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and culture, libraries, community and recreation services, and building and property maintenance.

The year also saw a major step forward in our plans to replace the ageing Council Chambers and improve Council and staff accommodation with our acquisition of a new civic and operational building at 828 Pacific Highway Gordon, adjacent to the current Council Chambers site.

On the financial front, it is pleasing that Council's healthy financial position has been maintained. The financial result from operating activities for 2012/2013 is a surplus of \$4.8 million. This surplus contributes to Council's capital program, which in 2012/13 was \$66.1 million. Council's underlying working capital is \$4.2 million, a level considered to be sound by Council's Independent Auditor.

Council recently received a "sound" financial rating from the NSW Treasury Corporation reinforcing our robust financial position. In fact, NSW Treasury Corporation ranks Ku-ring-gai in the top 16 councils in NSW, reinforcing our prudent approach to financial management.

Our objective is to maintain and enhance this positive financial position well into the future.

A new Council was elected in September 2013 and it is good to see the positive interaction and decision-making with elected Councilors for the long-term good of the area. I thank them all for their dedication and hard work in the first year of their term. I would also like to acknowledge those outgoing Councilors who represented the community until September 2012.

This Annual Report gives a detailed account of Council's achievements and challenges in 2012/2013. I thank Councilors and all of Council's staff for their valuable contributions across so many different areas.

We are in a strong position to continue to grow our capacity and build on this success in delivering first-rate local government for our community in future years.

John McKee, General Manager



GROWING OUR CAPACITY General Manager's Report

As General Manager, I'm delighted to present our 2012/2013 Annual Report which reviews our achievements, challenges and performance across the wide array of services and facilities we provide for our community.

This document contains a summary of our financial accounts as well as detailed information across our six key functional areas:

- Community development
- Urban environment
- Natural environment
- Planning and development
- Civic leadership and corporate services
- Financial sustainability

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The Local Environment Plan (Local Centres) 2012 (LEP), was gazetted by the State Government on 25 January 2013, and successfully meeting the Government's timeframe to complete this Plan was an enormous undertaking. I thank everyone who contributed – from Councilors and staff to residents and other stakeholders who took part in the community consultation process.

Planning staff have also made significant progress on development of the new Principal Local Environment Plan and continue work on master plans for key facilities.

Nonetheless, the revitalisation of our local centres and the delivery of key community facilities remains an enormous challenge for Council, and how we progress and fund these is an ongoing body of work to identify new opportunities with key stakeholders to realise these facilities.

An organisational priority in 2012/2013 was development and delivery of key planning documents under the State Government's Integrated Planning and Reporting framework.

The ongoing enhancement and alignment of the Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program and Operational Plan, together with Council's Resourcing Strategy (Long-term Financial Plan, Asset Management Strategy and Workforce Strategy), are critical in setting the strategic direction of Council and ensuring that our finite resources are deployed to provide maximum benefits to our residents.

As good financial managers we must ensure that opportunities to reduce expenditure and broaden income streams are captured to increase ongoing financial commitment to improving Council's roads, footpaths and other asset infrastructure.

2012/2013 also saw further development of our Asset Management Strategy to provide a framework for the long-term management of all our community assets including roads, footpaths, drains and buildings, which are valued at \$570 million. This work involved engaging with our community to understand their priorities and demonstrated that residents place a high value on the condition of roads, footpaths and drainage. As a result, further analysis will be undertaken with the community to ensure we have the right priorities for future funding and to determine the level of support for Council to apply for a Special Rate Variation that funds the renewal of these assets into the future.

Our area is often referred to as Sydney's Green Heart and we take that responsibility seriously. Our vast and precious natural environment is well served by our culture of sustainability and stewardship for the future.

The Environmental Levy has allowed us to implement far-reaching environmental initiatives and our innovative environmental programs and projects continue to make Ku-ring-gai a leader in environmental sustainability through climate adaptation strategies, stormwater harvesting systems and bushland and waterway rehabilitation.

As part of Council's culture of continuous improvement, and following on from an organisational review of all our services, we identified options for improvements in service delivery to better meet community needs. Based on the review's findings, we reformulated areas including development assessment, leisure