

Environment and Sustainability Reference Group

Terms of Reference

Classification

Reference Group

Purpose

To provide a mechanism for Council to consult with key stakeholders, seek specialist opinion and enable community participation in environmental sustainability issues, initiatives, policies and strategies.

Objectives

- Provide a forum for environment and sustainability issues of interest and concern for Whitehorse to be reviewed and considered prior to Council decision making processes on all aspects of the environment.
- Assist in the preparation or review of key environmental sustainability strategies and policies.
- Assist in the design and delivery of specific environment and sustainability programs by Council.
- Provide input on issues of environmental sustainability.
- Monitor the progress of implementation of Council action / management plans relating to environmental sustainability.
- Provide coordination, liaison and communication with other Council appointed community groups and key external stakeholders.

Membership and Chairperson

- Two Councillors with one Councillor to act as Chairperson
- Director Infrastructure
- Director City Development
- Twelve Community representatives endorsed by Council's Director Infrastructure and Director City Development as the delegated authorities in consultation with the Environment and Sustainability Reference Group Councillors
- Four Council officers to be nominated to the Reference Group. One Council officer is to be an Arborist.
- Administrative support provided by Council's Environmental Volunteer Support Officer

Term of appointment

Community representatives will be appointed by Council for a three-year term or until otherwise resolved by Council's delegated authorities.

An ongoing recruitment process of four community representatives will be undertaken in September/October each year and result in a total of twelve community representative members who rotate on three-year terms (four representatives each year).

Co-opted members

The Reference Group may invite suitably skilled persons to advise the Reference Group as a co-opted member for a specified purpose and period of time. A co-opted member joins the Reference Group in an advisory capacity and does not form part of the quorum.

Quorum

A meeting can only take place with a minimum quorum of:

- One Councillor;
- Four community members, where a community member can nominate a substitute if unavailable to attend; and
- One Council officer must be present for administrative purposes.

Member responsibilities

In order to fulfil the Reference Group's objectives, community members are expected to:

- Undertake induction as a volunteer of Whitehorse City Council.
- Demonstrate an understanding of diverse environmental and sustainability issues relevant to Whitehorse.
- Understand the role of local government in environmental and sustainability management.
- Be conversant with relevant Council plans and policies.
- Be reasonably available and able to commit to meet bi-monthly over the three-year period.
- Be prepared to send a proxy to meetings if unavailable.
- Prepare for and actively participate in regular meetings of the group.
- Keep informed on current developments, issues and concerns in relation to urban environments.
- Have knowledge of State Government policy and current issues regarding urban environments.
- Respect confidentiality, if required, of matters discussed in meetings.
- Declare conflicts prior to the discussion of an agenda item.

Council officers are required to abide by the Code of Conduct.

Whitehorse is committed to providing a safe workplace for employees, Councillors and volunteers.

Members of Council Reference Groups must:

- Be respectful at all times.
- Adhere to the Equal Opportunity Act 1995, and refrain from discriminating, harassing or bullying other people and using offensive language in their capacity as a member of the Reference Group.
- Adhere to the requirements of the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 and have regard to the principles of health and safety. Reference Group members must ensure that they contribute to the notion of a healthy and safe workplace.
- The council officer with responsibility for convening the Reference Group will provide an overview of the relevant legislative requirements and Council's Equal Opportunity and Anti-Bullying and Violence Policy as part of the Reference Group induction process.

Recruitment

- Council seeks both continuity within the Reference Group and generation of new ideas and direction, and as such, over time a mix of new and existing community members is encouraged. All existing members seeking another term will be required to re-nominate.
- Community member vacancies will be advertised via the Whitehorse News, on Council's website and via other channels.
- Council seeks community applicants with an ability to work collaboratively with other members and Council, a strong interest in local environment and sustainability issues, a proven understanding of environmental issues, and a willingness to commit up to 2 hours every two months to attend Reference Group meetings.
- Council staff will be appointed to the Reference Group from time to time.

It is intended to create a Reference Group with the following attributes:

- a. Diversity of environmental interests and knowledge including climate change, waste, transport, community development and education, urban biodiversity, water, open space;
- b. Representation of members of different local community groups;
- c. Representation of a variety of sectors in the municipality, including community agencies, business, education, and interested citizens;
- d. A mix of skills and attributes to complement other members of the Reference Group;
- e. Representation from different Council departments;
- f. Members will be selected on the merits of their skills and their ability to contribute to ensuring the attributes are achieved

Resignation of a Community Member

A community member of the Reference Group may resign at any time. Notice of resignation is to be provided in writing to Council.

Community members on the Reference Group will be deemed to have resigned if they fail to attend two consecutive meetings without giving prior notice of the intended absence.

Any Community member vacancy will be replaced. This process will include a review of the pool of previously unsuccessful applicants or readvertising. Community members are appointed by Council.

Meeting frequency

Meetings are held every two months for a period of approximately two hours at a Council venue or via virtual video conferencing, unless otherwise advised and agreed by the Reference Group. Meeting time will run from 5:30pm – 7:30pm.

Management of the Reference Group

- The Director Infrastructure or nominated delegate will convene the Reference Group, will resource the Reference Group and attend all meetings, provide information, support and technical advice. This includes the preparation of meeting agendas, minutes, reports and other administrative functions.

Reporting procedure

- The Environment and Sustainability Reference Group is not a formal committee but rather a group that is established by Council to provide advice and input so that staff can use that advice in operational matters and when preparing advice to Council.
- Any advice provided by the Reference Group will be reached by consensus where possible.
- A vote may be entered into to resolve a specific recommendation. Where differing views may be expressed by members of the group, these views will be reflected in any reports and statements issued.
- Minutes of the meetings will be recorded and acknowledged in the various reports on the various issues reported to Council.
- Recommendations made by the Reference Group require consideration and approval by Council or Council's delegate before being fully endorsed and acted upon.

Public Statements

Members of the Reference Group cannot make public statements on behalf of Council.

References

- Whitehorse Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2011 and the Climate Response Plan update
- Open Space Strategy
- Urban Forest Strategy

- Sustainability Strategy
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Whitehorse Planning Scheme

Approval date

26 February 2024

Next review date

February 2025