



Briefing Paper

Liveability Framework >>

A community-centred decision-making model and new way of working for Huon Valley Council



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1. Executive summary

The **Liveability Framework** is an innovative, community-centred decision-making model that will guide a **new way of working for Huon Valley Council (HVC) and the community**. The *Framework* is being implemented to address complex challenges in the external and internal environment of HVC.

The key objectives of the *Framework* are to:

- **Understand and measure** what matters most to the community.
- **Align the decisions, plans and budgets** of HVC with what matters to the community, and to the Huon Valley Community Vision.
- Provide a **structured and comprehensive framework** for planning and decision-making processes in HVC.
- **Address the complex and unique place-based needs** of Huon Valley communities and neighbourhoods.
- **Build trust and manage the expectations of the community** through evidence-based decisions, inclusive engagements and partnerships.
- Ensure HVC is **adapt and agile in the context of an ever-changing environment**, and innovative in delivering service to the Huon Valley community.

The *Framework* offers the following value propositions:

- **Improved organisational efficiency:** The outcome-focused model addresses siloed decision-making and improves coordination across teams.
- **Enhanced community engagement:** The contemporary place-based engagement approach distributes responsibility and uses digital tools to reach more community members.
- **Data informed solutions:** Using local data improves planning, resource allocation, and allows for performance benchmarking.
- **Improved service delivery:** The combined effect of better coordination, engagement, and data usage leads to more effective services.
- **Organisational agility and adaptability:** Short-term place-based plans enable faster responses to changing conditions.

2. Introduction

The purpose of HVC as a local government authority is outlined in the ***Local Government Act 1993***:

- to provide for the health, safety and welfare of the community;
- to represent and promote the interests of the community;
- to provide for the peace, order and good government of the municipal area.

Towards this purpose, HVC makes decisions, develops plans, allocates budgets, and delivers services to residents, businesses, and visitors across the Huon Valley. However, challenges in the external environment such as evolving community needs, complex decision-making environments, and a socio-economic environment characterised by high cost-of living and inflation, housing shortages and the impacts of climate change have made it more difficult for HVC to deliver these services efficiently and effectively on its own, ultimately impacting on the community's quality of life and overall wellbeing. These challenges have also impacted on the liveability of places across the Huon Valley. Internally, a siloed decision-making and planning culture has resulted in the development of many well-intended strategies and plans that are not aligned or integrated with each other, which has complicated efforts to address these challenges.

To address these challenges, HVC has developed the ***Liveability Framework***—an innovative, community-centred decision-making model that will guide a new way of working for HVC and the community. The community includes key partners like government agencies, academia, community organisations and businesses that are involved, influential and impacted in the Huon Valley. This *Framework* is designed to respond to changing circumstances, enhance the liveability of Huon Valley, and improve the community's overall wellbeing.

The *Framework* operates as a place-based model, ensuring diverse and unique voices are heard through:

- **Place-based contemporary community engagement:** Inclusive processes that ensure the community's perspectives are sought and understood.
- **Data informed solutions:** Using regular and periodic outcome-level data to deliver solutions.
- **Collaborative partnerships:** Engaging with community members and key partners to deliver solutions.

The decision-making principles contained in this *Framework* will enable Council to balance the diverse needs and perspectives of the community, leading to more equitable and representative outcomes. By using this *Framework*, HVC and the community can better understand what matters to residents, businesses, people who work and visit the Huon Valley, aligning decisions and plans with these insights for a resilient and sustainable future.

3. Framework objectives

The *Framework* aims to **introduce and embed a new model of working for HVC and the community** by:

- **Understanding and measuring** what matters most to the community.
- **Aligning the decisions, plans, and budgets** of HVC with what matters to the community, and to the Huon Valley Community Vision.
- **Providing a structured and comprehensive framework** for planning and decision-making processes in HVC.
- **Addressing the complex and unique place-based needs** of Huon Valley communities and neighbourhoods.
- **Building trust and managing the expectations of the community** through evidence-based decisions, inclusive engagements and partnerships.
- Ensuring HVC is **adapt and agile in the context of an ever-changing environment**, and innovative in delivering service to the Huon Valley community.

