



Council Policy

Community-centred Council committee framework

Version 2 - 22 July 2024

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Policy - external Community-centred Council committee framework

Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for establishing and operating 'community-centred' committees created by Lake Macquarie City Council (Council) to assist in the delivery of key focus areas and objectives under the Lake Macquarie City Community Strategic Plan ('Community Strategic Plan').

By promoting clarity and consistency in operations and expectations associated with Council committees, the policy aims to support good governance and informed Council decision-making, and enhance service delivery, economic and efficient use of public money, and public confidence in Council.

Scope

This policy applies to all Council staff, Councillors and other committee members.

This policy does not apply to the following committees:

- a) Committees of Council governed by the Code of Meeting Practice
- b) Councillor Portfolios
- c) Council's Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee
- d) Council's Property Advisory Panel
- e) Lead Mitigation Grants Panel
- f) Internal Council staff-only committees
- g) Community operating committees or groups with authority delegated under section 355 of the *Local Government Act 1993*
- h) 'External' committees which are administered outside Council.

Application of this policy is to be consistent with Council policies on business ethics and applicable codes of conduct.

Policy statement

The Community Strategic Plan guides the future direction of Lake Macquarie City for the next 10 years, shares the vision and aspirations for the future of Lake Macquarie and sets out the community's long-term plan. The Community Strategic Plan is Council's key strategic planning document and maps out the strategies and actions we will take to achieve our community's long-term vision for the city. The Community Strategic Plan is reviewed every four years, following an election.

Council actively engages with the Lake Macquarie community to achieve the objectives established in the Community Strategic Plan, and values diverse advice, input and engagement across a range of services and activities. Council has a responsibility to fulfil its statutory obligations under the *Local Government Act 1993*, including community participation, and to manage its resources effectively and efficiently. In doing so, Council is guided by the Community Engagement Strategy, which is based on best practice engagement principles including advice from the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2).

To support community engagement, Council may establish committees in accordance with relevant laws and Council policies and procedures, to assist in achieving objectives under the Community Strategic Plan. Such committees contribute to objectives by providing information and advice that Council may rely on in its decision-making processes and complement broader skills and knowledge available to Council.

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Council will establish and approve an individual charter for each committee to guide their operation and support effective engagement underpinned by strong governance. The charter will:

- detail a group's terms of reference, including a clear purpose and function
- outline the term of committee membership, including how committee members are to be recruited
- explain how a group contributes to a key focus area and identify the relevant objective under the Community Strategic Plan
- align with one of the four approved models for community-centred committees as outlined below
- be subject to regular review, at least once in each Council term.

All members must comply with relevant provisions of the committee's charter.

Council staff subject matter experts are responsible for preparing charters and facilitating individual committees within their areas of responsibility.

Models for community-centred committees

All committees should have clear and appropriate governance to support their operation. This policy establishes the following types of committee models, to provide consistent governance approaches that are aligned with a committee's general role in the Council decision-making process.

Council will adopt one of the following four models in developing a community-centred committee:

1. **Reference committee**

This type of committee is focused on addressing a specific action, project or deliverable, and provides insight or expertise to inform existing Council activities undertaken in accordance with operational plans and strategies.

IAP2 engagement stage: Inform/Consult/Involve

2. **Grants assessment committee**

This type of committee assesses applications for funding from grants programs that are offered by Council.

IAP2 engagement stage: Collaborate

3. **Recommendation committee**

This type of committee makes formal recommendations to the elected Council about matters of strategic priority under the Community Strategic Plan.

IAP2 engagement stage: Collaborate

4. **Awards committee**

This type of committee makes binding decisions about award recipients on behalf of the city, subject to a formal instrument of delegation.

IAP2 engagement stage: Empower

For more information about the IAP2 engagement stage, refer to the International Association of Public Participation Spectrum available at [IAP2 Published Resources - IAP2 Australasia](#).

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Table: Models for community-centred committees

Model 1 - Reference Committee	
Authority	Charter containing terms of reference approved by Council and subject to review.
Term	As required with details and length of term to be included in charter. A reference committee is to be recognised and concluded if and when an action, project or deliverable is completed.
Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor/s appointed by Council. Council will appoint Councillors for the Council term and consider reviewing Councillor membership or seek alternate Councillors for any committee at any time throughout the Council term. • Council staff responsible for relevant subject matter. • External agency representatives by invitation, if required. • Suitably skilled community members selected through expression of interest process. <p>Note: all Councillors invited to attend as observers.</p>
Chair	Subject matter expert/s (Council staff facilitated).
Meetings	As needed – Council staff work with group to determine meeting frequency and support.
Voting and decisions	Decisions relating to actions to be undertaken by committee members made by consensus. Minutes, including action log, to be maintained by Council staff.
Reporting	To responsible Council staff for consideration as part of work programs.
Model 2 – Grants assessment committee	
Authority	Charter containing terms of reference approved by Council and subject to review. Work plan approved by responsible manager. Relevant funding guidelines.
Term	As required – up to four years aligning with a Council term.
Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor/s appointed by Council. Council will appoint Councillors for the Council term and consider reviewing Councillor membership or seek alternate Councillors for any committee at any time throughout the Council term. • Council staff responsible for relevant subject matter. • External agency representatives by invitation, if required. • Suitably skilled community members selected through expression of interest process.
Chair	Councillor or independent Chair.
Meetings	As needed in accordance with approved work plan.
Voting and decisions	Quorum required to approve assessment outcomes for presentation to Council. Formal minutes (with agreed outcomes and action items) recorded and circulated to committee members.
Reporting	Responsible Council department to prepare report to elected Council containing agreed assessment outcomes.

