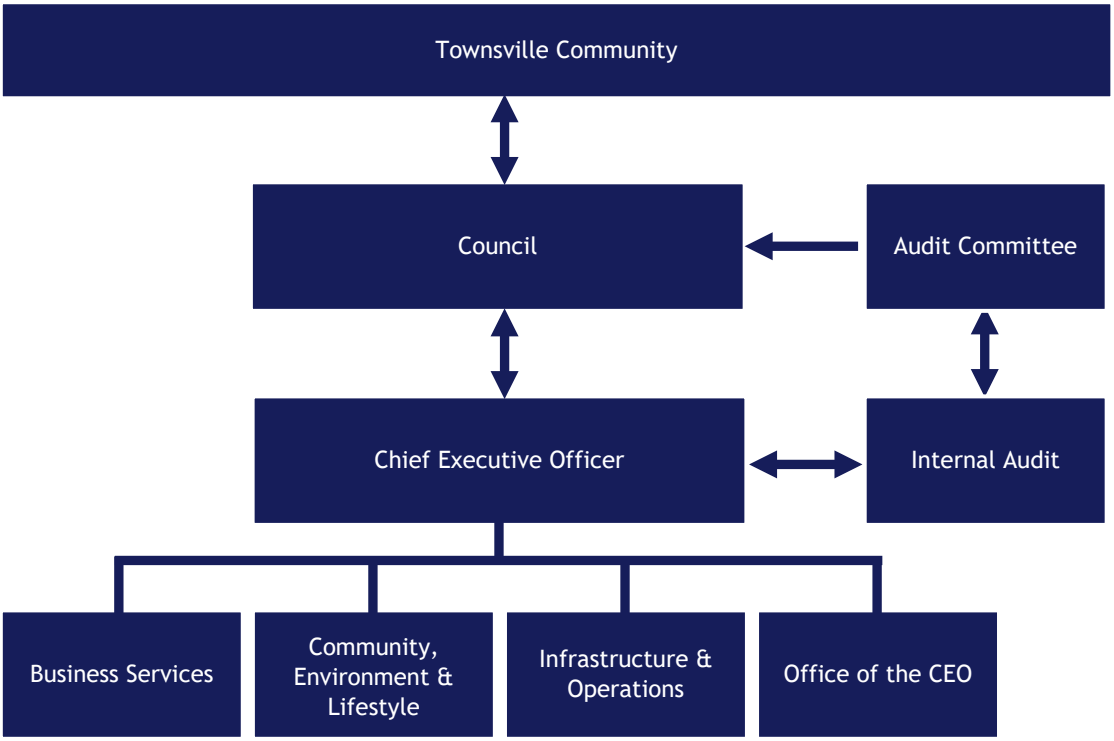
1.1.4. Organisational Structure



Council's organisational structure is designed to support the delivery of strategic priorities and community outcomes. The CEO leads the organisation and is supported by an Executive Team comprising divisional directors. This leadership group works in partnership with Councillors and workers to ensure that Council's vision and plans are effectively implemented.

The structure is reviewed regularly to ensure resources are aligned with service delivery needs and emerging priorities. Any substantial changes to the structure are approved by resolution of Council. This approach ensures that Council remains agile, responsive, and capable of delivering high-quality services to the community while maintaining strong internal governance and accountability.

1.1.5. Ordinary Council

Ordinary Council meetings are the formal decision-making forum for Councillors and are held at least once in each month. These meetings provide a structured environment where Councillors consider reports, debate issues, and vote on matters affecting the city. They are conducted in accordance with legislative requirements and Council's meeting procedures, ensuring decisions are made transparently and in the public interest.

To promote accessibility and community engagement, public attendance is encouraged, meetings are live-streamed and archived on Council's website, along with agendas and minutes. This allows residents to follow Council's work and understand how decisions are made.

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1.1.6. Advisory Committees

Council's Advisory Committees provide a vital link between Council and the community, offering insights and recommendations on key areas such as arts and culture, heritage, safety, and inclusion. These committees are made up of community representatives and subject matter experts who contribute local knowledge and perspectives to inform Council's decision-making. While Advisory Committees do not hold formal decision-making powers, their input helps shape policies and initiatives that reflect community needs.

Each committee reports directly to Council, ensuring that recommendations are considered as part of the broader governance process. This structure promotes collaboration, transparency, and inclusive engagement, allowing Council to tap into diverse expertise and strengthen its connection with residents. Details about the current Advisory Committees and their terms of reference are available on Council's website.

1.1.7. Representation on External Committees

Council appoints Councillors to represent the organisation on a range of external committees and boards. These appointments enable Council to contribute to regional collaboration, advocate for local priorities, and stay informed on issues that impact the broader community. Councillors serving on external bodies act as liaisons, sharing insights and bringing back relevant information to inform Council's strategic direction.

Appointments are made through a formal nomination and resolution process to ensure transparency and alignment with Council's objectives. Participation on external committees strengthens partnerships with other levels of government, industry, and community organisations, supporting coordinated planning and shared outcomes for the Townsville region.

