# Statutory Planning Services Review
## FINAL REPORT

Grosvenor Public Sector Advisory

CANBERRA | SYDNEY | MELBOURNE | BRISBANE

grosvenor.com.au

14 AUGUST 2020

# Table of contents

# Executive Summary

# Executive Summary

## Overview

Grosvenor Performance Group (Grosvenor) was engaged by Mansfield Shire Council (MSC) in February 2020 to undertake a review of the processes and procedures of MSC's Statutory Planning Unit (SPU). This review is a part of an organisation-wide review that was initiated as a result of decreasing levels of community satisfaction, which were highlighted by the Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey (LGCS Survey).

This report was originally drafted for internal use only but has been published at the request of MSC. An addendum has been provided to the Project Sponsor in addition to this report.

## Benchmarking Findings

Through benchmarking MSC with other similar councils, Grosvenor found that relative to these councils, the MSC SPU is processing a high number of planning applications, which is a credit to the team. In addition, the median processing time and percentage of applications completed within 60 processing days improved from 2017/18 to 2019/20.

On the other hand, a significantly higher gross days to determination time, which includes referrals and further information requests (RFIs), was identified as a key contributor to low community satisfaction within the Mansfield Shire.

## Effectiveness and Efficiency of Statutory Planning at MSC Findings

The effectiveness and efficiency of statutory planning at MSC was assessed by considering various aspects of SPU. As such the following findings were made to support the benchmarking:

| | Findings |
|---|---|
| 1 | SPU does not have an agreed and shared purpose and is currently lacking a focus on strategic planning |
| 2 | The previous structure of SPU did not support operational requirements due to the span of control expected of the Development Services Manager and lack of clear role accountability within the SPU team |
| 3 | Significant issues with the capacity of the Development Services Manager has considerable downstream impacts on the SPU team including an inability to adequately delegate tasks, develop team, performance manage and perform both statutory planning and strategic planning responsibilities |
| 4 | The current team culture within SPU features siloes, poor behaviours, lack of respect and support |
| 5 | Planning application and communication processes are not clearly defined, nor do they meet operational requirements regarding stakeholder satisfaction, quality and timeliness |
| 6 | Systems are largely manual, and one person is responsible for managing the database for applications. The VicSmart system enables streamlined applications, particularly for sub-divisions with the SPEAR system. |
| 7 | Stakeholder engagement is haphazard, communication is infrequent, and customer service is inconsistent. |

# Executive Summary

## Conclusion

Overall the review of the processes and procedures of SPU found that there were areas of opportunity for the efficient and effective delivery of statutory planning services at MSC.

Key areas of opportunity include the level of customer service, the lack of a clearly defined and agreed application process and the time taken to arrive at planning application outcomes. Other areas for improvement included the need for a clear purpose within SPU, a healthy team culture and consistent communication with applicants regarding the requirements for and progress of their planning applications.

The review found that the recent restructure was a positive change and would enable improvements to both the capacity and capability of staff within the SPU.

## Recommendations

Grosvenor developed 27 recommendations for MSC across the following areas:

> Scope and Purpose

> Capacity and Capability

> Culture

> Processes

> Systems

> Stakeholder Engagement and Communications.

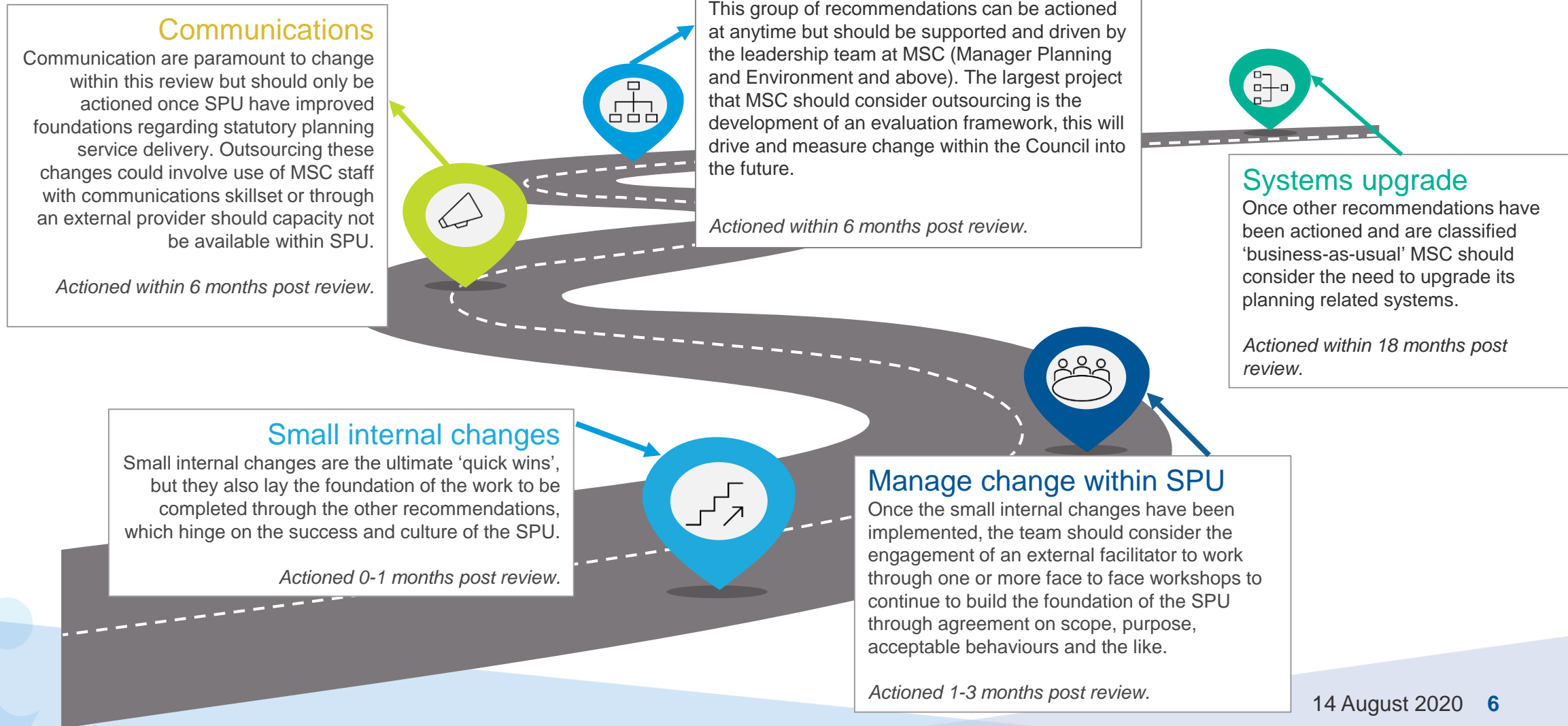A full list of the recommendations is detailed from Page 40.

These recommendations have been grouped and prioritised based on their potential impact and required effort using a prioritisation matrix as depicted on Page 43.

## Roadmap

Using a prioritisation matrix a roadmap has been developed to action these recommendations, with the first priority group implemented within 0-1 month of this review, and the fifth priority considered within 18 months of this review. The full roadmap is found overleaf and from Page 44.

# Executive Summary

*This roadmap is an example of a roadmap that MSC regarding SPU could begin to implement, should the aforementioned recommendations be accepted*

## Governance and leadership

This group of recommendations can be actioned at anytime but should be supported and driven by the leadership team at MSC (Manager Planning and Environment and above). The largest project that MSC should consider outsourcing is the development of an evaluation framework, this will drive and measure change within the Council into the future.

*Actioned within 6 months post review.*

## Communications

Communication are paramount to change within this review but should only be actioned once SPU have improved foundations regarding statutory planning service delivery. Outsourcing these changes could involve use of MSC staff with communications skillset or through an external provider should capacity not be available within SPU.

*Actioned within 6 months post review.*

## Systems upgrade

Once other recommendations have been actioned and are classified 'business-as-usual' MSC should consider the need to upgrade its planning related systems.

*Actioned within 18 months post review.*

## Small internal changes

Small internal changes are the ultimate 'quick wins', but they also lay the foundation of the work to be completed through the other recommendations, which hinge on the success and culture of the SPU.

*Actioned 0-1 months post review.*

## Manage change within SPU

Once the small internal changes have been implemented, the team should consider the engagement of an external facilitator to work through one or more face to face workshops to continue to build the foundation of the SPU through agreement on scope, purpose, acceptable behaviours and the like.

*Actioned 1-3 months post review.*

**1**

Introduction

# Introduction

## Overview

Grosvenor was engaged by MSC in February 2020 to undertake a review of the processes and procedures of MSC's SPU. This review is a part of an organisation-wide review that was initiated as a result of decreasing levels of community satisfaction, which were highlighted by the LGCS Survey.

## Project scope

In accordance with the RFT, the scope of this review included:

> defining:

— the existing scope and purpose of statutory planning services

— organisational objectives and operational and legislative requirements

> benchmarking against small councils

> assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of statutory planning services

> identifying options and opportunities for improved service outcomes

> developing a stakeholder engagement plan for use by the SPU.

## Out of scope

Importantly, in accordance with the RFT, the following were out of scope:

> this review was not intended to be an audit

> implementation of service delivery recommendations

> public consultation beyond that which is listed overleaf.

# Introduction

## Approach

The project included the following activities and stakeholder consultations:

> data collection and review

> benchmarking of selected small councils

> one-on-one consultations with:

— four Statutory Planning Services staff members

— one MSC staff member

— four external consultants

> one focus group with MSC Councillors

> one community survey with 32 individual responses

> one public forum with members of the Mansfield Shire community

> synthesis and analysis of all data received by MSC and stakeholder consultations

> early findings shared with the Project Sponsor and Manager Planning and Environment on 8 July 2020

> development of report, including addendum.

## Project limitations

The following project limitations should be noted when considering this review:

> the COVID-19 environment impacted on the ability of Grosvenor project team members to consult with stakeholders in person

> MSC's data is not routinely used for review purposes and as such the data is of varying quality and limited in timespan

> Grosvenor was required to select small councils that had identical available data in undertaking benchmarking. As far as possible, similar councils were utilised within these restraints.