4. Strategic context

The *Framework* builds upon HVC's primary purpose and functions as outlined in the **Local Government Act 1993**. The *Framework* also aligns with and enables the implementation of the **Local Government Priority Reform Program 2024-2026**, which seeks to define the contemporary role of local government along the following ideals:

"The role of local government is to support and improve the wellbeing of Tasmanian communities by:

- ***harnessing and building on the unique strengths and capabilities of local communities***
- ***providing infrastructure and services that, to be effective, require local approaches***
- ***representing and advocating for the specific needs and interests of local communities in regional, state-wide, and national decision-making***
- ***promoting the social, economic, and environmental sustainability of local communities, by mitigating and planning for climate change impacts"***

The *Framework* is aligned with the **Community Vision 2023**, the **HVC Strategic Plan 2024-2034** and **Term Plan 2023-2027**.

5. Understanding the concept of liveability

Liveability is defined as the qualities and characteristics of a place that support wellbeing and quality of life¹. Liveability is a broad and complex concept and can mean different things to different people. For example, some people may find a coastal town more liveable compared to an outback town. Similarly, younger people may prefer vibrant places with a variety of activities, while older people tend to prefer quieter places indicating that liveability can also change over time.

The *Community Vision 2023* identified the liveability outcomes (themes) that are important to the community. HVC seeks to achieve these liveability outcomes and ultimately enhance the wellbeing of communities and liveability of places across the Huon Valley.

6. Conceptual framework

The *Liveability Framework* is a simple and integrated model that will guide a new way of working for HVC. The theory of change (TOC), or program logic guiding the development of the *Framework* is provided in Annexure 1. As a conceptual framework, it is best visualised as shown in Figure 1 and made up of the following elements:

- Community centred partnerships:
- Community Vision:
- New way of working; and
- New way of planning.

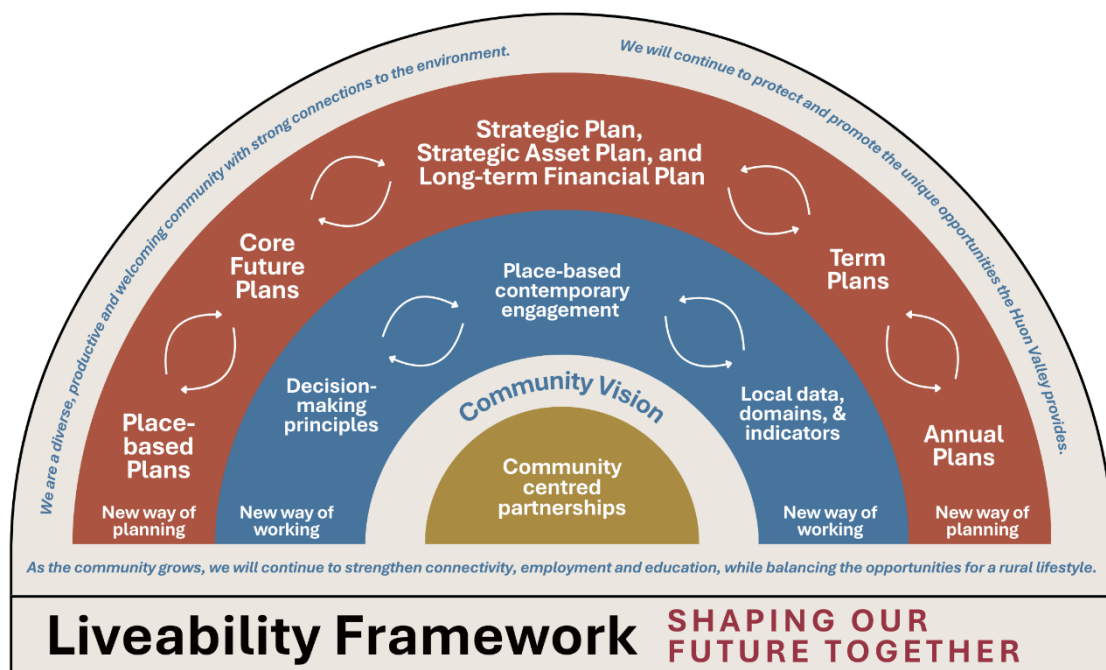


Figure 1

¹ <https://spatial.infrastructure.gov.au/>

6.1. Community centred partnerships

At the centre of the *Framework* is the **Community and Partners** of the Huon Valley. This includes residents, business owners, ratepayers, workers, and visitors who together comprise the Huon Valley's population. Community organisations, other government agencies and academia, and community structures like the **community forums, progress associations, rate payers' associations, service provider networks, peak bodies and/or industry groups** are included in this broader definition of the community. Different community members and groups will have different views on the decisions and plans made by HVC; the proposed decision-making principles will enable HVC to carefully consider and balance these diverse perspectives when making decisions and plans.

