

Engagement Summary Report

Draft Economic Development Strategy 2026 –2030

Executive summary

Community engagement on the Draft Economic Development strategy sought to understand whether the refreshed draft meets community needs in planning, advocating and developing a vibrant and prosperous City, as well as position the City of Monash as a place for business.

Engagement was undertaken through Shape Monash platform. In total, Council received 45 responses via a survey.

Themes identified through community engagement include:

- Strong support for inclusive and accessible economic participation, in particular jobs, skills and equity, and strong support for helping people enter and stay in the workforce.
- The importance of business support that is practical and visible such as tailored resources, events and workshops and networking opportunities.
- The need for a strong innovation ecosystem with effective connections and partnerships, entrepreneur support, plus proactive investment attraction and promotion for Monash's strengths such as manufacturing.
- Strong support for creating and improving public spaces that contribute to health, happiness and wellbeing.

The feedback from respondents was mostly positive, with responses supporting the direction of the strategy and recognising Monash's strengths as a hub for innovation, research and business. There was strong support for actions that strengthen business support, workforce development and connections between industry, education and research. Many participants valued existing Council programs such as events and workshops and called for these to continue with more opportunities for business collaboration, showcasing businesses, and practical support for small and home-based enterprises.

Alongside this support, respondents asked for more practical, tangible actions with clearer implementation and less 'jargon'. There were calls for clearer communication, stronger support for small and home-based businesses, improved digital capability and information sharing, plus a greater focus on inclusion and employment. Some concerns were also raised about infrastructure, housing and balancing growth.

Overall, feedback suggests the strategy is well supported with suggestions for clearer communications, increased connections, stronger emphasis on inclusivity and local impacts, and more visible, practical outcomes for businesses and the community.

Next steps

All input provided throughout consultation will be considered and where appropriate, included in amendments to the draft Strategy. Overall, minor changes have been made largely based around the timelines for select actions. These changes are now reflected in the final copy.

Background

The Monash Economic Development Strategy 2026-2030 provides Council with strategic directions to plan, advocate and develop a vibrant and prosperous City, as well as positioning the City as a place for business.

The Strategy is a re-refresh of the former Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan 2018-2022, reflecting the changes to the economy and environment.

The Strategy sets out an Action plan that aligns with the City of Monash Council Plan 2025-2029 and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

Monash is Victoria's second largest economic and employment generator, its economy is driven by industry specialisation such as manufacturing, health, science and education, research and development Monash is also supported by a vibrant network of activity centres, and employment precincts (including the Monash Employment and Innovation Cluster), infrastructure assets, as well as major research and development organisations.

How we engaged

A total of 45 contributions were submitted on the draft Strategy via Shape Monash. Opportunities to provide feedback were promoted through the following communication channels:

Website

- Shape Monash web page
- News article on home page

Email

- First for Business eNews
- Monash Mail eNews
- Chinese language eNews
- Industry eNews – Eastern Innovation, SEMMA, Monash Precinct Network, Trader Associations
- Direct email outreach to attendees of past business events

Social media

- Facebook
- Instagram
- LinkedIn

Other

- Monash printed Bulletin
- Presentation and/or flyers at all 9 workshops/events of Start Up, Invest and Grow in Monash series

Feedback (You said)