## Disclaimer

This report was originally drafted for internal use only but has been published at the request of MSC. An addendum has been provided to the Project Sponsor in addition to this report.
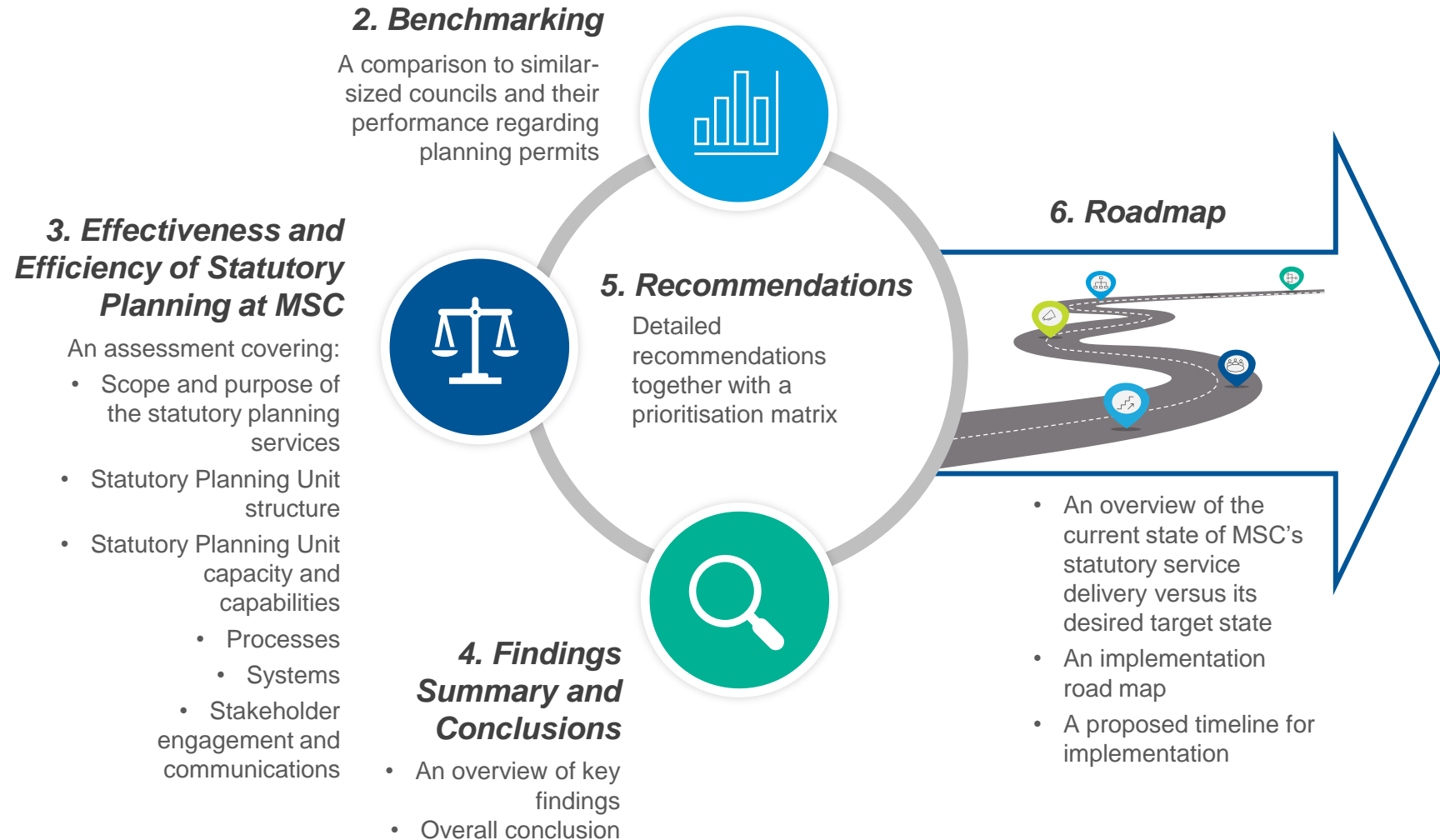
## Acknowledgements

Grosvenor would like to acknowledge all those who attended consultations or provided input into the development of this review including the MSC Project Sponsor and Project Manager.

# Report structure

*Overview of the report*

This report contains several sections and sub-sections in line with the key areas of investigation.

While there is some overlap between the sections, the relevant sections of this report are outlined in the diagram on the right.
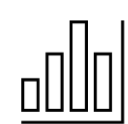
## 2. Benchmarking

A comparison to similar-sized councils and their performance regarding planning permits

## 3. Effectiveness and Efficiency of Statutory Planning at MSC

An assessment covering:
- Scope and purpose of the statutory planning services
- Statutory Planning Unit structure
- Statutory Planning Unit capacity and capabilities
- Processes
- Systems
- Stakeholder engagement and communications

## 5. Recommendations

Detailed recommendations together with a prioritisation matrix

## 4. Findings Summary and Conclusions

- An overview of key findings
- Overall conclusion

## 6. Roadmap

- An overview of the current state of MSC's statutory service delivery versus its desired target state
- An implementation road map
- A proposed timeline for implementation

**2**

Benchmarking

# Benchmarking

Benchmarking was conducted as part of this review to gain further insight into MSC's performance relative to similar-sized councils and to inform Grosvenor's review of SPU's effectiveness and efficiency.

The benchmarking undertaken consisted of the following three areas of investigation:

1. **Community satisfaction** – as the main driver for the review, the LGCS Survey results were used to establish a baseline understanding of MSC's performance in planning and building permits

2. **Processing performance** – mandatory reporting on planning permits including volume and type of applications were analysed to develop further contextual understanding of MSC's planning permit performance

3. **Website usability** – to understand the customer experience, a comparative framework was developed to assess MSC's website against similar council websites for the accessibility of information regarding planning permits.

## 1. Community satisfaction

The LGSC Survey compiles community feedback on Victorian councils. The Department of Environment Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) conducted 400 interviews between 1 February 2019 and 30 March 2019 for the 2019 LGCS Survey, which represented the latest available data at the time of writing this report. The community satisfaction survey results were used as a basis for benchmarking MSC's statutory planning against similar councils[1].

Compared to the 18 small shires surveyed, MSC underperforms both overall, and planning and building permits categories, as presented in the table below. Further, MSC received the lowest score in the comparator group.

| 2018/19 | Small Shire Average | MSC | Variance |
|---|---|---|---|
| Overall (out of 100) | 58 | 51 | -12% |
| Planning and Building Permits Score (out of 100) | 48 | 36 | -25% |

*Table 1. LGCS Survey Results*

## Trend in permit scores

The low score for planning and building permits is the culmination of a decline over the last 5 years with a sharp 10-point drop in from early 2018 to early 2019, as illustrated in the chart below.
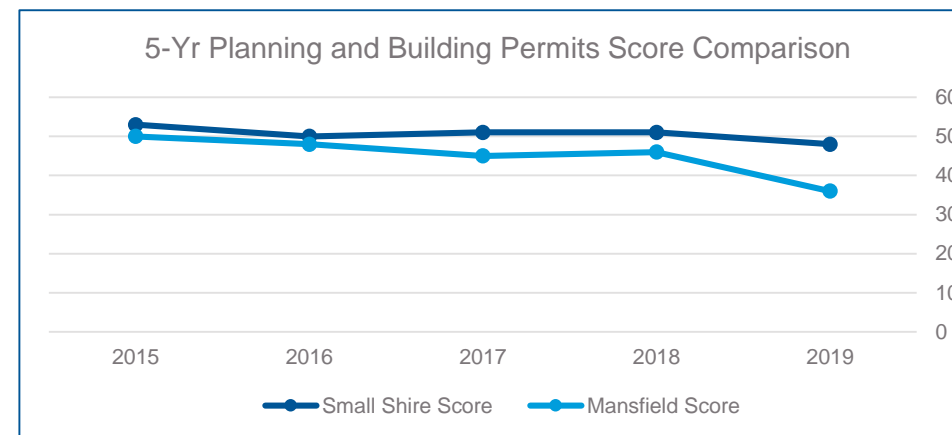


*Figure 1. 5-yr planning and building permits score comparison*

[1]As the Mansfield Shire has a population of less than 15,000, it is considered a Small Shire (see Attachment A for a full list of small shires in Victoria).

## 2. Processing performance

The following comparisons draw on the 2017/18 Planning Permit Activity Annual Reports, the latest available annual report on the Planning Victoria website. The report's numbers were validated against the latest available quarterly and monthly reports to ensure they are aligned with current planning permit activity levels. The annual reports were used as they provided more reliable and comparable data than the quarterly and monthly reports.

Mansfield Shire was compared to three other small shires:

> Ararat

> Hindmarsh

> Pyrenees.

This comparator group of small shires were selected for having both planning and building permit scores from the LGCS Survey and 2017/18 annual reporting data available. The survey and activity reports are aligned as they are both published around June each year.

It should be noted that the reporting data is limited and cannot account for all factors relating to planning permit performance. As the data is high-level, details are omitted including the complexity of plans. The purpose of this comparison is to provide some indicative insight around MSC's planning permit performance to identify specific areas for improvement.
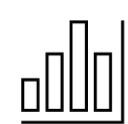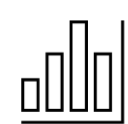
# Benchmarking

MSC apportions moderate budget to statutory planning and receives a high number of applications resulting in low resources per application as seen in the table to the right. Compared with the other three councils, MSC received 171 planning permits in 2017/18, 71 more than Pyrenees, which received the second-highest number of applications.

Having low resources per application may impact MSC's ability to process planning permit applications. These impacts may include limited capacity to process applications on time, internal pressure and/or limited capacity to identify and implement processing improvements. These issues will be discussed further from Page 21.

| Criteria | Mansfield | Ararat | Hindmarsh | Pyrenees |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| LGCSS overall score 2018/19 (/100) | 51 | 49 | 65 | 60 |
| LGCSS planning and building permits score 2018/19 (/100) | 36 | 52 | 50 | 47 |
| Population in 2016 | 8.2k | 11.0k | 5.6k | 7.0k |
| Area (sq. km) | 3,900 | 4,200 | 7,600 | 3,400 |
| Population density (per sq. km) | 1.8 | 2.8 | 0.9 | 1.9 |
| Statutory planning budget 2018/19 ('000) | $396 | $686 | $222 | $401 |
| Percentage of Council budget 2018/19 | 2.1% | 2.3% | 0.9% | 1.6% |
| Number of planning permits received 2017/18 | 171 | 76 | 27 | 100 |
| Number of planning permits received per 1000 residents | 21 | 7 | 5 | 14 |
| Statutory planning budget per planning permit received | $2,300 | $9,000 | $8,200 | $4,000 |

*Table 2. Budget and volume of applications in 2017/18*

# Benchmarking

MSC has a high rate of refusals and withdrawals compared to the other benchmarked councils, 8% and 10% respectively, versus zero refusals from all other councils and 7% of withdrawals from the second-highest council. The percentage of refusals does not distinguish between those which are made by referral authorities (under Section 55 of the Planning Scheme) and those which are decided by Planning Officers. Other factors which may impact refusals and withdrawal numbers include the high volume of applications and issues with the current application process, for example a lack of clarity around what information is required.