6.2. Community vision

Through regular community engagement, HVC collaborates with residents to develop a long-term community vision. The community vision identifies the liveability outcomes that are important to the community. The *Framework* ensures alignment with the community vision, helping to realise the community's aspirations for the Huon Valley.

6.3. A new way of working for Huon Valley Council

The *Framework* introduces **a new way of working for HVC, the community and partners**. The focus is on creating an integrated and coordinated approach to achieve the liveability domains and Community Vision 2023 outcomes. This includes the following elements:

6.3.1. Decision-making principles

The future focussed **decision-making principles** of the *Framework* are critical to embedding a new way of working and supporting liveability in the Huon Valley now and into the future. These decision-making principles also enable HVC to carefully consider and balance the diverse perspectives of communities and partners when making decisions and plans. These rationale and origin of these decision-making principles are listed below:

Principle	Statement	Why is this important	Example	Source
Be Transparent	Maintain open, honest, and realistic communication with the community.	Council can strengthen the trust of partners through transparency.	The community and partners understand the decision-making processes, and how they can be involved in these processes.	Community Vision 2023
Stay Engaged	Encourage active participation and collaboration among all residents in	Actively involving the community in the decision-making processes makes	The community can access modern and contemporary tools at any time	Local Government Priority Reform Program

Principle	Statement	Why is this important	Example	Source
	decision-making processes.	them feel valuable and helps them understand why decisions are being made in a certain way.	to provide feedback, suggestions and solutions.	2024-2026
Be Contextual	Respect and enhance the unique characteristics and identity of places across the Huon Valley. These unique characteristics include the balance between rural living and agricultural lifestyle that needs to be preserved.	The Huon Valley consists of distinct towns and villages, each requiring tailored attention and solutions. The region is also influenced by broader issues that unfold at regional, national, and global levels.	Develop annual plans and budgets using local data, knowledge, and community inputs, while balancing broader trends and patterns with local issues and challenges.	Community Vision 2023
Be Community-Centred	Place the needs, aspirations and vision of the community at the heart of all decisions.	Communities are best placed to understand their needs and how these needs can be met. Communities are also vast reservoirs of local knowledge and wisdom that can be tapped.	Utilise the Community Vision process to understand what matters to the community.	Local Government Priority Reform Program 2024-2026
Promote Inclusivity	Ensure that all community members, regardless of background, have equitable access to	Very often, marginalised community members face additional barriers in accessing	Provide safer and more comfortable engagement opportunities to encourage inclusivity.	Term Priority 2023-2027

Principle	Statement	Why is this important	Example	Source
	resources and opportunities.	resources and opportunities.		
Protect the Natural Environment	Safeguard natural resources and promote conservation efforts.	The natural environment is what make the Huon Valley unique. Protecting this asset is critical to the wellbeing of people and communities, and the liveability of places.	Work with the community to address coastal hazards and coastal management pathways.	Community Views 2023
Maintain a Future Focus	Plan with a long-term perspective to ensure the community remains viable for future generations.	Failing to balance immediate and long-term needs can burden both current and future generations.	Council has the right capital structure ratio is crucial in ensuring financial sustainability into the future.	Term Priority 2023-2027
Balance Actions	Consider social, economic, natural environment, built environment, and cultural capitals in decision-making.	Far too often, decisions are made in silos and without due consideration of the impacts on other capitals. The best example is economic decisions which usually impact negatively on the natural environment.	Utilise an outcomes-based approach in planning, budgeting and reporting.	Term Priority 2023-2027
Build Resilience	Develop strategies to withstand and recover from economic, social, and	The COVID-19 pandemic exposed inadequacies in our economic, social, and	Provide the tools, services and facilities that enable the community to be connected to	Term Priority 2023-2027