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Model 3 - Recommendation committee	
Authority	Charter containing terms of reference approved by Council and subject to review. Formal work plan approved by responsible manager.
Term	Four years aligning with a Council term. Responsible Council staff to conduct mid-term review of purpose and work plan, and report to Council about any proposed changes to the committee charter.
Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor/s appointed by Council. Council will appoint Councillors for the Council term and consider reviewing Councillor membership or seek alternate Councillors for any committee at any time throughout the Council term. • Council staff responsible for relevant subject matter. • External agency representatives by invitation, if required. • Suitably skilled community members selected through expression of interest process.
Chair	Councillor or independent Chair.
Meetings	As needed – minimum quarterly.
Voting and decisions	Quorum required to agree to formal recommendations to Council. Formal minutes (with agreed outcomes and action items) recorded and circulated to committee members.
Reporting	Responsible Council department to prepare report to Council containing agreed recommendations, as required.
Model 4 - Awards committee	
Authority	Charter approved by Council and subject to review. Charter to contain terms of reference and formal delegation of authority in accordance with the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> to select individual award recipients on behalf of Council in the relevant awards program approved by Council.
Term	As required, based on charter.
Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor/s appointed by Council. Council will appoint Councillors for the Council term and consider reviewing Councillor membership or seek alternate Councillors for any committee at any time throughout the Council term. • Council staff responsible for relevant subject matter. • Suitable community members selected through expression of interest process.
Chair	Councillor.
Meetings	As needed and determined by committee.
Voting and decisions	Quorum required to select award recipients and for decisions that impact the operation of the committee. Formal minutes (with agreed outcomes and action items) recorded and circulated to committee members.
Reporting	Responsible Council department to prepare a report to elected Council containing recommendations for significant changes if the awards are to be merged or stopped.

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Principles

Council will consider the following guiding principles when developing committees:

1. *Inclusive* – the perspectives of all relevant stakeholders should be included in a committee as far as possible, and reasonable efforts should be made to ensure equitable participation.
2. *Informed and sincere* – key information for an issue should be available to all participants to understand issues. Processes should ensure respectful discussion of issues and promote participation arising from a genuine desire to contribute to the city.
3. *Clear purpose* – all committees should have a clear and current purpose for activities, which should be measurable by indicators aligning with the Community Strategic Plan.
4. *Transparent* – information about a committee should be available to the wider community.
5. *Accountable* – community members should be able to see how feedback supports Council decision-making.
6. *Adaptable* – all committees should be regularly reviewed and adapted to suit changing contexts and needs. When a committee or group has achieved its purpose, it should be discontinued.

Review and evaluation

Responsible Council departments are responsible for reviewing and evaluating individual committees within their areas of responsibilities, at least once in each Council term.

Council's Communications and Corporate Strategy department is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the broad application of this policy, in consultation with responsible Council departments. Council policies are reviewed once in each Council term.

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Controlled Document Information

Authorisation Details

Folder No:	F2022/00278	TRIM Record No:	D11444322
Audience:	External		
Department:	Communications	Officer:	Coordinator Council Liaison - Caitlin Parr
Key focus area(s):	Shared decision making		
Review Timeframe: Max < 4 years	4 years	Next Scheduled Review Date:	22 July 2028
Authorisation:	Adopted by Council - 22 July 2024 in accordance with section 3 of the Toolkit for Policies, Procedures and Guidelines - Version 4.		
Authorisation	22 July 2024		

Related Document Information, Standards & References

Related Legislation:	<i>Local Government Act 1993</i> <i>Local Government (General) Regulation 2021</i>	Establishes guiding principles and obligations for local government in undertaking various activities.
Related Policies:	Code of Conduct for Councillors Code of Conduct for Council staff Code of Conduct for Council committee members, delegates of Council and Council advisors Business Ethics Community Engagement Strategy Community Participation Plan	Establishes behavioural and other standards and requirements for those involved in council committees. Outlines approaches toward community engagement in decision-making under the Environment Planning and Assessment Act 1979.
Related Procedures, Guidelines, Forms, WHS Modules/PCD's, Risk Assessments, Work Method Statements:	Community Engagement Guideline	Contains information about options and methods for Council community engagement activities.
Standards, COP's & Other References	N/A	N/A

Definitions

Term / Abbreviation	Definition
Nil	

Consultation (update for each version created)

Key Departments, Teams, Positions, Meetings:	Asset Management, Integrated Planning, Environmental Systems, Arts, Culture and Tourism, Community Partnerships, Property and Business Development, Communications and Corporate Strategy, Integrity and Risk, existing committees
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Version History

Version No	Date Changed	Modified By	Details and Comments
1	10 January 2022	Loren Cousins	New policy drafted and approved by Council

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2	May 2024	Caitlin Parr	<p>Updates to reference the Community Engagement Strategy.</p> <p>Plain English and readability edits.</p> <p>Update name of Property Advisory Panel.</p> <p>Lead Mitigation Grants Panel added as out of scope.</p> <p>Minor changes to committee models for clarity and consistency.</p>
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