MSC has a moderately high rate of applications with RFIs or referrals (43% and 60% respectively) as well as a gross days to determination time that is significantly greater than the comparator group (125 days versus 93 days from the second-highest council). The gross days to determination figure indicates the total time taken for planning applications including referrals and RFIs. Contributing factors include long wait times with referral authorities as well as multiple RFIs.

More recent data provided by MSC demonstrated that the median number of processing days was improved in the last two financial years with 83 days in 2017/18 compared with 63 days in 2018/19 and 52 days in 2019/20. The percentage of applications completed within 60 processing days also improved to 73% in 2019/20. It should be noted that processing days do not include the time in which planning applications are being considered by referral authorities or subject to RFIs.

Despite a reduction to the median number of processing days to determination, the gross days to determination continue to be a significant factor for low stakeholder satisfaction as discussed at Page 31. Areas that could be improved include the planning application process and communications. These issues will be discussed further from Page 21.

| Criteria | Mansfield | Ararat | Hindmarsh | Pyrenees |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| LGCSS planning and building permit score 2018/19 (/100) | 36 | 52 | 50 | 47 |
| Number of planning permits received 2017/18 | 171 | 76 | 27 | 100 |
| Percentage of refusals | 8% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| Percentage of withdrawals | 10% | 1% | 7% | 4% |
| Number of applications with further information | 43% | 18% | 43% | 13% |
| Number of applications with referrals | 60% | 60% | 57% | 21% |
| Average number of gross days to determination | 125 | 93 | 86 | 72 |
| Median number of processing days to determination | 83 | 69 | 58 | 49 |
| Percentage of applications completed within 60 processing days | 47% | 57% | 52% | 93% |

*Table 3. Refusals, withdrawals and processing time in 2017/18*
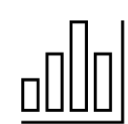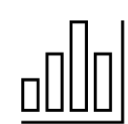
# Benchmarking

MSC approves a high number of dwellings and subdivision lots for its size, 70 and 120 compared to Pyrenees with 42 and 37 respectively. These numbers indicate that the SPU is particularly busy also aligning with the high number of applications received.

These factors may contribute to slow processing and community dissatisfaction. In particular, this may indicate the need for many referrals and requests for information which were identified as a key concern for stakeholders as discussed at Page 31.

| Criteria | Mansfield | Ararat | Hindmarsh | Pyrenees |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| LGCSS planning and building permit score 2018/19 (/100) | 36 | 52 | 50 | 47 |
| Number of planning permits received 2017/18 | 171 | 76 | 27 | 100 |
| Population in 2016 | 8.2k | 11.0k | 5.6k | 7.0k |
| Number of additional dwellings approved | 70 | 10 | 1 | 42 |
| Number of additional dwellings approved per 1000 residents | 9 | 1 | 0 | 6 |
| Net number of lots created from subdivision | 120 | 12 | 4 | 37 |
| Net number of lots created from subdivision per 1000 residents | 15 | 1 | 1 | 5 |

*Table 4. Types of planning applications in 2017/18*
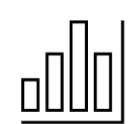
# Benchmarking

MSC has a moderately high number of applicable planning zones and overlays, which indicates a reasonable level of complexity. In general however these are not overly burdensome when considered against other small shires.

To explore this complexity further, Grosvenor considered the types of planning applications processed by MSC. Regarding this, MSC receives a moderate proportion of applications (38%) relating to change of land use. The majority of these applications are similar in nature and propose changing vacant land (82%) to residential land (91%). This may indicate lower complexity due to following the same general process followed for these applications.

The activity reporting data does not provide detail around the complexity of individual applications, however, given the similar nature of applications and the moderately high number of applicable planning zones and overlays there may be opportunities to further streamline these processes.

| Criteria | Mansfield | Ararat | Hindmarsh | Pyrenees |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| LGCSS planning and building permit score 2018/19 (/100) | 36 | 52 | 50 | 47 |
| Number of planning permits received 2017/18 | 171 | 76 | 27 | 100 |
| Number of applicable planning zones | 17 | 18 | 13 | 16 |
| Number of planning overlays | 12 | 13 | 9 | 10 |
| Number of permits issued including change of land use | 38% | 36% | 23% | 46% |
| Number of different land uses involved | 7 | 10 | 7 | 6 |
| Most popular current use (%) | Vacant (82%) | Vacant (42%) | Vacant (50%) | Vacant (93%) |
| Most popular proposed use (%) | Residential (91%) | Other (31%) | Food and drink premises (33%) | Residential (87%) |

*Table 5. Types of planning applications in 2017/18*

# Benchmarking

## 3. Website usability

A council's planning webpage is often the first place people look for information regarding planning permits. As such, Grosvenor developed the framework to the right to compare MSC's website to similar councils.

The framework focused on the building and planning webpages and assessed the ease of navigation from the council homepage or a search engine.

The websites of the following small shires were reviewed:

> Ararat
> Hepburn
> Hindmarsh

> Murrindindi
> Pyrenees
> Strathbogie.

The assessment presented on the right suggests that MSC's website is rated as average or below average regarding the provision of adequate information on planning permits and the application process.

These ratings may explain the high rate of refusals and withdrawals and applications with further information which may contribute to the low community satisfaction.

MSC's planning webpage ratings are indicated in blue

| Criteria | Above average | Average | Below average |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Webpage layout** | Clearly structured & user-friendly | Clearly structured | Difficult to navigate |
| **Planning permit application guidance** | Comprehensive & digestible | Comprehensive | Limited |
| **Planning permit application process** | Clear and comprehensive | Clear | Unclear |
| **Language and tone** | Clear, warm | Cold, cohesive | Cold, incohesive |
| **Council planning contact details** | In-text links | Found on-page | Out of date or not located on-page |

*Table 6. Website usability framework in 2017/18*
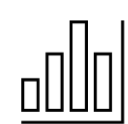
# Benchmarking

MSC recommends a pre-application meeting to help applicants understand the requirements of applying for a planning permit. However, MSC could encourage applicants to take up this offer by stating that it is a free service offered by the council to its constituents and listing the contact details in-text.

MSC could improve planning transparency with the community by updating major plans with regular updates coinciding with application progress milestones. Stakeholder engagement could be further improved by routinely publishing updates on major plans that receive significant public interest after an outcome is decided.

The usability of the planning information on the MSC website could be improved with a link to the Planning Scheme and planning scheme amendments. As this information is most relevant to planning professionals, MSC should consider the use of a mailing list or similar service to update key stakeholders with important planning information.

While the scope of this review is statutory planning, it became apparent that the website could be better utilised to communicate strategic planning and direction of the council. Notably, council development plans were not found.

MSC's planning webpage ratings are indicated in blue

| Criteria | Above average | Average | Below average |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Pre-application meeting recommendation** | Recommends meeting as a free service | Recommends meeting | Does not recommend meeting |
| **Public notices** | Lists notices and updates most plans | Lists notices and updates important plans | Lists important notices |
| **Planning scheme accessibility** | Linked & easy to find | Linked | No link |
| **Accessibility of planning scheme amendments** | Linked & easy to find | Easy to find | Not available |
| **Accessibility of development plans** | Linked & easy to find | Easy to find | Not available |

*Table 7. Website usability framework*

**3**

## Effectiveness and Efficiency of the Statutory Planning at MSC

# Effectiveness and Efficiency of the Statutory Planning at MSC

*Effectiveness* and *efficiency* can be defined as utilising the available resources in the most productive way to achieve SPU's operational and legislative requirements.

This section firstly defines SPU's operational and legislative requirements then assesses these by considering SPU's:

1. Purpose and Scope

2. Structure

3. Capacity and capabilities

4. Processes

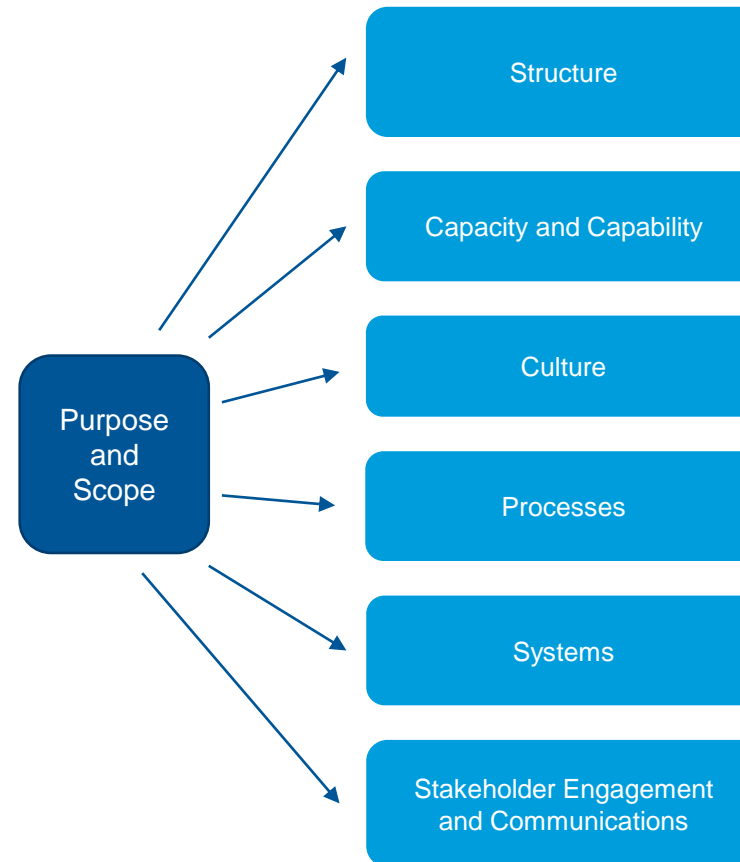5. Systems

6. Stakeholder engagement and communications.



*Figure 2. Efficiency and effectiveness assessment structure*

# Operational and legislative requirements of SPU

## Legislative requirements

The SPU is responsible for undertaking the role and duty of the Responsible Authority under the rules and regulations of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987,* the *Subdivision Act 1988* and associated legislation.