Principle	Statement	Why is this important	Example	Source
	environmental challenges.	environmental safeguards. Building resilience and preparedness against future disasters and disruptions is therefore crucial.	economic, social, natural and cultural resources.	
Act Proactively	Take proactive measures to prevent harm and address issues boldly.	Proactive approaches contribute to eliminating costly and delayed responses to complex problems occurring right now.	Use local data to bring together the community and key partners together to address complex problems, and set and manage expectations of the community.	Local Government Priority Reform Program 2024-2026
Follow Evidence-Based Practices	Base decisions on scientific evidence and research.	The ad hoc use of evidence-based decisions has resulted in costly, ineffective or unpopular policy responses.	Access, share and use local data to make place-based plans.	Local Government Priority Reform Program 2024-2026
Align Plans and Strategies	Ensure that various plans and strategies are cohesive and mutually supportive.	Misaligned plans and strategies within HVC have led to inefficiencies and fragmented approaches to complex problems. Effective solutions also require alignment with regional, state, and Commonwealth	Implement an outcomes-based <i>Liveability Framework</i> that aligns and integrates efforts across HVC, the community and partners.	Term Priority 2023-2027

Principle	Statement	Why is this important	Example	Source
		plans and strategies.		
Advocate for Partnerships	Foster partnerships with other organisations and partners to achieve common goals.	HVC provides services beyond its core mandate, which creates a significant financial burden. To ensure long-term sustainability, it's essential to advocate for these responsibilities to be transferred to the appropriate partners.	Develop a partnership model to manage the Huon Valley Brand.	HVC Strategic Plan 2024-2034
Collaborate Across Sectors	Work together with different sectors and groups to benefit from diverse strengths and perspectives.	Many of the complex problems faced by HVC cannot be solved on its own, or through conventional approaches. A collaborative and partnership-based approach can be utilised to tackle these problems.	Establish collaborative partnerships and forums that bring together different sectors and groups.	HVC Strategic Plan 2024-2034
Honour First Nations	Respect and incorporate the knowledge, traditions, and perspectives of Aboriginal peoples.	First Nations peoples have maintained a deep connection to Country since long before European settlement. Building trust with First Nations	Encourage SETAC to be actively involved in the development and implementation of the <i>Liveability Framework</i> .	HVC Reconciliation Action Plan

Principle	Statement	Why is this important	Example	Source
		communities requires acknowledging, respecting, and incorporating their cultural knowledge.		

6.3.2. Place-based contemporary engagements

This new way of working relies on a **place-based contemporary engagement approach** that bring the best of modern digital tools and traditional face-to-face engagements to connect with the community effectively, capture diverse voices and perspectives, and support meaningful participation in shaping the Valley's future. It addresses the limitations of traditional engagement methods, enhances place-based planning and aligns with the **Local Government Priority Reform Program 2024-2026**.

An online platform will enable local data and knowledge to be shared and communicated with the community. The platform will also host a variety of tools that enable community members to communicate and engage with HVC on various place-based issues and projects through ongoing and targeted engagements.

6.3.3. Local data, domains and indicators

The new way of working is an evidence-based approach that relies on both qualitative and quantitative local data to enable HVC, the community and partners to work towards, and achieve what matters most to the community.

Liveability domains and indicators represent the key aspects of life (outcomes) that matter most to Huon Valley communities, as identified in the Community Vision 2023. These aspects were organised into ten themes (henceforth referred as domains²). Domain-based indicators will be used to assess the current situation (baseline), enabling HVC, the community and partners to develop and implement place-based solutions that improve community wellbeing and local liveability. Regular measurement of these indicators will help track progress in each domain. Local data to measure progress will be obtained from periodic Community Views Surveys and Customer Service Surveys, real-time data on different socio-economic variables, and data from other ongoing and targeted engagements.

A localised, user-friendly dashboard will make these liveability domains and indicators publicly visible and accessible to all users (HVC staff, the community and partners). This will allow everyone to easily monitor and understand progress in the domains that matter to them.

² The term 'domains' is used to align with the Tasmanian Wellbeing Framework

6.4. A new way of planning for Huon Valley Council

The *Framework* introduces a comprehensive and structured planning framework that aligns directly with the community vision outcomes and core purpose of HVC. This approach replaces the current fragmented system with a coordinated planning and budgeting process that flows logically between different planning levels.