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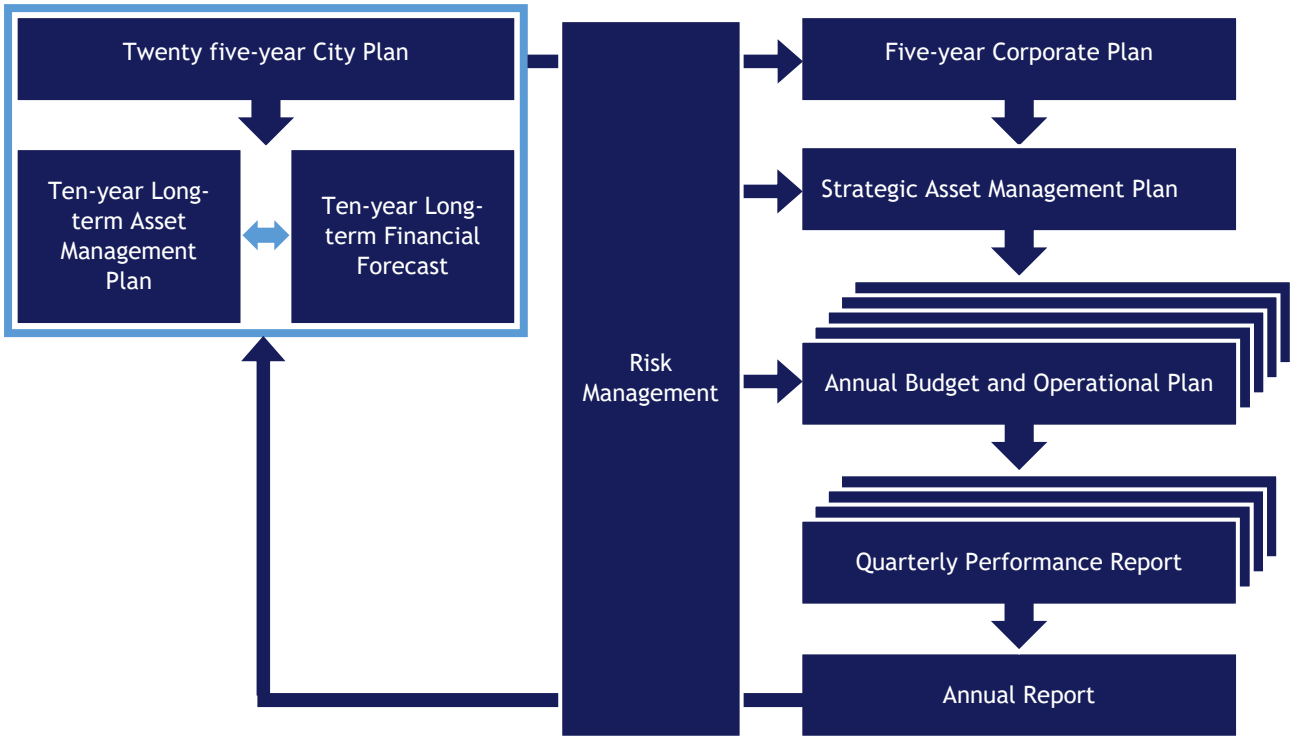
1.1.8. Strategic Planning Framework



Council's Strategic Planning Framework provides a structured approach to long-term planning and decision-making. It integrates community engagement, financial planning, asset management, and policy development to ensure that Council's goals are clearly defined and achievable. The framework supports coordinated planning across all levels of the organisation, helping Council respond to emerging challenges while delivering sustainable outcomes.

The framework is supported by a hierarchy of interconnected plans and strategies, including the Corporate Plan, Long-Term Financial Plan, Tree-year Capital Plan, Strategic Asset Management Plan, and City Deal. These documents guide Council's priorities and resource allocation, ensuring that planning is transparent, evidence-based, and aligned with community needs. Further details about supporting plans are available in Sections 3.1 and 5.1 of this document.

2. Ethical and legal behaviour of Councillors and local government employees

2.1. Ethical Oversight of Council

Council is committed to maintaining the highest standards of ethical conduct across all areas of its operations. Ethical behaviour is fundamental to building public trust and ensuring decisions are made in the best interests of the community.

Council's ethical framework is guided by the principles of the *Local Government Act 2009* and the *Public Sector Ethics Act 1994*, which promote integrity, transparency, and accountability. These principles are embedded in Council's policies, and codes of conduct.

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Oversight is supported by internal policies and external bodies such as the Queensland Ombudsman, Queensland Audit Office, and the Crime and Corruption Commission. Council also provides training and resources to ensure Councillors and workers understand their ethical obligations and can apply them confidently in their roles.

This commitment to ethical governance helps ensure that Council decisions are fair, transparent, and aligned with community needs.

2.2. Roles and Responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities within Council are defined under the *Local Government Act 2009*, which provides the legislative framework for local government in Queensland.

Council operates under a clear structure of roles and responsibilities to ensure effective governance and service delivery.