The *Planning and Environment Regulations 2015* set out requirements of the Responsible Authority in carrying out its duty including:

> processing of permits

> certificates of compliance

> compensation

> enforcement and legal proceedings

> administration.

Further, these instruments ensure the SPU meets the following requirements:

> follows a sound process, including the use of RFIs and referrals

> reaches final outcomes within 60 statutory days for standard planning permits, and 10 statutory days for VicSmart applications

> enables right of review of application decisions through the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

## Operational requirements

The operational requirements of SPU, like SPU's purpose, were not readily available for Grosvenor. As such the requirements below are informed by internal MSC policies and the roles and responsibilities of SPU staff. At a broad level these can be understood as:

> serve the Mansfield Shire community by providing sound and timely advice regarding statutory planning

> facilitate the sound and timely processing of planning applications

> maintain high levels of customer service

> support strategic growth of the Mansfield Shire

> track all applications and communicate all major application milestones to customers

> foster a healthy team culture which supports both a balanced workload and capability uplift.

## Purpose of SPU

At present, SPU does not have a documented purpose nor were SPU staff members able to describe a consistent purpose for the team. As a result Grosvenor found SPU is not clear on its purpose, nor how it aligns with MSC's mission.

Grosvenor has relied on the MSC's overarching mission statement and associated organisational objectives to understand how and where these could be adapted to SPU.

Using MSC's mission, Grosvenor understood the purpose of SPU as assisting MSC through statutory and strategic planning to:

> *plan for the long-term future and prosperity of the Mansfield Shire*

> *act as advocates on behalf of the community*

> *collaborate with the community to achieve the best possible outcome*

> *build strong and productive partnerships with our community, local businesses, other levels of government and key service providers operating in our municipality*

> *achieve the highest standards of good governance, transparency and accountability*

> *recognise and value the diversity of views and needs within the community*

> *create a respectful, supportive and fair environment where differences are valued and encouraged to support good decision making*

> *understanding and trust between Council and the community.*

There is a significant concern both internally and externally that SPU does not currently embody MSC's mission and purpose. This concern manifests itself through the lack of understanding in the role of the MSC in serving the local community and the lack of customer-centric service delivery. SPU service delivery was described as driven from the 'inside-out versus outside-in'. In practice, this means SPU's service delivery is driven according to internal needs, as opposed to the needs of external stakeholders and the wider Mansfield Shire community.

These concerns will be discussed in greater detail throughout this report as they impact on all areas of statutory planning services at MSC, in particular, culture, processes and stakeholder relations.

# Purpose and Scope of SPU

## Scope of SPU

The scope of statutory planning services at MSC comprises both statutory and strategic planning.

1. Statutory Planning is the part of the town planning process that is concerned with the regulation and management of changes to land use and development within the Mansfield Shire

2. Strategic planning is the part of town planning that seeks to provide direction for the sustainable growth of the Mansfield Shire.

In best-practice organisations, strategic planning and statutory planning are interdependent and are applied simultaneously within planning units to ensure alignment and continuous improvement (depicted in Figure 3).

At present, statutory planning is the key focus for all Planning Officers at SPU, with the Development Services Manager (now Manager Planning Environment see Page 26) taking responsibility for strategic planning. The Principal Planner's (now Coordinator Planning, see Page 26) position description does, however, include responsibility for both statutory and strategic planning though in practice this is not occurring. Due to this current state, and a lack of capacity from the Development Services Manager to focus solely on strategic planning, there is a lack of strategic planning occurring within the SPU.

Strategic planning is a key driver in achieving the mission of MSC to support the growth and development of the Mansfield Shire. Without strategic planning, statutory planning is at risk of being viewed with a narrow lens and may not support the long-term growth and prosperity of the area.
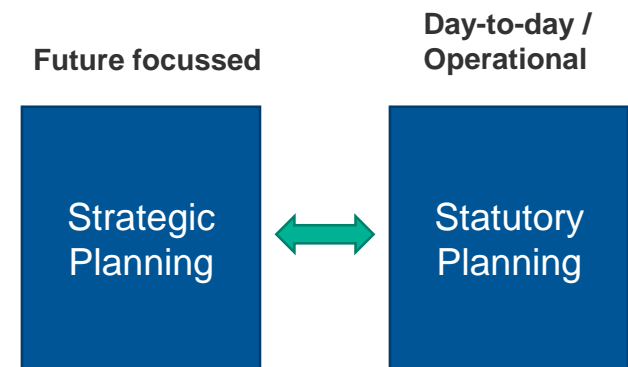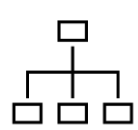
**Future focussed**     **Day-to-day / Operational**

| Strategic Planning | ⟷ | Statutory Planning |

*Figure 3. The best practice interdependence between strategic and statutory planning*

# Statutory Planning Unit Structure

At the time of review, the structure of the SPU was flat, with each member reporting to the Development Services Manager (now Manager Planning and Environment), as shown in Figure 4. There have since been changes to this structure (Figure 5) with an organisational-wide realignment to group similar functions for efficiency[2]. The new structure enables greater strategic input and oversight and improved customer service.

For the purposes of this review, it is useful to consider the SPU team structure before 1 July 2020 as it informs the current state of other areas of concern including capability, capacity, culture and processes.

## Previous SPU structure

Prior to July 2020, the Development Services Manager was responsible for a range of areas within MSC, of which statutory planning was one. At the time, the Development Services Manager had 11 direct reports. As a benchmark, highly specialised and technical areas should aim to have narrower *spans of control*[3] *(*e.g. 1:3-6). As statutory planning is a technical area, best practice would suggest fewer direct reports for this role. The previous level of reports was unsustainable in the long-term which was well understood by MSC and contributed to the internal restructure.

The Development Services Manager's role has been narrowed to reduce the number of responsibilities. As such Environmental Health, Emergency Management, Local Laws and Regulatory Services have been removed from the role responsibilities to focus the role on Strategic and Statutory Planning, Waste and Environment.
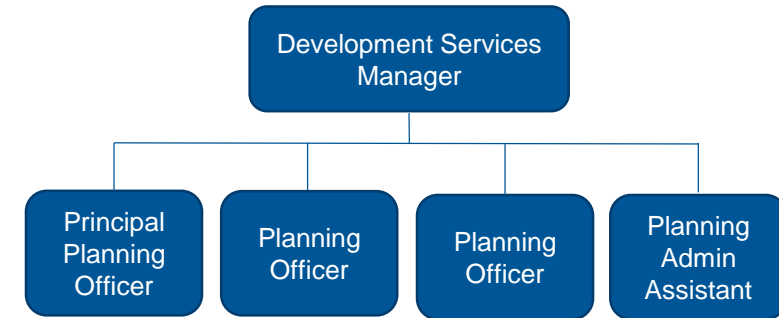


*Figure 4. Statutory Planning Unit team structure before 1 July 2020*
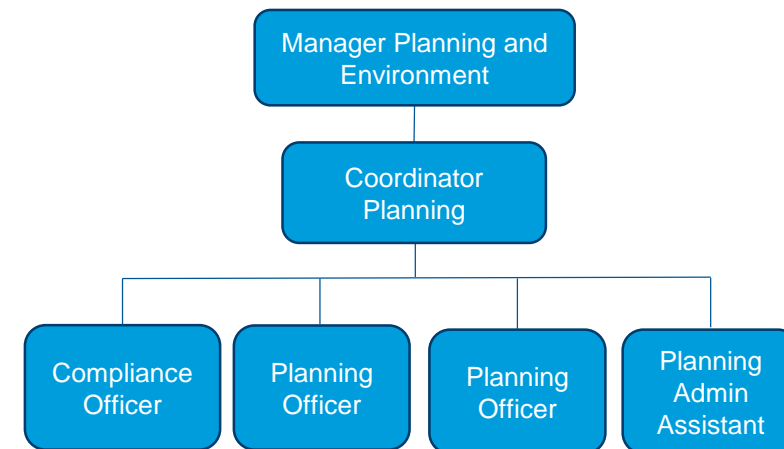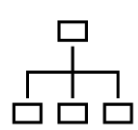


*Figure 5. Statutory Planning Unit team structure after 1 July 2020*

[2]the new organisational structure is available on the MSC website
[3] *span of control* refers to the number of people for which an individual is responsible

# Statutory Planning Unit Structure

Previously, the Development Services Manager reported directly to the Chief Executive Officer but will now be reporting to the General Manager Infrastructure and Planning. In addition, there was no Team Leader prior to July 2020 which has now been rectified through the inclusion of the Planning Coordinator. These changes will further address some of the span of control issues impacting on capacity and capability and discussed on Page 28.

Further issues were evident regarding the role and responsibilities of the Principal Planner in the previous structure. The position description of the Principal Planner outlined a supervisory responsibility in the position objectives section rather than role accountabilities. Additionally, in practice the position did not have any direct management duties. The lack of direct reporting meant that supervision and support for less experienced staff was occurring inconsistently with some Planning Officers, and not others.

There was also no clear role accountability regarding to the delegated authority of approval for planning applications. These were neither clearly understood by staff nor documented which surfaced through inconsistent delegations of authority and permit processing (detailed at Page 29).

From Grosvenor's review, several issues were evident as a result of the previous structure. These issues spanned capacity, capability, culture, processes, systems and stakeholder communications and are further explored in the following pages.
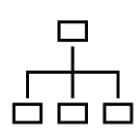
# Capacity, Capability and Culture

## Capacity

The key concerns identified by Grosvenor regarding capacity within SPU relate to the lack of capacity of the Development Services Manager. However, they may also be impacted by the large number of applications processed by SPU.

The lack of capacity of the Development Services Manager had the following impacts:

> inability to adequately delegate tasks, develop staff, performance manage and create a one-team mindset which had downstream impacts on staff capacity, capability and culture

> inability to dedicate a sufficient amount of time on both statutory and strategic planning which impacted on the ability of SPU to meet its operational requirements.

Comparatively, SPU processes more planning applications than other similar small shires (171 in 2017-18 versus 100 for the small shire with the second-highest number of applications). Though not all staff held significant concerns about their capacity and workload, this volume of planning applications may contribute to capacity challenges. This high volume may also impact on the timeliness and quality of processing applications according to operational and legislative requirements.

A lack of delegation of responsibility and supervision (discussed at Page 27) also led to staff assuming responsibilities without direction. This lacking delegation reportedly led to a workload imbalance between staff, where some staff were processing more applications than others.