Key features of this new approach include the development of future focused long-term core plans and the creation of flexible, short-term place-based plans responsive to local conditions. The approach offers full integration with statutory planning requirements under the **Local Government Act 1993** and clear relationships between all planning documents to ensure alignment of resources and priorities.

6.4.1. Plans required in terms of the Local Government Act 1993

The foundation of the new planning approach remains anchored in statutory requirements that call for:

- a **community vision** that provides the long-term aspirational vision and priorities for the Huon Valley;
- a **strategic plan** (10-year horizon) that establishes the broad goals and objectives to achieve the community vision;
- a **term plan** (4-year horizon) that details the priorities of the current Council.
- an **annual plan/budget** that outlines specific actions and resource allocations for each year;
- a **strategic asset management plan** that guides infrastructure decisions; and
- a **long term financial management plan** that ensures fiscal sustainability.

6.4.2. Core plans

Core plans bridge the gap between high-level statutory documents and implementation.

- **Purpose:** To provide integrated, future-focused direction on core aspects of life (outcomes) and/or major risks and opportunities that matter to the community.
- **Scope:** Limited to 4-5 critical areas to maintain focus and effectiveness
- **Timeframe:** Medium to long-term (5-10 years) with regular review cycles
- **Proposed examples of core plans:**
 - Future Climate and Place Plan
 - Future People and Population Plan
 - Land Use and Development Strategy (LUDS)
 - Future Economic Wellbeing Plan

The nature, name and format of core plans will evolve over time based on trends identified through local data analysis. Initially, the core plans will be informed by the community vision, strategic plan, and term plan. As the *Framework* matures, these core plans will also influence the development and review of the statutory documents, creating a two-way relationship.

6.4.3. Place-based plans

Place-based plans translate core plans into locally relevant actions:

- **Purpose:** To develop unique solutions tailored to specific communities and neighbourhoods
- **Scope:** Geographically defined, from neighbourhood plans for larger towns to community plans for smaller settlements
- **Timeframe:** Shorter-term (1-3 years) to allow for agility and responsiveness

These plans enable communities to actively participate in identifying and implementing solutions that address local challenges while building on existing strengths. They recognise the distinct historical, cultural and natural heritage, and the unique mix of rural lifestyle and agricultural pursuits that define many places across the Huon Valley.

This integrated approach addresses current challenges where various supporting strategies and plans exist without clear alignment to the community vision or strategic plan. Many of these documents have resource implications that haven't been factored into asset management or financial planning. In the new approach, all plans inform resource allocation through the annual budget, asset management, and financial planning processes

The structured planning hierarchy in Figure 2 below ensures that all planning and budgeting activities remain aligned with community priorities while maintaining the flexibility to address local needs and emerging challenges.

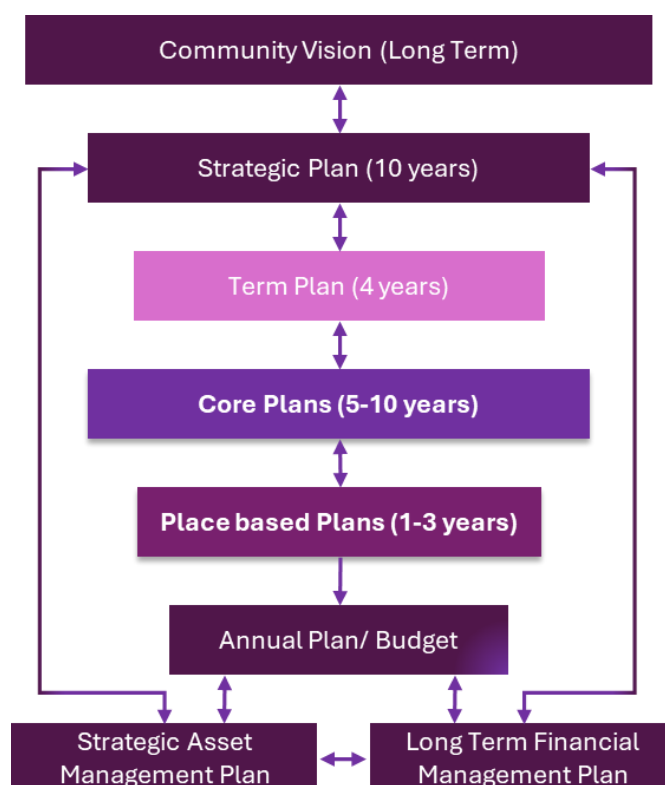


Figure 2

7. Key enablers of the liveability framework

The effectiveness of the *Framework* as a community-centric approach to decision-making and new way of working depends on two key enablers:

1. **Local data:** Access to outcomes-based data that reflects community priorities and local context to drive evidence-based decisions.
2. **Place-based contemporary engagement:** Appropriate tools and approaches for sharing local data, accessing information, and participating in decisions.