Role	Responsibility
Councillors (including the Mayor)	Councillors are elected to represent the interests of the community. They provide strategic leadership, make decisions on behalf of residents, and are accountable for Council's performance.
Mayor	The Mayor leads Council meetings, represents Council at official functions, and provides strategic direction to the CEO to ensure high-quality administration.
CEO	The CEO is responsible for managing the organisation, implementing Council decisions, and ensuring services are delivered efficiently and in line with Council's priorities.
Council Employees	Council Employees conduct the day-to-day operations of Council, delivering services, providing advice, and supporting the implementation of Council policies and plans.

Each role contributes to the overall effectiveness of Council, with responsibilities guided by legislation, internal policies, and a commitment to ethical and transparent governance.

2.2.1. Delegations

To operate efficiently and make timely decisions, Council delegates certain powers and responsibilities to the Mayor, CEO, and other authorised officers. These delegations are made in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2009*.

Delegations allow Council to manage day-to-day operations while ensuring that appropriately qualified individuals make decisions. This supports good governance by promoting accountability, transparency, and effective service delivery.

Delegations from the Council to the CEO are recorded in a formal register.

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2.3. Review and Control Mechanisms

2.3.1. Code of Conduct

Council is committed to maintaining a workplace culture built on integrity, respect, and accountability. The Code of Conduct, available on Council's website, outlines the standards of behaviour expected of all employees, contractors, and others working on behalf of Council.

The Code is based on the ethics principles of the *Public Sector Ethics Act 1994*, the local government principles of the *Local Government Act 2009*, and Council's own corporate values: Safety, Excellence, Respect, Value, and Enjoyment.

It guides workers in making ethical decisions, acting with professionalism, and delivering services in the public interest. All workers are introduced to the Code during induction and are expected to uphold its principles in their daily work.

2.3.2. Diversity and Equality

Council is committed to fostering a diverse, equitable and inclusive workplace that reflects the community it serves. Council values the unique backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives that each person brings and recognises that inclusion strengthens both the organisation and the services it delivers.

The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Workplace Policy, is available on Council's website. It outlines Council's commitment to creating a safe and respectful work environment for all workers and Councillors, promoting fair treatment and equal opportunity, and encouraging participation and contribution from people of all backgrounds.

All Councillors and employees are expected to model inclusive behaviour and support initiatives that promote diversity and equity across Council's operations and community engagement.

2.3.3. Complaint Management

Council is committed to handling complaints in a fair, transparent, and timely manner. The Complaint Management Policy and associated Procedure provides a consistent process for responding to concerns about Council services, decisions and worker conduct.

These documents ensure that complaints are assessed on their merits and handled without bias, confidentiality and privacy are respected, and feedback is used to improve services and strengthen community trust.

Council encourages residents to raise concerns and provides multiple ways to lodge a complaint, including online, by phone, or in writing. Information about lodging a complaint and the associated guidance documents are available on Council's Complaints page.

2.3.4. Inappropriate Conduct of Councillors

Council is committed to upholding high standards of conduct among Councillors. Complaints about the conduct of Councillors are managed in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2009* and overseen by the Office of the Independent Assessor (OIA).

All complaints about Councillor conduct must be submitted to the OIA, which undertakes an initial assessment to determine whether the matter involves inappropriate conduct, misconduct, or corrupt conduct. Depending on the outcome, the OIA may:

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- dismiss the complaint;
- investigate further;
- refer the matter to the Councillor Conduct Tribunal; or
- refer it back to Council for investigation.

When a matter is referred to Council, it is managed under Council's Investigation Policy, ensuring a fair, confidential, and timely process. A copy of the Investigation Policy is available on Council's website.

This system reinforces ethical leadership and ensures Councillors are held to account in a transparent and independent manner.

2.3.5. Fraud and Corruption

Council is committed to a zero-tolerance approach to fraud and corruption. Through its Fraud and Corruption Management Framework and Policy, Council proactively prevents, detects, and responds to fraudulent or corrupt conduct. Council's approach aligns with Australian Standard AS 8001:2021 – Fraud and Corruption Control.

All Councillors, employees, contractors, and volunteers are responsible for upholding these standards and must report suspected fraud or corruption. Regular training and oversight ensure ongoing awareness and compliance.

Further information is available in the Fraud and Corruption Management Policy on Council's website.

2.3.6. Confidentiality

Council is committed to safeguarding confidential information in accordance with its Confidentiality Policy and relevant legislation. Confidentiality is essential to maintaining public trust and ensuring that sensitive information—such as legal advice, personnel matters, commercial-in-confidence data, and security-related content—is handled appropriately. Council ensures that access to such information is limited to those with a legitimate need and that all workers and Councillors are trained to manage it responsibly.

Council balances its commitment to confidentiality with its obligations under transparency laws, including the *Right to Information Act 2009*. This approach ensures that while sensitive data is protected, the public still has access to information that supports open governance. By maintaining clear protocols and ongoing worker education, Council upholds the integrity of its operations and protects the interests of individuals and the community.

2.3.7. Councillor Contact with Lobbyists

Council maintains strict protocols to ensure that interactions between Councillors and lobbyists, developers, or submitters are ethical, transparent, and in line with legislative requirements. The Councillor Contact with Lobbyists, Developers and Submitters – Officers Present Policy requires that all business-related contact occurs in the presence of a Council officer. This approach helps prevent undue influence and ensures that discussions are properly documented and accountable.