## Capability

The review found no significant capability gaps when taking into consideration varying levels of experience. However, the previous team structure may have contributed to a risk of stagnating capabilities. This risk may be due to a lack of training and mentoring, as well as the encouragement and support to undertake these.

## Culture

A poor team culture was apparent throughout Grosvenor's review of SPU with the following anecdotal behaviour evidenced:

> misbehaviour on numerous occasions between staff members

> evidence of siloes and division within SPU causing people to operate individually or with select staff, rather than employing a team mindset

> fractured relationships manifesting in lack of communications or respectful communication between staff

> incompatible personalities

> lack of respect and support for one another.
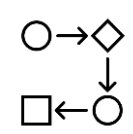
# Process

A clearly defined and agreed process for planning applications was lacking internally within SPU.

This lack of a clearly defined process spanned:

> the initiation process, e.g. acknowledgment of receipt, scheduling of pre-planning meeting

> standardised review of planning applications, including RFIs and referrals

> delegation of responsibility for final approval/refusal decisions

> the frequency and level of communication required while processing applications.

These internal process issues impacted external stakeholders and were evident through:

1. inconsistency in application processing

2. lack of transparency of application processing

3. a burdensome application process

4. delays in notifying applicants of outcomes

5. lack of communication relating to planning application progress and updates to the Mansfield Planning Scheme (discussed in detail at Page 33).

These are discussed in the following pages.
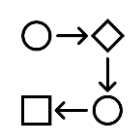
## 1. Inconsistency in application processing

Due to the lack of internal clarity in the application process, external stakeholders described inconsistency in the processing of applications. This inconsistency extended to receiving different advice on very similar planning applications, as well as experiencing a different level of customer service dependent on which Planning Officer was providing the service.

Several stakeholders expressed concern around perceived favouritism, and planning application processing not being based on merit within SPU. Examples provided included poor-quality site plans deemed acceptable for some applicants, and high-quality site plans deemed unacceptable for others.

Where pre-planning meetings were held between applicants and SPU staff, it was viewed as helpful and constructive. In addition to providing an opportunity to clarify expectations, pre-planning meetings were viewed as enabling a streamlined process.

## 2. Lack of transparency of application processing

Transparency in the planning application process was also cited as a key area of frustration for external stakeholders. The lack of transparency was apparent from the commencement of the application process with no acknowledgment of planning application receipt. As a result, applications lacked a clear start date with which to monitor the 60-day turnaround.

Further, stakeholders expressed frustration around receiving inconsistent progress updates relating to their planning applications (e.g. information regarding when the application is referred to a third party or when a referral authority approves it). Some stakeholders reported that these actions occasionally resulted in applicants missing RFI deadlines.
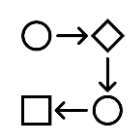
### 3. A burdensome application process

The planning application process was labelled as overly burdensome and complicated by many stakeholders, given the low complexity of most applications received by MSC.

The burdensome application process manifested in the referral of a high percentage of applications to referral authorities. According to the research conducted by Grosvenor, 60% of applications were referred to third parties in 2017/18, which is the equal highest percentage of referrals of the four small councils benchmarked. Stakeholder frustration regarding these referrals was associated with the added time delays associated with some third-party authorities.

Some stakeholders also shared that on occasion, these referrals were unnecessary due to the low complexity of the application. Similar feedback also called for a review of the Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) held between MSC and various referral authorities regarding when an application was required to be referred beyond MSC for comment or conditions.

The burden of RFIs (in 43% of applications) was also noted throughout consultations. It was highlighted that multiple RFIs were common within one planning application with each concerning a different issue. Best practice was understood as one RFI per application which covered all issues.

The wider implications for these RFIs and delays due to referrals to authorities was the cost burden for consultants, rendering the application unprofitable and costly to their business. This fact was highlighted by a variety of consultants as disincentivising developments and growth within the Mansfield Shire.

### 4. Delays in notifying applicants of outcomes

The timeliness of the planning application process was a key concern for stakeholders, with the whole process regularly exceeding the 60-day timeline requirement even when the 'clock is stopped' due to referrals to authorities.

Based on Grosvenor research and benchmarking, this was an area where MSC underperformed. The research demonstrated that the average gross days for determination in 2017-18 for MSC was 125 days. This number exceeded the other three small councils benchmarked by 32 days (or almost 5 weeks). Some stakeholders reported that some applications had taken up to six months or more for approval.

Applications finalised within the 60 processing-day timeframe improved from 47% in 2017/18 to 73% in 2019/20. While this represents an improvement from a legislative perspective, the delays caused by referrals and RFIs, which 'stopped the clock', still caused frustration for stakeholders due to the negative flow-on effects on their businesses and clients.
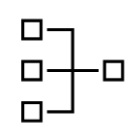
# Systems

MSC does not effectively utilise software to automate and streamline all application processing, however, the VicSmart system is viewed as fit-for-purpose for sub-division applications. Further, while the administration of the database is generally viewed as effective and efficient, an overreliance on one staff member results in poor processing efficiency and slow application turnaround on occasion.

Stakeholders raised the following considerations regarding systems:

1. fit-for-purpose systems
2. manual processing.

## 1. Fit for purpose systems

Currently, there is no fit-for-purpose system to support the SPU in streamlining the processing of all applications, particularly for application management.

The newly introduced planning-specific email is an improvement in this regard. However, the review found that planning consultants were still copying council Planning Officers into email queries. By including Planning Officers in the initial emails, an unnecessary burden was generated through duplication of information.

This duplication may have resulted from insufficient communication around the new email or lack in an acknowledgement of receipt. It should be clarified that applications will not be actioned unless they are received through the generic email only, and all queries should receive an automatic acknowledgement of receipt.

These small improvements may lead to less duplication and more efficient processing.

In contrast, stakeholders on all sides spoke highly of VicSmart applications, a state government initiative to streamline simple planning applications. VicSmart has 10 statutory days to provide an outcome for applications which MSC meets at a higher rate than the 60 statutory days for other applications according to planning permit activity reporting. Additionally, a similar system called SPEAR is used for subdivisions with a similarly high turnaround. Therefore, MSC should encourage wider use of these systems and explore options for automating planning applications for which VicSmart and SPEAR do not apply.

## 2. Manual processing

Although the generic email ensures that all applications are sent to one location, there is currently no portal which means the information flow is bottlenecked and relies on a single staff member to monitor and manage the inbox.

The Planning Administration Assistant is currently wholly responsible for managing the database for planning applications. While it was widely viewed that the administrator is both responsive and effective, the reliance on this position is a bottleneck that results in delays when they are on leave and impacts on operational and legislative requirements.

Stakeholder engagement and communications are integral to a high functioning and customer-centric service delivery model. However, this review found that SPU stakeholder engagement is currently undertaken in an ad-hoc manner, communications are infrequent, and the customer service experience is inconsistent.

## Stakeholder engagement

Stakeholders shared that stakeholder engagement currently undertaken by SPU is transactional and reactive, with little focus on customer service. Stakeholders agreed that before this review, there was minimal stakeholder engagement occurring particularly regarding statutory planning. The SPU also lacked a clear stakeholder engagement strategy.

## Communications

As described previously through the processes and systems sections, communications between SPU and the public are inconsistent and can be generally described as poor. Concerns raised included the frequency of communications by the SPU staff members. Key concerns included:

> the lack of acknowledgement of receipt of application

> the lack of application progress updates

> irregular updates provided to planning professionals about any process changes or changes to the Mansfield Planning Scheme.

Written communications relating to planning applications were also cited as inconsistent. Some stakeholders experienced an efficient and effectively communicated application process. In contrast, others felt that their planning applications were deliberately being delayed, or they were not receiving adequate communications relating to these applications.

These communication breakdowns caused challenges to productivity and impinged on the processing time of applications.

## Customer service

Customer service is the face of MSC, and inconsistent service levels are warranting stakeholder criticism. Grosvenor heard that the customer experience was inconsistent, ranging from *fantastic* to *upsetting*.

Some stakeholders stated a perception of antagonism by SPU staff members, which impeded on effective service delivery and impacted the establishment of successful customer relationships. Some customers experienced impolite, unhelpful, and at worse, unprofessional interactions with staff which included the lack of support for local business.

The impact of stakeholder concerns relating to current SPU stakeholder engagement, communications and customer service has resulted in frustrations amongst stakeholders. The impacts extend to poor relationships between staff and stakeholders and diminished reputation for MSC. These impacts have resulted in little to no dialogue with stakeholders, leaving them unresolved.

**4**

Findings summary and Overall conclusion

# Findings summary

Benchmarking

Benchmarking community satisfaction scores, planning permit activity and website usability led to the insights listed below.

MSC's statutory planning activity compared to similar councils is summarised as:
> low resources per applications given moderate statutory planning budget and a high number of applications
> a high rate of refusals and withdrawals (with the inclusion of Section 55 refusals)
> a moderately high rate of applications with further information or referrals
> a significantly higher gross days to determination time
> an improvement in the median processing time and percentage of applications completed within 60 processing days
> a high number of approved dwellings and subdivision lots for its population
> a high proportion of similar applications including change of land use
> average or below average for information regarding planning permit applications on the council's website.

Grosvenor found that relative to similar councils, SPU is processing a high number of planning applications, which is a credit to the team. In addition, the median processing time and percentage of applications completed within 60 processing days continues to improve.
On the other hand, a significantly higher gross days to determination time, which includes referrals and RFIs, was identified as a key contributor to low community satisfaction within the Mansfield Shire. These factors were further developed through stakeholder consultation conducted by Grosvenor which led to greater insights presented overleaf.

# Findings summary

Efficiency and effectiveness

1. SPU does not have an agreed and shared purpose and is currently lacking a focus on strategic planning

2. The previous structure of SPU did not support operational requirements due to the span of control expected of the Development Services Manager and lack of clear role accountability within the SPU team.

3. Significant issues with the capacity of the Development Services Manager has considerable downstream impacts on the SPU team including an inability to adequately delegate tasks, develop team, performance manage and perform both statutory planning and strategic planning responsibilities

4. The current team culture within SPU features siloes, poor behaviours, lack of respect and support

5. Planning application and communication processes are not clearly defined, nor do they meet operational requirements regarding stakeholder satisfaction, quality and timeliness

6. Systems are largely manual, and one person is responsible for managing the database for applications. The VicSmart system enables streamlined applications, particularly for sub-divisions with the SPEAR system.

7. Stakeholder engagement is haphazard, communication is infrequent, and customer service is inconsistent

# Overall conclusion

The SPU is currently falling short of operational and legislative requirements, particularly the level of customer service, the lack of a clearly defined and agreed application process and the time taken to arrive at planning application outcomes. As such, there is room to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of SPU's current service delivery.