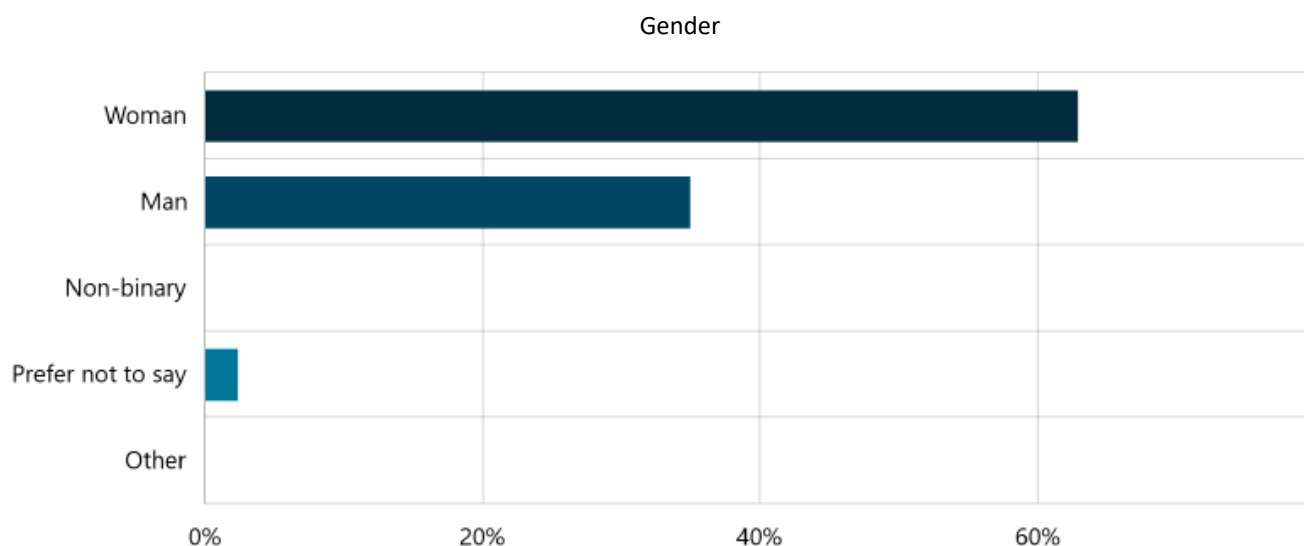
Who we heard from

Our consultation aimed to engage broadly with the business community, including targeted outreach to small businesses, sole traders, home-based businesses, industry stakeholders, and multicultural communities.

During the engagement period we received 45 contributions from 18 business owners or managers, 12 sole traders, startup or entrepreneurs, 5 industry stakeholders, 4 workers in Monash, 3 respondents considering opening a business in Monash in the future, and 19 Monash residents. Respondents were from across the City of Monash, with the majority from Mount Waverley and Glen Waverley. Many respondents operate home-based or small enterprises, and participants represented a culturally diverse community, with 50% born overseas and 26% speaking a language other than English at home.

