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Council restructure seeking an efficient and sustainable future to proceed

Gladstone Regional Council has unanimously adopted a new organisational structure to save approximately \$14.4 million over three years and better serve the community now and into the future.

Gladstone Regional Council Acting Mayor, Chris Trevor, said the development of the new structure was informed by the input and involvement of staff who told the organisation it needed to be “more efficient, innovative, effective and collaborative” in its deliveries.

“More than 70 of our people participated in workshops and we received 106 items of employee feedback to guide the structure’s development and 276 items of employee feedback during the structure’s consultation period.

“Our people were very engaged in the process and I am confident our new structure will support us to be more agile in adapting to community needs,” Cr Trevor said.

Cr Trevor said shifts in focus enabled Council to include in its structure functions dedicated to:

- Increasing the instances customer queries are resolved in the first contact
- Making it easier for businesses to tender for Council work
- Centralising works planning across parks, roads, water and sewerage to better coordinate deliveries and resources
- Overarching management of \$2.2 billion of assets, to drive energy efficiencies, reduce maintenance and life-cycle costs, and investigate ways to diversify revenue streams from its assets through technologies like converting waste to energy
- Driving a reduction in Council’s environmental footprint, including energy use reductions
- Increasing Council’s understanding of and engagement with the community
- Developing the talent of Council’s workforce
- Strategic grants sourcing, to increase external funding for projects that are identified as priorities for our community
- Understanding and forecasting community needs
- Investigating innovations and technology that can increase efficiencies, savings and customer convenience

Cr Trevor said the implementation of new technologies to “turn cost centres into profit centres” was an important focus area in the structure.

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“Queenslanders recently witnessed the pressure a change in our economic environment can place on local governments, when the China market for recyclable materials disappeared,” the Acting Mayor said.

“Technologies, like converting waste to energy, can turn a necessary service, like waste management, from a liability into a cost-neutral or even profitable service.

“This not only enables us to deliver more value to our community and customers; it also means Council is in a strong position to withstand changes to our economic and political environments.”

Cr Trevor said the structure also reduced the organisation’s layers to four in most cases and five in operational areas to “bring workers on the ground closer to the people leading them”.

“We will reduce the layers of bureaucracy, cutting the red tape currently in our business, to make it easier for our employees to do their work and easier for the community to do business with us,” he said.

“Council’s current structure and model restricts us from being cost-competitive – so much so that in some areas we take longer to do work in-house than contracting work externally,” he said.

“I want to change that, to achieve long-term financial sustainability and future-proof jobs by bringing work back inhouse.”

The Acting Mayor stated the new structure would deliver an estimated three-year saving of \$14.4 million through structural changes, reducing contracted work and closing vacant positions.

“These savings are in addition to the savings we expect to find through the structure’s focus on grant-sourcing, excellence in asset management and process improvements,” Cr Trevor said.

He said the shift in focus meant that there would be a reduction of 12 full time equivalent roles, however there has also been an increase of 3.5% in front line roles.

“The proposed new structure, with its increased focus on customer service, responsible asset management, grants sourcing and finding new technologies and efficiencies, proposes many new opportunities for our people to apply their skills, abilities and passion to a different and exciting future at Council,” Cr Trevor said.

“Most of the new positions will be opened only to employees displaced through a redundancy in the first instance, before we open unfilled positions internally and, in some cases, externally.”

Cr Trevor said the instigation of change was often a challenging process, but Council had a responsibility to ensure financial sustainability and provide a competitive level of service to the community.

“If we’re efficient the community benefits, if we’re inefficient the community pays,” he said.