Concerns regarding operational and legislative requirements include a lack of strategic planning, poor team culture, inconsistent planning application management and inconsistent communication of planning application milestones. Despite an improvement in the percentage of planning applications completed within 60 processing days, the average number of gross days to determination remains high, indicating inefficiencies within the application process, namely the use of referrals and RFIs.

The benchmarking highlighted further areas of tension for the SPU, such as the high number of applications given the SPU's size. The high volume may impact on SPU's ability to process planning applications as effectively and efficiently as desired. The findings confirmed the benchmarking indicators of a slow and burdensome process, and inconsistent communications from the stakeholder perspective. These issues were evidenced through RFIs being sought over and above other councils and delays with referral authorities. The benchmarking did not indicate that the complexity of applications significantly impacted processing times.

The need for a common and agreed-upon purpose within the SPU is fundamental for the team moving forward. This purpose will also be facilitated by the recent restructure with flow-on effects on capacity, capability, internal processes, and stakeholder engagement. Capacity issues currently impact on the ability of the SPU to support team growth and capability uplift, and healthy team culture.

In addition to the internal team issues, the planning application and communication processes are not clearly defined within the SPU leading to inconsistent communication and outcomes, a lack of transparency around the application process, and a slow and burdensome application process. These impacts create further challenges with communication and stakeholder engagement for the SPU.

Despite many areas for improvement, the use of a generic planning email, implementation of the VicSmart application system, and the use of pre-planning meetings were considered by all stakeholders as enabling a sounder and more streamlined application process. Grosvenor also recognises the recent restructure as a positive initiative that will reduce the level of responsibilities of the Development Services Manager enabling better workflow management and a refocus on strategic planning.

There exist many practical and meaningful ways forward for the SPU, which will support improvements to service delivery and consequently, community engagement and satisfaction. These actions are detailed in the recommendations presented in the following section.

**5**

Recommendations

# Recommendations

*Overview of section*

Based on the findings and conclusions outlined in this report, Grosvenor has identified several recommendations in line with the key areas of investigation that will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of MSC's statutory planning services. The recommendations are presented in a prioritisation matrix that will assist MSC in deciding whether and when to pursue the proposed recommendations.

# Recommendations

**Scope and Purpose**

1. Develop SPU scope and purpose
2. Develop clear organisational and operational objectives for SPU

**Capacity and Capability**

3. Create clear roles and responsibilities/accountabilities for staff, leveraging agreed position descriptions, this should include delegation of responsibility within planning approval decisions (i.e. align steps of the process maps at Attachment B to specific roles and the definition of performance metrics
4. Set up weekly meetings to delegate tasks and share information, creating a safe space for asking questions and learning opportunities
5. Establish training needs and based on available training budget, provide relevant training to staff
6. Provide planning staff the opportunity to seek external or internal mentors, and provide the opportunity for catch ups with their mentor
7. Establish succession planning for SPU

**Culture**

8. Create a team charter for behaviours and expectations
9. Hold 10 minute 'stand up meetings' every day to gauge capacity, delegate task responsibility and sense the team mood
10. Celebrate events and achievements (e.g. birthdays, EOFY, team as well as individual accomplishments)
11. Manage unacceptable behaviour in line with MSC's performance management protocols

# Recommendations
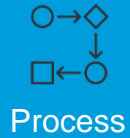
**Process**

12. Develop clear processes for planning applications, test these with the team and agree upon the process
13. Review and update, as required MOUs with referral authorities to avoid unnecessary referrals and burdensome processing times
14. Agree process for receipt of planning applications (e.g. at which point in the application process the 60 day timeframe commences)
15. Agree upon when and how progress updates will be provided, and then action. These updates may be at three key milestones of the application process where the applicant might be alerted via email or the website, which could have an application section where progress is tracked (we recommend the latter)

**Systems**

16. Set up a portal where planning applications are to be submitted
17. Enable automatic replies for each application
18. Consider a range of systems to assist the planning team
19. Establish a contingency plan for the Administration Officer to ensure business continuity (e.g. train another administration staff member to be able to manage the database)
20. Reinforce the message in the community that the generic email address is the correct destination of planning applications

**Stakeholder Engagement and Communications**

21. Develop an external Stakeholder Engagement Plan in line with MSC's overarching Stakeholder Engagement Framework (see Attachment D)
22. Develop Change Management Plan, including Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, to support the implementation of agreed recommendations and the continuous assessment of SPU's performance
23. Agree to internal time limits for communicating progress of applications
24. Routinely update website to outline application process and requirements as well as track progress of applications
25. Develop a customer service script for enquiries setting out clear expectations
26. Provide monthly updates to interested parties via email mail outs
27. Consider the use of communications staff within MSC to assist SPU in communications activities

# Recommendation Grouping

*In the table below, each of the 27 identified recommendations have been categorised into five groups to enable batching of actions. The recommendations under each group need not be actioned at the same time.*

| Small internal changes actioned by Manager Planning and Environment | Managing change within the SPU team | Communications change | Changes implemented through governance and leadership | Systems upgrade |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| > set up weekly and daily meetings (R4, R9)<br><br>> encourage the use of mentors (R6)<br><br>> clarify training budget and encourage take up (R5)<br><br>> celebrate small achievements (R10) | As a team, run a series of workshops to agree:<br><br>> scope and purpose (R1)<br><br>> organisational and operational objectives (R2)<br><br>> team charter (R8)<br><br>> process for planning applications including receipt and progress updates (R3, R12, R14, R23) | > agree upon when and how progress updates will be provided (R15)<br><br>> set up a portal for planning applications (R16)<br><br>> enable automatic replies for each application (R17)<br><br>> reinforce message in the community that the generic email is the correct recipient of planning applications (R20)<br><br>> routinely update website to outline application process and requirements as well as track progress of applications (R24)<br><br>> develop a customer service script for enquiries (R25)<br><br>> provide monthly updates to interested parties via email mail outs (R26)<br><br>> stakeholder engagement plan (R21)<br><br>> consider use of other staff within MSC to develop SPU communication tools (R27) | The MSC leadership team should consider:<br><br>> roles responsibilities and accountabilities for staff (R3)<br><br>> performance management for poor behaviour (R11)<br><br>> review of MOUs with referral authorities (R13)<br><br>> establish succession planning for SPU (R7)<br><br>> developing a contingency plan for administering SPU's database (R19)<br><br>> develop a change management plan with monitoring and evaluation framework and performance measures (R22) | Once MSC has implemented all other recommendations, the Council should consider the need for a more sophisticated system to manage planning applications (R18) |

# Prioritisation matrix

The following prioritisation matrix should be utilised by MSC to implement 'quick win' projects and commence 'major projects'. A prioritisation matrix is a simple tool that ranks projects (or recommendations) based on criteria that are determined to be important such as impact and effort. For our purposes, "impact" = positive benefit to MSC and "effort" = difficulty of implementing and/or high cost to implement.

| | Recommendation Group | Impact and Effort | Priority |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Small internal Changes actioned by Manager Planning and Environment | High / Very Low | 1 |
| 2 | Managing change within the SPU team | Very High / Low | 2 |
| 3 | Communications change | Very High / Med-High | 3 |
| 4 | Changes implemented through governance and leadership | Very High / High | 4 |
| 5 | Systems upgrade | Med / High | 5 |

**6**
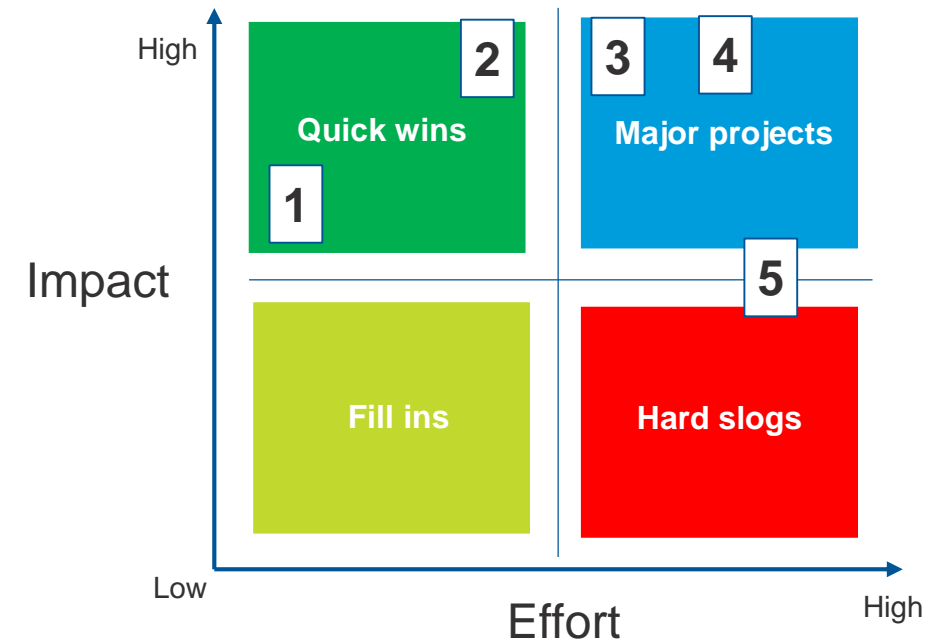
Roadmap

# Roadmap

The final section of this report focuses on the implementation of recommendations, outlined in the previous section, and provides:

1. an overview of the current state of MSC's statutory service delivery in contrast to its target state, highlighting current gaps and areas of improvement

2. a roadmap for implementing the recommendations listed on Pages 47-48 which should be read in conjunction with these recommendations.

3. a proposed timeline for the implementation of suggested recommendations to support the practical and successful implementation of improvements.