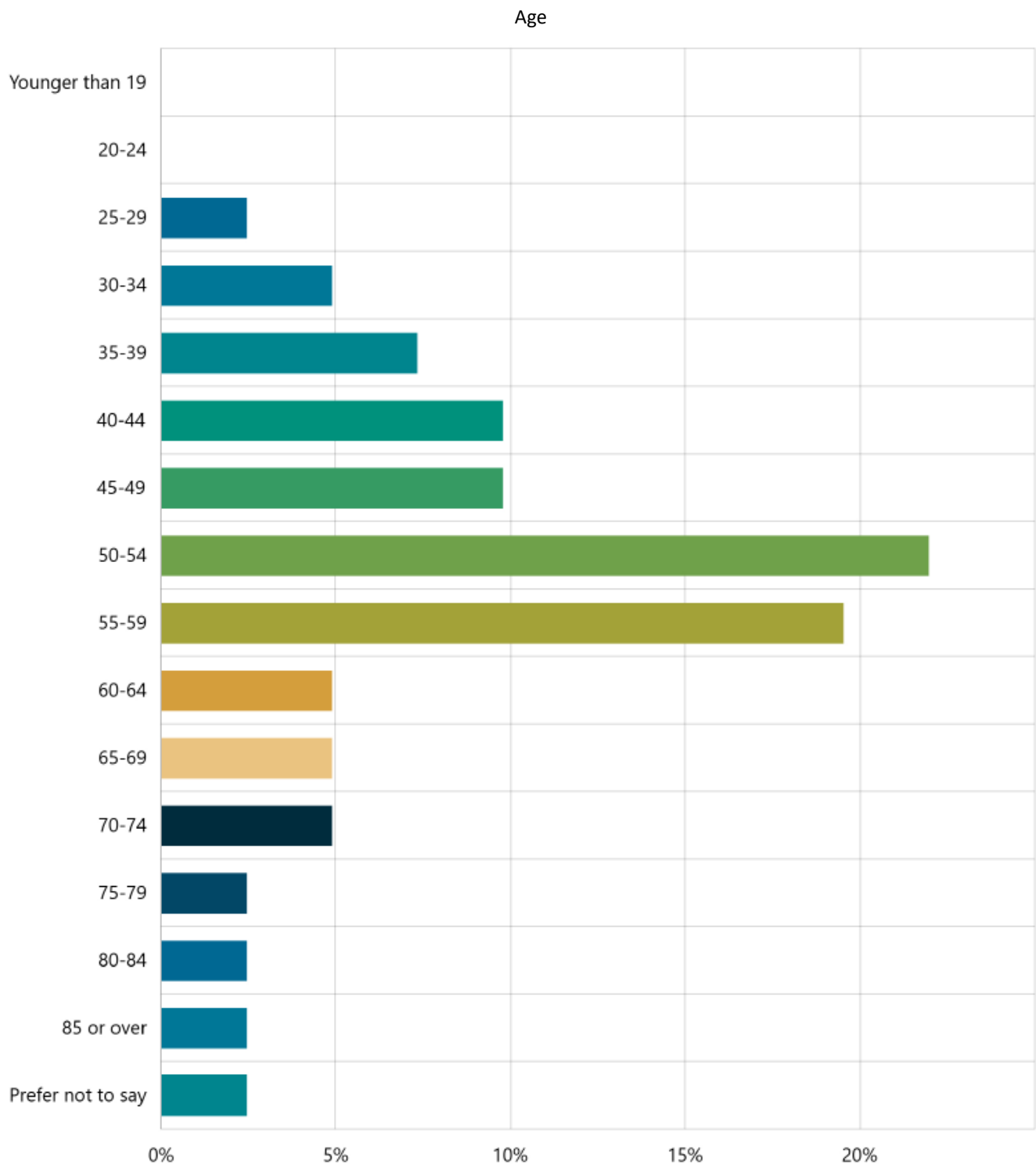
Gender

Of the 45 responses to the survey, 27 identified as a woman, 15 identified as a man and 1 preferred not to say. Zero respondents identified as non-binary or selected 'prefer to self-describe'. Two chose to skip the question.



Age

Survey respondents ranged in age from 25 to 85+ years old, with the majority of respondents within the 50-59 age groups.



Diversity indicators

- 21 respondents were born overseas (Primary countries of birth were Sri Lanka, China, India, and United Kingdom)
- 11 respondents spoke English as a second language (primary languages spoken were Mandarin and Hindi)
- 1 respondent identified as being part of the LGBTIQ+ community
- 1 respondent identified as a primary carer.

Length of business operation in Monash

Respondents were asked how long their business had been operating in Monash:

- 17 are well established businesses in Monash for 10 or more years
- 6 are new businesses to Monash of less than 1 year
- 4 have been running their business in Monash for 5 to 10 years
- 2 respondents are relatively new to Monash of 1 to 5 years.

Type of business

- 13 respondents ran home-based or mobile businesses
- 6 respondents' business was in an office
- 5 respondents ran their businesses online
- 2 respondents had a shop front business
- 1 respondent had a warehouse business
- 5 respondents selected other.

What we heard from the community

A total of 45 participants provided feedback on the draft Economic Development Strategy. The majority of respondents supported vision, with:

- 73% indicating the vision reflects what they want well, or very well
- 20% indicating it somewhat reflects their views and
- A small proportion unsure, with no respondents indicating opposition

Comments highlighted that respondents value Monash's strengths as a hub for innovation, research, health, education, and manufacturing, and see strong potential for continued economic growth. Many respondents also noted alignment with existing Council programs and initiatives.

Feedback and comments on the draft strategy

26 respondents provided further comments on the strategy that are noted below with Monash Officer comments where applicable:

- *“Development of the infrastructure and other facilities.”*
- *“Investment and support that enables local manufacturers of medical devices and healthcare consumables to work closely with health systems like Monash Hospital to accelerate innovation, validation, and adoption. This creates better care for patients. A stronger, more sustainable health system. And a local medtech industry with the commercial depth to supply both - creating the jobs, resilience and global standing that only come from making things here.”*
 - **Officer comment:** The Strategy outlines a key theme – A City of Investment, Action 3.4 highlights to establish an investment attraction brand that markets Monash to investors, with supporting prospectus materials that promotes Monash’s value proposition. As part of SIGM in 2026, a health innovation discovery tour was held with 22 people in attendance. Council is also an active member of the Monash Precinct Network, which actively targets engagement with health sector.
- *“Business awareness that benefit the local communities of Monash. For Example, initiatives that promotes and directly impacts circular economy / sustainability or Cost of Living impacts e.g. Publication via Monash Bulletin.”*
 - **Officer comment:** The Strategy outlines a key action 2.8 that highlights the importance of circular economy practices, supporting a more productive and sustainable business base.
- *“Being a local business, would really like to see a subsidized Virtual Office facilities being offered to local businesses that wish to register their address in the Monash Area in ASIC. The local Virtual Office facilities cost almost double of what MBC (Melbourne Business Centre - \$30/Mo) is charging. However, it is inconvenient to collect mails from that location. The draft strategy is fantastic. Please consider my suggestions.”*
 - **Officer comment:** Noted the comment, however, Council is not in a position to provide subsidised virtual office space, however, working with our key partners and through the development of a Business Concierge officer, research may be undertaken to understand the need and requirements.
- *“In terms of providing more housing and businesses, I don’t support high-rise. If we need more housing, why not encourage subtle low rise subdivisions (e.g. units, townhouses) across the whole of Monash. This better supports small business, doesn’t alienate and upset communities, suburbs maintain their character, doesn’t result in major increased traffic in certain roads, and lowers the risk of crime in high density areas. Why not general low-rise development across the whole of Monash rather than high-rise in certain areas. This would result in more cohesive and happier communities and involve lots of businesses rather than large developers. Don’t agree with activity centres. Sounds like another word for high-rise development.”*
 - **Officer comment:** Noted – Action 1.9 – highlights that Council will play a role in meeting the State housing targets which aims to deliver more homes near transport, job opportunities and essential services by 2050.
- *“Services like local libraries are very important.”*
 - **Officer comment:** Noted – Council is also undertaking a Public Library Strategy which will be provided on Shape Monash for community consultation in September 2026.
- *“There is a lot of managerial jargon in it – depressing.”*