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Councillors must disclose any potential conflicts of interest arising from such interactions and follow Council procedures for reporting and record-keeping. While incidental or social contact is not covered by the policy, Councillors are expected to remain vigilant about perceptions of influence. By enforcing these standards, Council promotes fairness in decision-making and strengthens public confidence in its planning and development processes.

2.3.8. Councillor Interaction with Employees

Council has adopted clear guidelines to ensure professional and respectful interactions between Councillors and Council employees. Under the Acceptable Request Guidelines – Councillors, all requests for information or advice must be made through approved channels, such as the Councillor Support team or designated email systems. Councillors are not permitted to direct employees and must avoid any behaviour that could be perceived as exerting influence or pressure.

These guidelines help maintain a clear separation between governance and administration, supporting transparency and accountability in Council operations. By ensuring that requests are reasonable and do not interfere with employee workloads or service delivery, Council protects the integrity of its decision-making processes and promotes a collaborative working environment.

2.3.9. Material Personal Interests and Conflict of Interest

Council is committed to transparent and accountable decision-making. Councillors must declare any material personal interest or conflict of interest in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2009* and the Code of Meeting Practice Policy, available on Council's website.

Councillors must declare interests as soon as they become known, leave a Council meeting during discussion, and ensure the declaration is recorded in the minutes. A standing reminder is read at meetings in line with Operation Belcarra reforms.

Council officers are also required to disclose any actual, perceived, or potential conflicts of interest, complete a management plan, and update Council on any changes in circumstances.

This approach ensures Councillors and workers uphold the highest standards of ethical conduct.

2.3.10. Related Parties

Council complies with Australian Accounting Standards on related party disclosures to ensure transparency in financial reporting.

Key Management Personnel, including the Mayor, Councillors, the CEO, and Directors, must identify related party relationships and declare related party transactions. Declarations are required on appointment, when circumstances change, and annually. Ordinary transactions (e.g. paying rates or paying standard fees for facility use) are excluded.

Council maintains a register of declared related party transactions.

Further details are outlined in Council's Related Party Disclosure Policy, available on its website.

2.3.11. Register of Interests

Council, through its CEO, maintains registers of interests for Councillors, Senior Executive and related parties in accordance with the *Local Government Regulation 2012*. These registers promote transparency by recording financial and non-financial interests that could influence decision-making.

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The Mayor maintains the register of interests of the CEO and their related parties. The Office of the Chief Executive Officer maintains declarations for other employees. The Register of Interests for Councillors are publicly available on Council's website.

These registers support accountability and help manage potential conflicts of interest across Council.

2.3.12. Public Interest Disclosure

Council encourages the reporting of suspected wrongdoing in Council and is committed to managing Public Interest Disclosures (PIDs) in a confidential, timely, and supportive manner. Council has implemented a Public Interest Disclosure Policy and Procedure to govern disclosures and Council's response.

Anyone, including employees, contractors, or members of the public, can make a disclosure. Council protects disclosers from reprisal and ensures all PIDs are assessed and, where appropriate, investigated.

Further details are outlined in Council's Public Interest Disclosure Policy and Procedure, available on Council's website.

2.3.13. Audit and Risk Committee

Council's Audit and Risk Committee is an independent advisory body established under the *Local Government Act 2009* and *Local Government Regulation 2012*.

The Committee supports Council's governance by providing oversight in key areas including, assurance activities, financial reporting, risk management, internal controls and a range of governance activities.

The Committee comprises no more than two Councillors and up to three independent members, including an Independent Chair. It meets quarterly (or more often if required) and reports to Council.

Further details are outlined in the Audit and Risk Committee Policy and Terms of Reference, available on Council's Audit and Risk Committee page.

2.3.14. External Audit

Council's financial statements are independently audited each year by the Queensland Audit Office (QAO) or its appointed contractors. This external audit process provides assurance that Council's financial reporting is accurate, complete, and compliant with Australian Accounting Standards and the *Local Government Regulation 2012*. It also helps identify areas for improvement in financial controls and governance practices.

Audit findings are reported to Council and made publicly available through the Auditor-General's Reports to Parliament. Council addresses any issues raised through its internal governance processes, ensuring that recommendations are considered and acted upon.

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2.3.15. Internal Audit

Council's Internal Audit function provides independent assurance that Council's operations are efficient, effective, and compliant with relevant laws, policies, and procedures. Operating under the *Local Government Act 2009, Local Government Regulation 2012* and the Institute of Internal Auditors International Professional Practices Framework (IPPF), Internal Audit evaluates internal controls, risk management systems, and financial and operational processes to support continuous improvement and good governance.

The Internal Audit team reports quarterly to the Audit and Risk Committee, ensuring that findings and recommendations are reviewed at the highest level. This function helps Council identify areas for improvement, strengthen accountability, and enhance service delivery. By maintaining a robust internal audit program, Council demonstrates its commitment to transparency, integrity, and responsible management of public resources.