Figure 3 below illustrates the interdependent relationship between these enablers and the *Liveability Framework*.

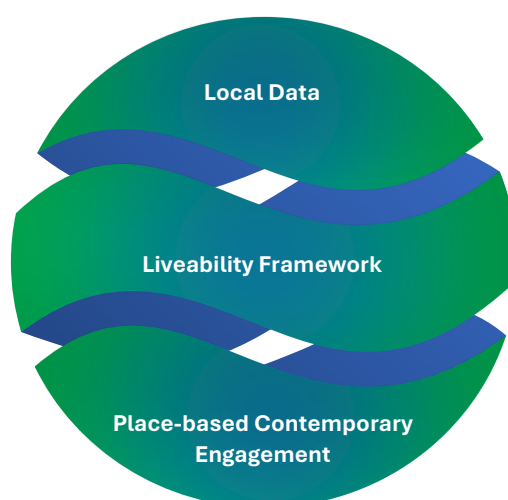


Figure 3

8. Implementing the liveability framework

The *Framework* enhances existing governance, planning, and budgeting frameworks through improved coordination and integration, without replacing them. The *Framework* operates as a **continuous cycle of community engagement and responsive decision-making and planning**, as shown in Figure 4.

On the **Council's part**, local data sources including the periodic Community Views and Customer Satisfaction Surveys, ongoing and targeted engagement outcomes, and real-time economic, social, and demographic data are used to understand issues and challenges affecting the Huon Valley at both regional and local levels.

This knowledge is shared with the community and partners to help develop innovative, sustainable solutions for individual neighbourhoods. HVC then works collaboratively to refine and prioritise these solutions based on feasibility and key decision-making principles during annual planning and budgeting. Where appropriate, partnerships and advocacy initiatives may be pursued to implement core plans and place-based plans. Knowledge and data shared with

the community also assists in setting and managing the expectations of the community. Project monitoring data helps track progress and community benefits.

On the **Community and partners’ part**, they provide vital place-based data through ongoing engagement with HVC. Their insights about local issues and challenges inform the development of place-based solutions, which HVC can support either directly or through partnerships and advocacy. Input is gathered through existing forums and proposed initiatives like the Community Forum.

This annual cycle informs the development of core plans and place-based plans that align with HVC’s statutory long, medium, and short-term planning requirements.