- “Yes. The strategy aspires to a connected ecosystem but none of the 30+ actions create the shared information infrastructure that makes connection possible. Four actions are missing:

1. Monash Ecosystem Data and Information Strategy (Action 2.12). The foundation. Map data assets across key participants (CSIRO, Monash University, ANSTO, startups, manufacturers), establish governance for trusted data access, and pilot within the MNEIC. Aligns with Victoria's Economic Growth Statement on digital technologies.”

- **Officer comment:** Noted – due to current capacity, Council is not able to introduce a new Strategy, however it will be noted if external funding opportunities become available.

“2. Workforce and Skills Information Network (Action 1.7). Connect employers, training providers (Holmesglen, Monash University), and community groups for real-time visibility of skills supply and demand.”

- **Officer comment:** Noted, whilst the real time visibility is aspirational, Council does work and will continue to partner with Monash University and Holmesglen linking employers to training providers.

“3. Digital Economy Capability Program (Action 2.13). Build the skills businesses need to participate in a connected digital economy.”

- **Officer comment:** Noted, digital capability is important emerging skill and workshops around digital capability will continue to form part of our Start up Invest and Grow program and other partner programs supported by Council.

“4. Digital Placemaking Pilot (Action 4.11). Pilot shared information infrastructure in 2-3 activity centres to demonstrate value at local scale.”

- **Officer comment:** Noted, this suggestion is beyond the scope of the current Strategy.

- “This strategy covers 25,000+ businesses, \$36.4B in economic output, and 133,000 local jobs. A four-year linear strategy with periodic review isn't sufficient for that scale. What's needed is an evergreen approach built on continuous sensemaking: ongoing interpretation of economic signals, workforce shifts, and investment patterns feeding directly into strategy updates.

This is supported by having information infrastructure that lets the ecosystem understand itself. Just as physical infrastructure (transport, utilities, SRL) underpins economic activity, information infrastructure is the digital layer that enables a modern local economy to function. Victoria's Economic Growth Statement identifies digital technologies as a priority sector. This strategy should reflect that by investing in shared, trusted data access as foundational infrastructure.

Without this, the strategy's ambitions around connectivity and innovation remain aspirational.”

- “As a disability and community service provider I would like to request more inclusive arrangements at Monash. So people with all ability could participate. There should be a supported hub or make the existing hub more accessible.

The information about economic development strategy should be more spread out across Monash in micro level.”

- **Officer comment:** Noted, Under Theme 1 – A City of Prosperity and Wellbeing – the EDS highlights the focus on addressing social inequities and there are a number of Actions listed - 1.1 and 1.2 that will particularly target people with disabilities.

- *“A business and innovation online directory.”*
 - **Officer comment:** Noted – As the City of Monash has over 25,000 businesses, keeping a directory contemporary and up to date requires extensive resourcing. This is not an action for inclusion at this stage.
- *“Small business collaboration event for business owners to work closely from supplier to manufacturer or service provider”*
 - **Officer comment:** Noted, officers will continue to bring together business owners and suppliers as part of the SIGM program.
- *“Please try to connect all members who joined on the (Start Up, Invest and Grow Health Innovation) tour on one email. Because we didn't have more time to get connected.”*
 - **Officer comment:** Noted – We will consider this action for the 2027 program, as permission will need to be granted at the registration stage.
- *“Waverley Basketball Complex - desperately needs more parking. Whilst parking spaces are currently insufficient - Monash should not fine car owners who park incorrectly for short durations... it's essentially a problem created by the council so it's a conflict of interest that the council fines the people affected by lack of parking spaces.”*
- *“To encourage 'green' white collar businesses to utilise more of the shared office providers - Monash could offer subsidies / coupons to businesses that use share office spaces. This also fosters networking”*
- *“it would be great to have focused trade shows, festivals or quarterly competitions for the best SME in a specific sector or semi-related sectors. That way, the businesses will have an opportunity to show off their core competency as a highest level.”*
 - **Officer comment:** Noted, the SIGM program will continue to build opportunities for businesses to highlight their practice and discuss emerging opportunities.
- *“This is a well thought out strategy.”*
- *“More opportunities for business to be represented and show case their expertise.”*
 - **Officer comment:** Noted as above.
- *“Clear strategies to market and connect to clients in the area.”*
- *“So questions relied on existing knowledge and practices making it difficult to answer therefore not applicable.”*
- *“Thank you so much for this amazing Economic Development team that is led by Gill Di Pasquale for the wonderful work they are doing for business and community.”*
- *“Experienced business coaches to share their knowledge and support with the new business starters.”*
 - **Officer comment:** Noted – Monash Council offers a mentoring service. Details are listed on our website along with the Empowering Women Entrepreneur program which is sponsored by City of Monash and co-ordinated by Eastern Innovation. We also provide a free Council-sponsored mentoring sessions via the Small Business Mentoring Service.
- *“Great to be involved in projects around Monash and surrounding suburbs.”*
- *“More events for ladies in business if possible to organise in the evenings.”*