3. Sustainable development and management of assets and infrastructure, and delivery of effective services

3.1. Planning

3.1.1. Planning Scheme

Council's Planning Scheme, known as the Townsville City Plan, provides the strategic framework for how the city will grow and develop over the next 25 years. It supports sustainable development by balancing housing needs, infrastructure planning, environmental protection, and economic growth. The scheme is designed to reflect community aspirations for a liveable, resilient, and prosperous city, while aligning with the *Planning Act 2016* and other relevant legislation.

The Planning Scheme encourages housing diversity and affordability, promotes efficient infrastructure investment, and supports job creation and business development. It guides land use decisions and development assessment processes, ensuring that growth is well-managed and consistent with Council's long-term vision. The Townsville City Plan is publicly available on Council's website, providing transparency and enabling residents, developers, and stakeholders to engage with the city's planning priorities.

3.1.2. Financial Planning

Council's financial planning framework ensures the responsible and sustainable management of community resources. It supports long-term fiscal stability by aligning financial decisions with strategic priorities and service delivery goals. Council's financial strategy includes a 10-year forecast that incorporates key sustainability ratios outlined in the State Government's Financial Management (Sustainability) Guideline, to guide investment and budgeting decisions.

The framework is built on principles of transparency, intergenerational equity, and resilience. Council uses the Queensland Treasury Corporation's forecasting model to assess financial health and inform planning. This approach enables Council to balance current needs with future obligations, ensuring that infrastructure, services, and community initiatives are funded appropriately. Financial planning is reviewed regularly to respond to changing conditions and maintain confidence in Council's stewardship of public funds.

3.1.3. Annual Budget

Council adopts an Annual Budget each financial year to allocate resources for delivering services, infrastructure, and community priorities. The budget is a key tool for implementing the Operational Plan and reflects Council's commitment to financial responsibility and strategic alignment. It includes detailed financial statements, capital works programs, and is supported by key policy documents such as the Revenue Policy, Investment Policy, and Debt Policy.

Prepared in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2009* and *Local Government Regulation 2012*, the budget is developed through a transparent process, published on Council's website. Council also publishes a summary version to promote community understanding and engagement. By aligning financial planning with strategic planning, the Annual Budget ensures that Council can deliver value to the community while maintaining long-term financial sustainability.

3.1.4. Procurement Management

Council's procurement practices are guided by a commitment to transparency, ethical conduct, and value for money. The Procurement Policy, available on Council's website, ensures that all purchasing decisions support Council's strategic objectives while complying with the *Local Government Act 2009* and *Local Government Regulation 2012*. Council applies sound contracting principles, which include open and effective competition, support for local suppliers, environmental responsibility, and fair dealing.

Procurement decisions consider whole-of-life costs, social and Indigenous procurement targets, and associated risks. Internal controls and oversight mechanisms are in place to ensure consistency and accountability across all procurement activities. By maintaining robust procurement processes, Council ensures that public funds are used responsibly, and that goods and services are acquired in a way that delivers long-term value to the community.

3.1.5. Asset Management Planning

Council manages a diverse portfolio of long-life assets that are essential to delivering services and supporting community wellbeing. Councils' Asset Management Framework, including the Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP), available on Council's website, provides a structured approach to planning, maintaining, and renewing assets across 11 portfolios:

Water	Waste-water	Resource Recovery	Transport
Stormwater	Coastal	Open space	Community and cultural
Information and communication technology	Buildings and facilities	Fleet	

The plan is aligned with the *Local Government Act 2009* and industry standards, including ISO 55000, and ensures that asset decisions are informed by lifecycle considerations, service needs, and financial sustainability.

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Council's asset management practices aim to balance cost, risk, and performance while responding to growth, climate change, and evolving community needs. Regular reviews and data-driven planning help ensure that assets remain fit for purpose and that investment is prioritised effectively. By integrating asset management into its broader governance framework, Council supports long-term resilience and delivers infrastructure that meets both current and future needs

3.1.6. Project Management Framework

Council applies a structured Project Management Framework to ensure the consistent and effective delivery of capital and operational projects. This framework supports best-practice planning, execution, and review, helping Council align projects with strategic objectives and community priorities. It provides clear guidance on project governance, resource allocation, stakeholder engagement, and risk management, ensuring that projects are delivered on time, within budget, and to expected standards.

Oversight is provided by Council's Project Management Office (PMO), which supports teams across all phases of project delivery. The PMO helps maintain consistency, reduces duplication, and improves transparency by applying standardised tools and methodologies. This approach strengthens Council's capacity to deliver complex initiatives and ensures that projects contribute meaningfully to the city's growth, resilience, and service outcomes.

Details on some of Council's major projects can be found on its website.

4. Democratic representation, social inclusion, and meaningful community engagement

4.1. Communicating with the Community

4.1.1. Community Engagement

Council is committed to fostering inclusive, transparent, and meaningful engagement with the community. The Community Engagement Policy, available on Council's website, provides a clear framework for involving residents in decisions that affect their lives, ensuring that diverse voices are heard and considered. Council's approach is guided by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) principles, which promote openness, respect, and collaboration throughout the engagement process.

Engagement activities are designed to be accessible and culturally appropriate, encouraging participation from all sectors of the community. Council uses a range of tools and platforms—including face-to-face consultations, digital surveys, and the Have Your Say Townsville portal—to gather feedback and share information. This commitment to engagement helps build trust, strengthens community relationships, and ensures that Council decisions reflect the needs and aspirations of Townsville's residents.

