

Council Policy – Stakeholder Reference Groups, Advisory Groups and Committees of Council

Responsible Directorate	Corporate Services
Responsible Business Unit/s	Governance
Responsible Officer	Manager Corporate Performance
Affected Business Units	All

Objective

The objective of this Policy is to provide guidance for the establishment and operation of Stakeholder Reference Groups, Advisory Groups and Committees of Council.

The Policy also outlines the expectations of external members.

Scope

This policy applies to all Stakeholder Reference Groups, Advisory Groups and Committees of Council established by the Shire, including those formed in collaboration with external stakeholders.

Policy

Introduction

Under Section 5.8 of the *Local Government Act 1995*, Council may establish Committees to assist Council, and to exercise the powers and discharge the duties of the Council that can be delegated to a Committee. Committees report to Council and can be established for a particular purpose, with a completion date, or can be ongoing.

Stakeholder Reference Groups or Advisory Groups (Reference or Advisory Groups) are a collection of people that meet to assist the Shire in making recommendations or forming views for the Administration to progress or to be recommended to Council.

Reference or Advisory Groups will not be delegated decision making ability or be authorised to exercise the powers or discharge the duties of the Council.

Establishment

Committees of Council may be established in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1995*.

Reference or Advisory Groups may be established by a simple majority resolution of Council. Reference or Advisory Groups established pursuant to this Policy are not, and are not intended to be, Committees established under Section 5.8 of the *Local Government Act 1995*.

Reference or Advisory Groups may be established to:

- a) facilitate Council Member, stakeholder and/or community input and involvement opportunities;
- b) provide advice; and

c) support the Shire, in regard to strategic, special interest and/or operational activities.

The decision on whether the group is established as a Committee of Council, Stakeholder Reference Group or Advisory Group will be on the basis of the following:

Name	Purpose	Operation
Committee of Council	To meet a legislative requirement (for example the Audit Committee) or to assist Council, including to exercise powers or discharge duties of Council that can be delegated to a committee. May be established to enable members to concentrate on specific matters in greater depth, offering objective insights and more efficient deliberation whilst maintaining the strict procedures required for decision making. Established on an ongoing basis with objectives that relate to the statutory functions of Council. External members are appointed based on specific expertise or experience.	In accordance with s 5.8 of the <i>Local Government Act 1995</i>. Meetings will be convened, conducted and recorded in accordance with the Shire's Standing Orders. Formal decisions and recommendations are presented to Council.
Advisory Group	For the sole purpose of providing technical advice on operational matters in a manner that complements staff competencies and the Shire's core services. An Advisory Group provides an opportunity for community members, organisational representatives or technical experts to provide comment, advice, local knowledge, information and feedback regarding plans, services and programs.	Meetings will be conducted in a formal manner providing an opportunity for ideas to be raised and for general discussion. Records (including agenda and minutes) of meetings are to be kept and all records retained in the Shire's record keeping systems. Minutes of meetings are to be tabled for Council's noting at the next available Ordinary Council Meeting.
Stakeholder Reference Group	Convened in relation to a specific policy development, planning process, capital project or other time limited project. Stakeholder Reference Groups provide an opportunity for community	Meetings will be conducted in an informal manner providing an opportunity for ideas to be raised and for general discussion.

	members, organisational representatives and/or technical experts to collaborate and deliberate in order to develop meaningful feedback, advice, and to share local knowledge and information on a specific topic, for a fixed period of time. Conflicts of interest or personal experiences and connections held by reference group members may be relevant during community consultation, as they can offer valuable context and insight. These perspectives help enrich feedback and foster a deeper understanding of community needs, provided they are acknowledged transparently and managed appropriately. These groups may be established at any time as an engagement mechanism to develop community consensus on matters that have broad competing needs. Membership of these groups need to be balanced depending on the objective of the group.	All meetings will be facilitated and ground rules will be established for each meeting. The purpose and expected goals are clearly articulated for each meeting, for example specific aspects of a project that community input is sought, such as project benefit, not design decisions. Where necessary, the Shire may engage an external facilitator to run meetings. Minutes of meetings are to be kept and all records retained in the Shire's record keeping systems. Minutes of meetings may be tabled for Council's noting at the next available Ordinary Council Meeting. Outcome of meetings are to be analysed and summarised by Shire Officers to inform Officer recommendations that are presented to the Major Complex Committee as required at certain stages of a project.
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Terms of Reference

All Groups and Committees will operate in accordance with the Terms of Reference approved by Council which provide:

- A clear statement of objective and the scope of activity to be undertaken;
- Membership/stakeholder representation.
- The operational and administrative framework by which activities are to occur.