# Current State vs Future State

*This page depicts the current state of statutory planning service delivery at MSC versus the target date. It informs the roadmap overleaf.*

## Current State

**1. Scope and Purpose**

*Lacking an agreed purpose and strategy*

*Does not meet operational and legislative requirements*

*Not incorporated as part of BAU*

**2. Structure, Capacity and Capability**

*Accountabilities are ill-defined*

*Unsustainable workload for some due to span of control*

*Capability uplift is not a focus*

**3. Culture**

*An unhealthy team culture*

**4. Processes and Systems**

*Unclear and inconsistent application processes*

*Lack of systems to streamline processes*

**5. Stakeholder engagement and communications**

*Detrimental to public value*

*Inconsistent customer experience*

*Low quality and untimely service delivery*

*Ad-hoc stakeholder engagement*

*Few communications*

## Target State

**1. Scope and Purpose**

*Clearly defined purpose and strategy*

*Meets operational and legislative requirements*

*Integrated into BAU*

**2. Structure, Capacity and Capability**

*Accountabilities are clearly defined*

*Spans of control are manageable*

*Structure fosters capability uplift and support*

**3. Culture**

*A safe and happy workplace that fosters professional growth*

*Effective change management*

**4. Processes and Systems**

*Streamlined, consistent and transparent processes*

*Dedicated resources to ensure effective coordination*

*Reliable, fit-for-purpose, easy to use systems*

**5. Stakeholder engagement and communications**

*Delivers public value*

*Consistent customer experience*

*Effective and efficient service delivery*

*Wide stakeholder engagement*

*Frequent and transparent communications*

# Roadmap

*This roadmap is an example of a roadmap that MSC regarding SPU could begin to implement, should the aforementioned recommendations be accepted*

## Communications

Communication are paramount to change within this review but should only be actioned once SPU have improved foundations regarding statutory planning service delivery. Outsourcing these changes could involve use of MSC staff with communications skillset or through an external provider should capacity not be available within SPU.

*Actioned within 6 months post review.*

## Governance and leadership

This group of recommendations can be actioned at anytime but should be supported and driven by the leadership team at MSC (Manager Planning and Environment and above). The largest project that MSC should consider outsourcing is the development of an evaluation framework, this will drive and measure change within the Council into the future.

*Actioned within 6 months post review.*

## Systems upgrade

Once other recommendations have been actioned and are classified 'business-as-usual' MSC should consider the need to upgrade its planning related systems.

*Actioned within 18 months post review.*

## Small internal changes

Small internal changes are the ultimate 'quick wins', but they also lay the foundation of the work to be completed through the other recommendations, which hinge on the success and culture of the SPU.

*Actioned 0-1 months post review.*

## Manage change within SPU

Once the small internal changes have been implemented, the team should consider the engagement of an external facilitator to work through one or more face to face workshops to continue to build the foundation of the SPU through agreement on scope, purpose, acceptable behaviours and the like.

*Actioned 1-3 months post review.*

# Timeline of recommendation implementation

**Grosvenor™**
PUBLIC SECTOR ADVISORY

| AUG 2020 | SEP 2020 | NOV 2020 | FEB 2021 | FEB 2022 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

**Final Report approved by MSC**

**Small internal changes recommendations finalised:**
> set up weekly and daily meetings (R4, R9)
> encourage the use of mentors (R6)
> clarify training budget and encourage take up (R5)
> celebrate small achievements (R10)

**Manage change within SPU recommendations finalised:**
As a team, run a series of workshops to agree:
> scope and purpose (R1)
> organisational and operational objectives (R2)
> team charter (R8)
> process for planning applications including receipt and progress updates (R3, R12, R14, R23)

**Communications recommendations finalised:**
> agree upon when and how progress updates will be provided (R15)
> set up a portal for planning applications (R16)
> enable automatic replies for each application (R17)
> reinforce message in the community that the generic email is the correct recipient of planning applications (R20)
> routinely update website to outline application process and requirements as well as track progress of applications (R24)
> develop a customer service script for enquiries (R25)
> provide monthly updates to interested parties via email mail outs (R26)
> stakeholder engagement plan (R21)
> consider use of other staff within MSC to develop SPU communication tools (R27)

**Governance and leadership recommendations finalised:**
> roles responsibilities and accountabilities for staff (R3)
> performance management for poor behaviour (R11)
> review of MOUs with referral authorities (R13)
> establish succession planning for SPU (R7)
> developing a contingency plan for administering SPU's database (R19)
> develop a change management plan with monitoring and evaluation framework and performance measures (R22)

**Communications recommendations considered:**
Once MSC has implemented all other recommendations, the Council should consider the need for a more sophisticated system to manage planning applications (R18)

# Attachments

# Attachment A - Benchmarking – List of Small Councils

| Shire | 2019 Report available | Overall Score | Planning and building permits score |
|---|---|---|---|
| Alpine | Y | 60 | N/A |
| Ararat | Y | 49 | 52 |
| Benalla | Y | N/A | N/A |
| Buloke | Y | 55 | N/A |
| Central Goldfields | Y | 57 | N/A |
| Gannawarra | N | 59 | N/A |
| Hepburn | Y | 56 | 49 |
| Hindmarsh | Y | 65 | 50 |
| Indigo | Y | 61 | N/A |
| Loddon | N - did not participate | N/A | N/A |
| Mansfield | Y | 51 | 36 |
| Murrindindi | N | N/A | N/A |
| Northern Grampians | N | N/A | N/A |
| Pyrenees | Y | 60 | 47 |
| Queenscliff | N | N/A | N/A |
| Strathbogie | Y | 56 | N/A |
| Towong | N | N/A | N/A |
| West Wimmera | N | N/A | N/A |
| Yarrambiack | N | N/A | N/A |

# Attachment B - Statutory Planning Permit Application Process (Internal)
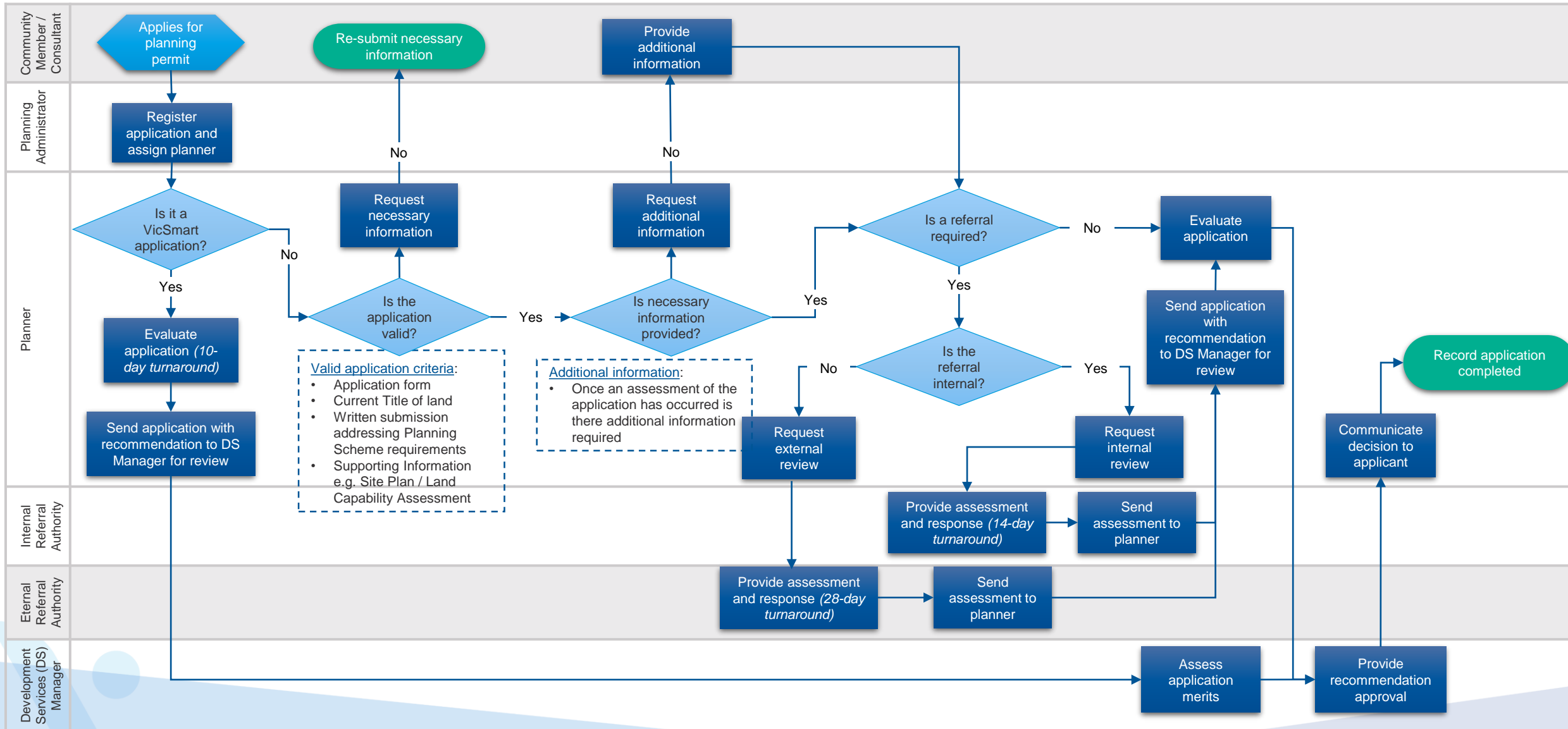
# Attachment C - Planning Permit Application Process (for external use)

**Grosvenor**
PUBLIC SECTOR ADVISORY

Before Application Lodgement

Application Lodgement

After Application Lodgement



**Prepare VicSmart application**

*VicSmart Application Guide*

**Obtain referral authority approvals**

*List of referral authorities [link]*

**Submit application through VicSmart**

*VicSmart application form*

**Determine if a Planning Permit is required**

*Do You Need A Planning Permit? [guide link]*

**Determine if eligible for VicSmart lodgement**

*VicSmart Application Guide*

VicSmart

Other Applications

**Conduct pre-planning meeting with Council Planner**

*Phone or email planning team [contact details]*

**Prepare application**

*Application form*

**Submit application**

*Lodge application [portal/email]*

10 business days

60 business days

**Council checks the application**

**Council gives public notification, if required**

**Council assesses the application**

**Council seeks approvals from referral authorities, as required**

**Council provides application response**

**Council may request more information and/ or referrals**

**Approval of permit**

**Apply for review by VCAT, if required**

**Notice of decision with conditions**

**Refusal to grant a permit**

**Apply for review by Council, and VCAT if required**

| Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 3 | Step 4 | Step 5 | Step 6 | Step 7 | Step 8 | Step 9 | Step 10 | Step 11 | Step 12 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

**Attachment D**

Stakeholder Engagement Plan

# Stakeholder Engagement Plan

*The strawman stakeholder engagement plan in the pages that follow can be used in the delivery of statutory planning services throughout MSC as needed.*

## Purpose

This stakeholder engagement plan is intended to address the community dissatisfaction around the planning permit application process.
Key areas of focus:

> communication

> customer service.