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4.1.2. Customer Service Standards

Council is committed to delivering high-quality, responsive, and accessible customer service across all areas of its operations. Council aims to ensure that every interaction with the community is professional, courteous, and timely. Services are designed to be easy to access through multiple channels, including in-person, by phone, and through digital platforms, allowing residents to engage with Council in ways that suit their needs.

Council uses feedback to continuously improve service delivery and enhance community satisfaction. Specific service areas, such as Water Services, operate under formal Customer Service Standards that outline expectations for service levels, billing, complaints handling, and dispute resolution. These standards are publicly available on Council's website, reinforcing Council's commitment to transparency, accountability, and community-focused service.

4.1.3. Open Data Strategy/Dashboards

Council is committed to transparency and innovation through its open data and digital reporting initiatives. The Townsville Dashboards platform provides public access to a wide range of Council and community data in user-friendly formats. This includes interactive dashboards, community profiles, and visual tools that help residents, researchers, and businesses explore local trends, services, and performance indicators.

The open data portal is updated regularly and supports informed decision-making by making key datasets freely available. While some information may be restricted due to privacy or confidentiality, Council strives to make as much data as possible accessible to the public. This initiative enhances civic engagement, supports evidence-based planning, and reflects Council's broader commitment to open government and digital transformation.

4.1.4. Have Your Say Townsville

Council's Have Your Say Townsville platform provides a dedicated space for community members to participate in Council projects, planning, and decision-making. This online engagement tool allows residents to share feedback, ideas, and concerns on a wide range of initiatives, from infrastructure upgrades to policy development. It reflects Council's commitment to open government and ensures that community input is captured in a transparent and accessible way.

The platform supports targeted engagement by allowing projects to be grouped by topic or stakeholder interest, making it easier for residents to find and contribute to issues that matter to them. A variety of interactive tools—such as surveys, maps, and discussion forums—encourage meaningful participation. Project updates and outcomes are shared with participants, reinforcing accountability and demonstrating how community feedback influences Council decisions.

4.1.5. Advertising Spending Policy

Council uses paid advertising to inform, educate, and engage the community about its services, programs, and initiatives. The Advertising Spending Policy, available on Council's website, ensures that all advertising activities serve a clear public purpose and are aligned with Council's strategic objectives. Advertising must not be used to promote individual Councillors or for political purposes, and all expenditure must be justified, transparent, and accountable.

The policy provides clear guidance on the appropriate use of advertising across various media channels. It supports consistent messaging, responsible use of public funds, and compliance with relevant legislation. By applying these principles, Council ensures that advertising contributes to community awareness and trust, while maintaining the integrity of its communications.

5. Good governance of, and by, local government

5.1. Planning

5.1.1. Townsville City Deal

The Townsville City Deal is a long-term partnership between the Australian Government, Queensland Government, and Townsville City Council aimed at driving economic growth, urban renewal, and coordinated planning across the city. Signed in December 2016, it was Australia's first City Deal and sets out a 15-year vision for Townsville's development. The agreement supports strategic investment in infrastructure, services, and reforms that benefit the community and enhance the city's liveability and resilience.

Key initiatives under the Deal include major projects such as the North Queensland Stadium, port expansion, and revitalisation of the city centre. The Deal promotes collaboration across all levels of government, ensuring that planning and funding decisions are aligned and responsive to local needs. By providing a shared framework for action, the Townsville City Deal strengthens regional partnerships and supports sustainable growth for current and future generations.

5.1.2. Corporate Plan

The Corporate Plan is Council's key strategic document, guiding its priorities and actions over a five-year period. It reflects the community's values and aspirations and sets out how Council will deliver services, infrastructure, and initiatives that support a thriving, sustainable city.

Developed through community and stakeholder engagement, the plan outlines Council's long-term vision and strategic direction. It provides a framework for decision-making and resource allocation, ensuring that Council's efforts are aligned with the needs of the community.

The Corporate Plan is supported by operational plans and performance reporting, which track progress and ensure transparency and accountability.

Council's Corporate Plan is available on Council's website.

5.1.3. Operational Plan

The Operational Plan translates Council's strategic direction into specific actions and initiatives to be delivered over a financial year. It outlines the key projects, services, and activities that support the goals of the Corporate Plan and are funded through Council's annual budget.

This plan ensures that Council's day-to-day operations are aligned with its long-term vision and community priorities. It also provides a basis for monitoring performance and reporting progress.

Council tracks implementation of the Operational Plan through regular performance reporting, ensuring transparency and accountability in service delivery.

The Council's Operational Plan is available on Council's website.

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5.2. Performance and Reporting

5.2.1. Annual Report

Council's annual report is one of its key accountability documents. It provides a comprehensive assessment of Council's performance in implementing the long-term five-year Corporate Plan and annual Operational Plan. The report also summarises Council's financial performance throughout the preceding financial year.

The annual report serves as a transparent record of Council's achievements and challenges, and helps inform residents, stakeholders and potential investors. The latest annual report, and an archive of prior reports, are available on Council's website.