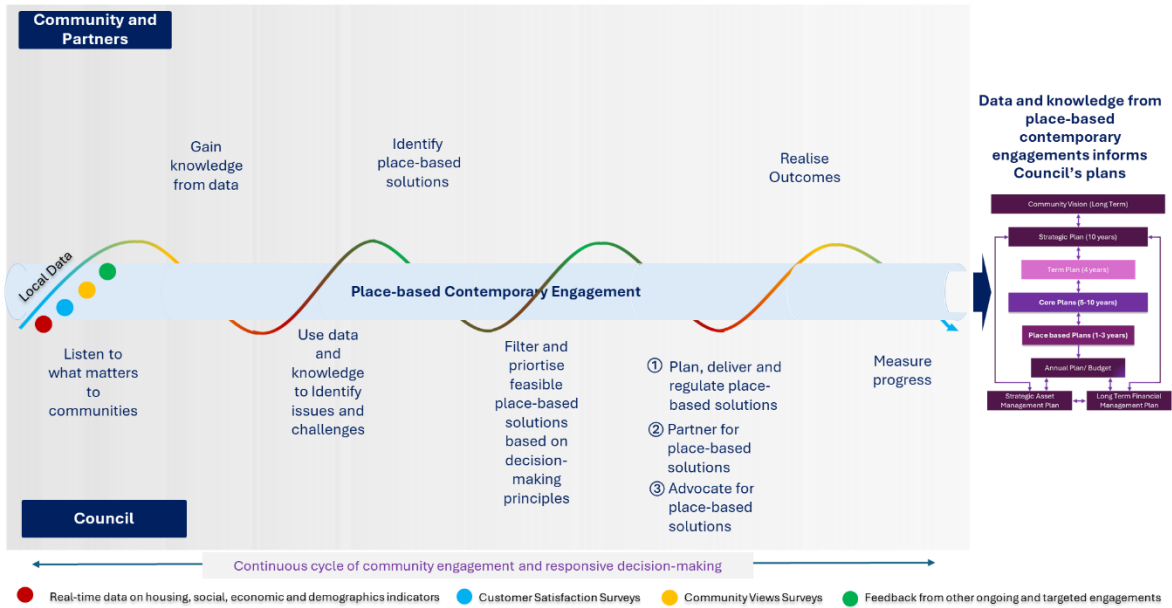


Figure 4

9. Value and costs arising from implementing the liveability framework

While many of the benefits of implementing the *Framework* are not easily quantifiable, the approach offers a solid value proposition in the following key areas.

Improved organisational efficiency: The outcome-focused framework addresses siloed decision-making and improves coordination across teams through:

- Better integration and coordination of plans, strategies, and budgets;
- Reduction of duplicative efforts with internal and external partners; and
- Staff time redirected from administrative tasks to value-adding activities.

Enhanced community engagement: The contemporary place-based engagement approach ensures the responsibility for engagement is shared and uses digital tools to reach more community members through:

- Engagement tools and resources available 24/7/365 from the comfort of residents' homes;
- Reduced need for additional physical presence of staff during engagement initiatives;
- Ability to connect with previously unreachable community members;
- Increased community participation rates;
- Greater demographic diversity in engagement; and
- Decreased costs for physical engagement events.

Data informed solutions: Using local data improves planning, resource allocation and allows for performance benchmarking through:

- Proactive planning and service delivery based on community needs;
- Improved accuracy of service demand forecasting;
- Higher percentage of decisions supported by local data;
- Better alignment of services with community-identified priorities;
- Enhanced ability to measure and benchmark performance against other jurisdictions;
- Shared local data that benefits residents and businesses in their own planning and investment decisions; and
- Better-targeted service delivery reducing wasteful efforts.

Improved service delivery: The combined effect of better coordination, engagement, and data utilisation leads to more effective services through:

- Reduced response time to service requests;
- Increased first-time resolution rates;
- Higher community satisfaction with service delivery; and
- More efficient use of asset maintenance resources through data informed prioritisation.

Organisational agility and adaptability: Short-term place-based plans enable faster responses to changing conditions through:

- Enhanced flexibility in the face of external environment changes;
- More responsive allocation of resources based on emerging needs;

- Improved ability to incorporate community feedback into planning adjustments; and
- Reduced resource requirements in the Engagement Unit for major initiatives.

Costs

In terms of cost, the only annual costs currently foreseen are the costs of:

- procuring an annual subscription to key economic, social and community data;
- hosting a biannual Community Views survey;
- hosting a biannual Community Satisfaction Survey; and
- maintaining a contemporary engagement platform, all of which currently amounts to \$94,500 a year.

While no additional human resources are currently needed, organic succession planning requirements may need to be factored in due course for many of the involved roles and responsibilities.

10. Next steps in implementing the liveability framework

The following are the steps that will be implemented towards implementing the *Framework* (a project schedule is attached as Annexure 2):

- Steps to be immediately following Council endorsement
 - The soft launch of Engage Huon Valley as the key platform hosting HVC's place-based contemporary engagement activities on 9 April 2025.
 - The launch of the Community Views Survey 2025 on 4 April 2025.
 - The hosting of the first Community Forum in Huonville on 12 April 2025.
- Steps to be implemented over the rest of the FY2025/26 period:
 - Development of new place-based contemporary engagement plans
 - Development of new planning and budgeting processes and templates.
 - Development of new coordination and integration processes in HVC.
 - Development of place-based plans towards FY2026.27.
 - Conduct of a Customer Satisfaction Survey in FY2025.26.

11. Recommendations

It is recommended that Council:

- Endorses the *Liveability Framework*-an innovative, community-centred decision-making model that will guide a new way of working for HVC, the community and partners.

Appendix 1: Theory of change for the liveability framework



Appendix 2: Project schedule