Council may resolve to terminate a Group or Committee at any time.

Extent of Authority

Reference or Advisory Groups have no decision-making powers and do not have any authority to act on behalf of the Shire. In operation, the group cannot direct employees, call tenders, award contracts, expend monies, direct volunteers or do anything which is the responsibility of the Shire.

Reference or Advisory Groups members either collectively or individually are not authorised to speak on behalf of the Shire or provide comment to the media or other persons, in respect of any item under consideration, unless authorised by the Chief Executive Officer.

Reference and Advisory Groups - Advice to Council

The outcomes of Reference and Advisory Groups will be conveyed to a Committee or Council via a report prepared by the applicable Shire Officer. The Chair of the Reference or Advisory Group, or a nominee, will have the ability to speak on the advice to Council at the relevant Council Meeting, via a Deputation and to answer any questions raised. They will not participate in debate or discussion.

Membership

Membership, nomination processes and tenure of appointment for each Reference and Advisory Group or Committee is set out in the respective Terms of Reference.

Membership may include Elected Members, Shire employees, representatives of agencies and stakeholder organisations, and members of the community.

The Reference and Advisory Group and Committee membership shall be appointed by Council.

Community Membership

Expectations

External members have a responsibility to:

- a) actively listen to the opinions of a wide range of stakeholders.
- b) commit sufficient time to the process.
- c) represent the interests of other people, including those who might be less vocal or harder to reach.
- d) recommend the best-fit solution that meets the needs of all people with an interest or those likely to be affected, including those from minority groups; and
- e) keep people informed on the progress of the process (when confidentiality doesn't apply).

Code of Conduct

External members are expected to act in accordance with the Shire's [Code of Conduct for Volunteers](#).

Members of Committees of Council are required to comply with the [Shire's Code of Conduct for Councillors, Committee Members and candidates](#).

All external members will be provided with a copy of the relevant Code of Conduct at the first meeting and will be required to sign a declaration that they will comply with the Code.

Conflicts of Interest

Conflicts of interest for Reference and Advisory Groups members are to be managed in accordance with the relevant terms of reference.

In preparing the terms of reference, consideration will be given to the purpose of the group and the appropriateness of a member with a conflict of interest participating in the discussion, noting that conflicts of interest may be relevant during community consultation.

To avoid conflicts of interests associated with procurement probity, Stakeholder Reference Group meetings are not to be held during the procurement phase of project including planning, evaluation, award and contract negotiations.

Council Decision

The Shire's decision-making obligations are guided by relevant legislative, strategic and operational requirements and therefore the views or proposals of a Reference or Advisory Group may not always prevail.

Definitions

Advisory Group means a group created for the sole purpose of providing technical advice on operational matters in a manner that complements staff competencies. An Advisory Group has no direct tie to a statutory function of Council.

Committee means a Committee established under Section 5.8 of the *Local Government Act 1995*.

Meeting means an assembly of the group for a particular purpose and extends to workshops and other similar sessions.

Stakeholder Reference Group means a group convened in relation to a specific policy development, planning process, capital project or other time limited project and provides a mechanism to engage with the community to achieve specific pre-determined objectives. These groups are established for a fixed period only, and the purpose and expected goals are clearly articulated for each meeting.

Related Documents

- Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale Code of Conduct for Councillors, Committee Members and candidates
- Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale Volunteer Code of Conduct
- Council Policy – Council Delegates and Representation on External Organisations, Including Community Groups

Legislation / Local Law Requirements

- *Local Government Act 1995*
- *Local Government (Model Code of Conduct) Regulations 2021*
- *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996*

Amendment Record

Relevant Delegations		Nil.	
		Date	Resolution Number
Council Adoption		3 November 2025	SCM-4-2025
Version	Date	Resolution Number	Amendment Details