5.2.2. Annual Financial Statements

Council prepares annual general purpose financial statements in accordance with the *Local Government Regulation 2012* and Australian Accounting Standards. These statements provide a detailed account of Council's financial performance and position for the financial year.

The statements are audited by the Queensland Audit Office. Once adopted, they are published as part of Council's Annual Report and made available to the public, see section 5.2.1. Publishing the financial statements reinforces Council's commitment to financial accountability and the responsible stewardship of community resources.

5.2.3. Quarterly Corporate Performance Reports

Council prepares quarterly corporate performance reports to track progress against the Operational Plan. These reports are presented to Council every three months, as required under the *Local Government Regulation 2012*. They provide a clear and timely assessment of how Council is delivering on its commitments, enabling both internal oversight and public transparency. The reports are published on Council's website and form part of the broader performance framework that supports continuous improvement and accountability.

5.2.4. Corporate Planning and Performance Management System

Council uses an integrated performance management system to manage and report on its strategic and operational performance. This system consolidates Council's planning documents and enables tracking of progress across all levels of the organisation, from individual roles to city-wide outcomes. It supports evidence-based decision-making and ensures that performance data is accessible, measurable, and aligned with Council's goals. Through regular updates and reporting, the performance management system strengthens transparency and helps Council deliver on its commitments to the community.

5.3. Risk Management

5.3.1. Enterprise Risk Management

Council adopts a proactive and integrated approach to risk management, ensuring that risks are identified, assessed, and managed consistently across all areas of its operations. This supports informed decision-making, protects public resources, and enhances service delivery.

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Council's Enterprise Risk Management Framework, including its Enterprise Risk Management Policy, which are available on Council's website, are aligned with ISO 31000:2018 and embedded into strategic planning and daily operations. Risk appetite statements guide decision-making by clarifying acceptable levels of risk, while key indicators and tolerance metrics help monitor performance. Regular reporting to senior leadership and the Audit and Risk Committee ensures visibility and accountability.

5.3.2. Disaster Management and Emergency Response

Council plays a central role in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery, guided by the *Disaster Management Act 2003, Disaster Management Regulation 2014* and the State Disaster Management Strategic Policy Framework. Council's disaster management function is designed to enhance community resilience and ensure a coordinated response to emergencies and disaster events within the Townsville local government area. This includes the establishment and operational readiness of the Townsville Local Disaster Management Group (TLDMG) and the Local Disaster Coordination Centre, which oversee the implementation of relevant community plans and procedures during disaster events.

The primary objective is to restore normal community functioning as quickly and safely as possible. Council focuses on re-establishing essential infrastructure and services, providing welfare and psychosocial support, and facilitating environmental and economic recovery. Coordination with regional, state, and federal agencies ensures that resources are mobilised efficiently and that recovery efforts are comprehensive and inclusive. Through this approach, Council supports the wellbeing of residents and strengthens the city's capacity to withstand and recover from future disasters.

Council maintains an internal emergency response capability and associated suite of guidance documents. The TLDMG Plans are available on Council's website.

5.3.3. Business Continuity Management

Council recognises the importance of organisational resilience and has implemented a comprehensive Business Continuity Management Framework to ensure it can respond effectively to disruptions. This framework includes an overarching Business Continuity Plan supported by detailed sub-plans, which collectively guide Council's response to events that interrupt critical business functions. The framework is designed to protect essential services, maintain public confidence, and meet regulatory and contractual obligations during times of crisis.

In the event of a significant disruption, Council prioritises the rapid restoration of key operations to minimise impacts on the community, workers, and stakeholders. The framework outlines clear roles and responsibilities, escalation procedures, and recovery strategies that help mitigate financial, legal, reputational, and service delivery risks. By embedding continuity planning into its governance practices, Council ensures it can maintain service standards, safeguard public resources, and support community wellbeing even under adverse conditions.

The Business Continuity Management Policy is available on Council's website.

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5.3.4. Insurance

Council maintains a comprehensive insurance program to protect its people, assets, and operations against unforeseen events. This program is centrally managed and includes coverage for public liability, property damage, motor vehicles, and employee wellbeing. Insurance plays a key role in Council's broader risk management strategy, ensuring that financial impacts from unexpected incidents are minimised and that services can continue with limited disruption.

Council provides clear guidance on how to lodge insurance claims, with information available to workers and the public through its website. The insurance framework is regularly reviewed to ensure coverage remains appropriate and responsive to emerging risks. By maintaining robust insurance arrangements, Council demonstrates its commitment to financial stewardship, operational resilience, and the ongoing delivery of services to the community.

5.4. Information Management

5.4.1. Right to Information

Council is committed to transparency and accountability through open access to information. In line with the *Right to Information Act 2009*, Council recognises the public's right to access documents held by government agencies, unless there is a valid reason to withhold them. Council proactively publishes a wide range of information and open data sets to support informed community engagement and reduce the need for formal access requests.