## Scope

For the SPU to improve the level of engagement of key external stakeholders. Specifically, planning permit applicants including the community members and consultants.

## Audience

> for use by the SPU

> to engage planning permit applicants.

## Engagement Principles

> Positive working relationship

— providing service to the community

— information flow (manage expectations, foster understanding, uphold consistency)

— facilitate positive outcomes

— good customer service.

## Strategic Alignment

A stakeholder engagement plan is action-oriented. It is best practice for an engagement plan to be informed by an overall organisation strategy and stakeholder engagement framework.
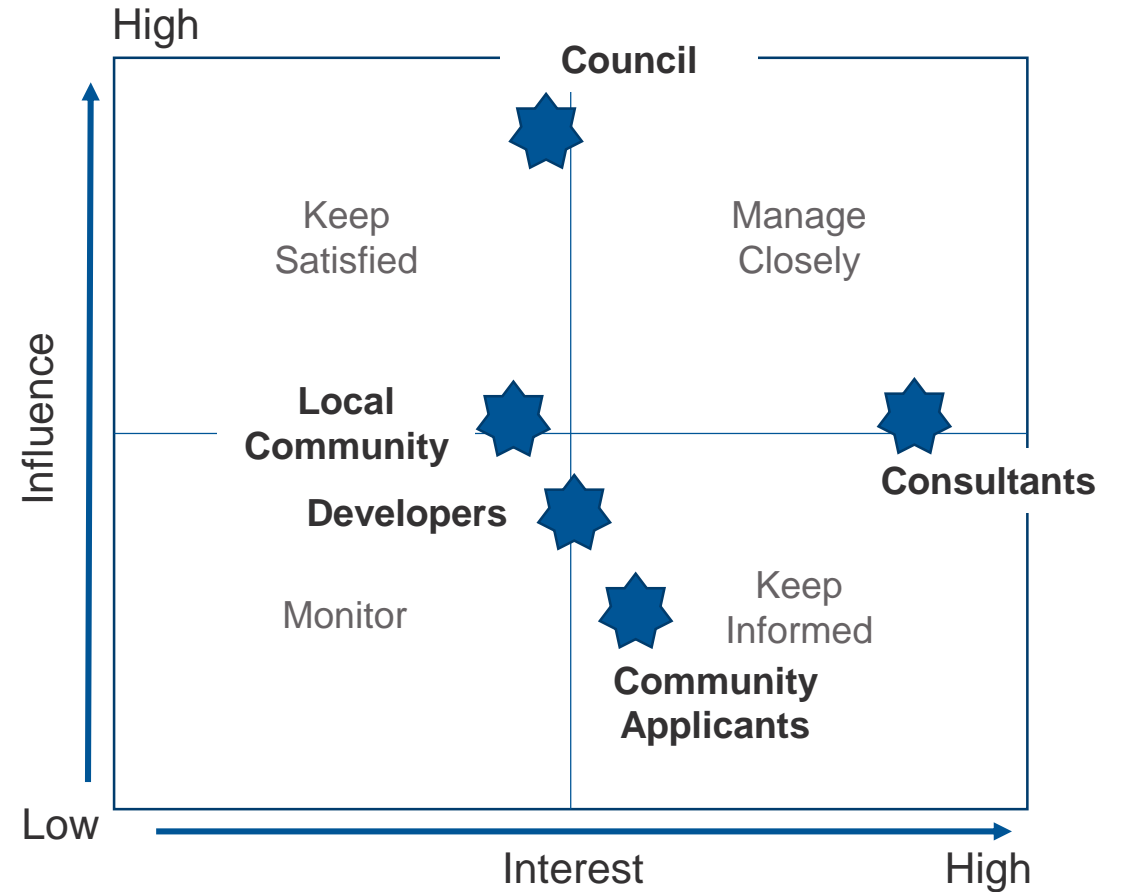
# Key Stakeholders

*Grosvenor has identified five key stakeholder groups was the SPU should be considerate of in implementing its stakeholder engagement plan. Further groups of stakeholders may be identified in future iterations of this plan.*

## MSC Planning Permit Stakeholders

The stakeholders identified below are the key groups that the SPU will engage with or are directly impacted by the planning permit application process.

| Key Stakeholders | Strategic/Operational | Description |
|---|---|---|
| **Local Community** | Strategic | The citizens and ratepayers of Mansfield Shire. This group have an intrinsic interest in the direction and development of their local area. |
| **Councillors** | Strategic | The community appointed representatives that are responsible for making decisions on the direction of the council. |
| **Consultants** | Operational | The professionals that apply for the majority of planning permit applicants on behalf of local residents and developers. Typically complex plans. |
| **Community Applicants** | Operational | Local residents that undertake planning permit applications. Typically simple plans. |
| **Developers** | Strategic | Investors that contribute to the growth and development of Mansfield. |

# Stakeholder Mapping

*Grosvenor has identified five key stakeholder groups was the SPU should be considerate of in implementing its stakeholder engagement plan. Below, Grosvenor has mapped the stakeholder groups to inform the level of engagement required by MSC based on the IAP2 principles.*

**Influence / interest**

> how much influence does the stakeholder have over Statutory Planning Services/MSC?

> how much interest does the stakeholder have in Statutory Planning Services/MSC?

**What action is required based on this?**

> keep satisfied

> manage closely

> keep informed

> Monitor.

# Engagement Levels

*Grosvenor has identified five key stakeholder groups was the SPU should be considerate of in implementing its stakeholder engagement plan. Below, Grosvenor has indicated how the stakeholder groups may be engaged and at what times by MSC based on the IAP2 principles.*

Increased impact on the decision →

| | Inform | Consult | Involve | Collaborate | Empower |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Community Participation Goal** | To provide the community with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions | To obtain community feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions. | To work directly with the community throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered. | To partner with the community in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution. | To place final decision-making in the hands of the public. |
| **Which level of participation?** | > MSC should inform **all relevant stakeholders** on significant changes to the Planning Scheme and decisions from the Planning Forum<br>> MSC should frequently communicate with **all stakeholders** via social media platforms e.g. Have Your Say, Website, Mansfield Matters<br>> MSC should inform **all relevant stakeholders** on the progress of development applications online | > MSC should consult with **Council, Consultants and Community Applicants** on current processes and levels of satisfaction<br>> MSC should host regular public forums for **Consultants**, **Community Applicants and Developers** | > MSC might consider the appropriateness to involve **Council and Consultants** on changes to the Planning Scheme and referral policies | > Key changes and decisions should be discussed with **Council** such as changes to the Planning Scheme | > Key planning decisions are to be referred to **Council** |

# Key Messages

*The strawman stakeholder engagement key messages below can be used throughout MSC's engagement process as required. These should be agreed by SPU and/or the leadership team as MSC and may change in alignment with MSCs and SPU's mission and purpose.*

**Success**

These messages represent what success looks like for this engagement plan. They should be consistent in all communication and aligned across the key stakeholders.

1. *Our purpose is to serve the community.*

2. *Our role is to promote and foster sustainable growth in the Shire.*

3. *We are committed to continuous improvement.*

Successful implementation of this plan should result in the community's perception of the Council aligning to these key messages.

**1. Serve**

> councils are ultimately responsible to local residents and ratepayers

> function of council is to provide services to the residents

> planning departments inform the growth and development of a council area in the best interests of the residents, broader community and environment.

**2. Promote**

> planning departments ensure responsible growth and development that is aligned with community needs

> solutions-focused application of planning expertise to understand and meet community needs through suggesting alternatives when necessary.

**3. Improve**

> proactively seek feedback

> review feedback and action appropriately

> maintain transparency and accountability.

# Engagement Management

*The below table attempts to commence the process of mapping current engagement resources with possible future engagement resources at the disposal of MSC. It also considers how the implementation of communications-related recommendations could be distributed internally within MSC.*

| Current Engagement Resources | Possible Future Engagement Resources | Engagement Responsibilities |
|---|---|---|
| Phone | | Planning Officers, Support Officer |
| Email (dedicated) | Receipt autoresponder | Support Officer, Planning Officers |
| Service Counter | | Support Officer, Planning Officers |
| In person (meetings) | | Planning Officers |
| Website<br>- planning permit application page<br>- notices<br>- planning scheme amendments<br>- have your say | | Communications Officer, Planning Officers, *Team Lead* |
| Facebook page | | Communications Officer, Planning Officers, *Team Lead* |
| Newspaper | | Communications Officer, Planning Officers, *Team Lead* |
| Mansfield Matters Newsletter | | Communications Officer, Planning Officers, *Team Lead* |
| Signages/posters (notices) | | Support Officer, Planning Officers |
| Mail | | Support Officer, Planning Officers |
| | Application portal | Support Officer, Planning Officers |
| | Mailing list | Support Officer, Communications Officer, Planning Officers |

# Monitoring and Evaluation

*Monitoring and Evaluation is key to understanding how effective and efficient MSC's engagement activities and efforts have been. Below are examples of how SPU and MSC could monitor and evaluate the change in community perceptions through either informal or formal monitoring and evaluation activities.*

Monitoring and evaluation of the SPU's community engagement efforts can be informal, simple and run internally, or fulsome, structured and delivered externally.

## Informal monitoring and evaluation

Informal monitoring and evaluation may include:

> further capture of LGA Satisfaction Surveys

> further public forums and Council surveys.

Informal monitoring will enable learnings about MSC's engagement activities in a general sense.

## Formal monitoring and evaluation

Formal and detailed monitoring and evaluation may include:

> agreement on key outcomes e.g. a more favourable perception of the SPU

> agreement on key performance indicators for each outcome

> identification of data sources for each outcome

> monitoring and evaluation against key outcomes over an agreed period of time.

Formal monitoring and evaluation will test the efficiency, effectiveness and appropriateness of any of MSC's engagement activities.

**Ashleigh Fitzgerald**

**t (03) 9616 2700**

Project Manager

**Brian Mendis**

**t (03) 9616 2700**

Project Consultant

**abn** 47 105 237 590 **acn** 105 237 590

**e** hello@grosvenor.com.au

**w** grosvenorpg.com.au

Level 15, 379 Collins Street Melbourne VIC 3000 **t** (03) 9616 2700

Level 4/17 Moore St, Canberra ACT 2601 **t** (02) 6274 9200

Level 18, 1 Castlereagh Street Sydney NSW 2000 **t** (02) 8274 9200

Level 6, 200 Adelaide Street Brisbane QLD 4000 **t** 0413 214 817

Subscribe to our news        Connect with us on LinkedIn        Follow us @GrosvenorMC