- **Officer comment:** Noted – The Women in Business Network is a popular event and Action 2.9, it states to continue to grow and develop the Monash Business Women's Network and support its evolution toward a self-sustaining network. The evening time slots can be explored as part of this action.
- “There is an element of future focus that's missing. Are we limiting our beliefs? Can Monash surpass the CBD?”
- “It should be AI, Data ready.”
- “Remember there are non public facing service businesses in Monash too - activity centres, manufacturing, etc don't help my business whatsoever as I operate from home and have always done everything for myself. In over 20 years of business (and in the oft forgotten Ashwood corner of the council), Monash has given me a few seminars and not much more really. Maybe at home and sole traders deserve some support too... Top of my head, how about something like rates discounts, services support, consideration to provide services to council, specific seminars and networking events, collective access to supplies/suppliers (an afternoon to get an IT specialist cover new security software needs or problem solving), or a means of some bartering and cross promoting support between micro businesses.”
 - **Officer comment:** Noted – Action 2.7 highlights Business events and workshops. Officers continue to explore and scope the best opportunities for networking around particular themes and skill requirements.
- “Identity questions don't cover domestic abuse and homeless survivor (again, without support or help from Monash) which feels like a handicap but in reality just makes life harder without recognition. Trying to heal from abuse and run a business is a tough road. Not council's fault, but worth considering along with other challenges faced in this area.”
- “Provide grants for Migrant founders especially women founders.”
 - **Officer comment:** Noted – Whilst specific grants are not available for migrant founders, Action 1.2 highlights connecting jobseeker and workforce support with a range of specialist partners.
- “So far it covers all the most important points.”
- “Clean up the homeless situation in Oakleigh. It is dirty and has druggies and homeless and feels unsafe and is going downhill. There should be a hotline to move these people away. They are sleeping in the streets and doing drug deals can be aggressive and antisocial.”
- “Can we prioritise issues that affect the majority of our residents not the minority. Like eg. cost of living, community safety and health, domestic violence, effective transport. Etc.”
- “Need to manage commercial and retail growth with livability for residents. Even with transport options nearby, cars will always be used.”
- “The upkeep of roadside mowing, weeding and the removal of litter would make the area much more appealing.”
- “There is a lack of content relating to "third" sector businesses which are an important part of the economy - not for profit groups, sports clubs and so on are all part of a thriving economy and ecosystem and should also be supported to retain them within Monash.”
- “Just make sure not to spend money replicating resources and toolkits that already exist. For example, there is a wealth of material for start-ups and new ventures that has been publicly funded and can simply be adapted for use in Monash.”

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- *“A lot of these questions are typical of government-based mindsets. I can see some thread of SRL and fear a leaning towards the Labor government's control. Monash, let alone Victoria, cannot afford any more of that cost. If you can't learn from Labors failings then you don't deserve to be in your job.”*

*Officer comment: **Noted above.***



How we will consider your feedback

Internal discussions have been held with key stakeholders concerning modifying the timelines for select actions based on work load and priorities and these have been amended.

Some responses and suggestions are beyond the scope of this Strategy; however, they are noted if future opportunities arise through external funding grants. The Strategy balances realistic actions for delivery with the available resources and partnership arrangements currently in place.

Next steps

The draft Economic Development Strategy will be presented to Council at the July 2026 meeting for endorsement. Once finalised, officers will commence implementation of the year 1 actions. Measuring the impact of the implemented actions will be conducted through the key performance indicators provided and a snapshot report will be promoted via the First for Business e- news on an annual basis.