To make information more accessible, Council maintains a Right to Information Policy, publication scheme, and a disclosure log, both available through its Right to Information page. These resources outline the types of information routinely released and summarise documents disclosed through formal applications. Council also provides guidance on how to lodge an access application and applies the required public interest tests when assessing applications. This approach ensures that Council balances openness with the need to protect sensitive or confidential information, while promoting trust and transparency in local governance.

5.4.2. Information Privacy

Council is committed to protecting the personal information of individuals in accordance with the *Information Privacy Act 2009*. Personal information means information or an opinion about an identified individual or an individual who is reasonably identifiable from the information or opinion whether the information or opinion is true or not and whether the information or opinion is recorded in a material form or not. Council recognises the importance of privacy in maintaining public trust and ensures that personal information is collected, stored, used, and disclosed responsibly and lawfully.

Council's Information Privacy Policy, available on its website, outlines how it manages personal information across all areas of its operations. The policy ensures that privacy principles are embedded in Council's systems, processes, and decision-making. All workers are required to comply with these principles, and privacy complaints are handled in a timely and confidential manner. By maintaining strong privacy practices, Council supports transparency while safeguarding the rights of individuals.

5.4.3. Information Management and Information Governance

Council recognises information as a strategic asset and is committed to managing it effectively across its entire lifecycle. Council's approach to information governance is guided by the Information Management Framework, including the Information Management Policy and Records Governance Policy, which together ensure that information is accurate, secure, accessible, and compliant with legislative requirements. These policies support consistent practices in data management, recordkeeping, information security, and privacy, aligning with the *Public Records Act 2023*, *Right to Information Act 2009*, and *Information Privacy Act 2009*.

Council's governance of information is embedded in its operations through clear roles, responsibilities, and supporting systems. This includes the use of compliant tools for capturing and managing records, structured oversight of information assets, and regular reviews to ensure integrity and discoverability. By treating information as a core enabler of service delivery and decision-making, Council strengthens transparency, reduces risk, and ensures that information supports both operational needs and community needs.

5.5. Legal Framework

5.5.1. Policies, Administrative Directives and Procedures

Council uses a structured framework of policies, administrative directives, and procedures to guide decision-making and operational activities. Policies are formal statements adopted by Council that define its position on key issues and provide strategic direction. Administrative directives, issued by the CEO, support the implementation of Council decisions and ensure compliance with legislative requirements. Procedures outline the specific steps workers must follow to carry out these policies and directives effectively.

This framework, supported by Council's internal Corporate Guidance Documents Procedure ensures consistency, accountability, and transparency across Council's operations. All documents are reviewed regularly to remain current and responsive to legislative changes, organisational priorities, and community needs. Approved policies are published on Council's website, providing the public with clear insight into how Council operates and makes decisions. This approach supports good governance by ensuring that workers actions are aligned with Council's strategic objectives and legal obligations.

5.5.2. Legislative Compliance

Council is committed to operating within the bounds of all applicable legislation and regulatory requirements. Legislative compliance is a core component of Council's governance framework, ensuring that decisions, actions, and services are lawful, ethical, and aligned with community needs. Employees are expected to understand and apply relevant laws in their daily work, supported by internal policies, training, and oversight mechanisms.

Council actively monitors changes in legislation and updates its policies and procedures accordingly to maintain compliance. Regular reporting to senior leadership helps ensure accountability and supports continuous improvement in compliance practices. This approach reinforces Council's commitment to responsible governance and provides assurance to the community that its operations are conducted with integrity and transparency.

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5.5.3. Local Laws

Council adopts local laws to support the good governance and effective management of the local government area. These laws provide Council with the authority to regulate matters that directly impact the community, such as public health, safety, infrastructure, and amenity. Most of Council's local laws are based on model provisions recommended by the Queensland Government, ensuring consistency and legal robustness.

To promote regional alignment, Townsville has adopted an identical set of local and subordinate laws alongside neighbouring councils, including Charters Towers and Burdekin Shire. This coordinated approach helps streamline compliance and service delivery across the region. All current local laws are publicly available on Council's website, allowing residents to understand their rights and responsibilities and engage with Council's regulatory processes transparently.

5.5.4. Mandatory Registers

Council maintains a series of mandatory registers to support transparency, accountability, and public access to information. These registers record key details about Council's operations, decisions, and interests, helping to ensure that governance processes are open and traceable. Examples include registers of interests, complaints, local laws, and related party transactions, each maintained in accordance with legislative requirements.

A full list of registers available for public inspection is published on Council's website. Residents may request access to these registers by contacting Council directly. This system reinforces Council's commitment to open government and provides the community with a clear view of how decisions are made and how public resources are managed.

5.5.5. Legal Services

Council's Legal Services team provides professional legal support across all areas of Council operations. As a central service partner, the team ensures that Council's decisions, actions, and agreements are legally sound and aligned with relevant legislation. This includes providing advice on governance matters, managing litigation and prosecutions, preparing contracts and leases, and supporting compliance with statutory obligations.

Legal Services also plays a key role in risk mitigation by identifying legal issues early and supporting informed decision-making. The team works closely with internal departments to ensure that legal considerations are integrated into project planning, policy development, and service delivery. By maintaining high standards of legal practice, Council strengthens public confidence in its operations and upholds its commitment to lawful and ethical governance.

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