

Finance and Operations Committee

Agenda

Date: Wednesday 16 February 2022

Time: 6pm

**Venue: Civic Centre (Council Meeting Room)
13 Mair Street, Benalla**

The *COVID-19 Omnibus (Emergency Measures) Act 2020* enables councils to hold meetings electronically. This measure is intended to ensure the safety of members of the public, Councillors and Council staff.

The Council Meeting Room has limited capacity for public attendance. Accordingly, members of the public are encouraged to watch the live broadcast of the meeting at www.benalla.vic.gov.au

Any person wishing to participate in Question Time in accordance with Rule 7.2 of the *Governance Rules 2020* should contact the Council by emailing council@benalla.vic.gov.au or telephoning Governance Coordinator Jessica Beaton on (03) 5760 2600.

In accordance with the Governance Rule 6.4 an audio recording will be made of the proceedings of the meeting.

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1 Bridge Street East
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Agenda

- Chair** Councillor Justin King
- Councillors** Councillor Danny Claridge
 Councillor Peter Davis
 Councillor Don Firth
 Councillor Bernie Hearn (Mayor)
 Councillor Punarji Hewa Gunaratne
 Councillor Gail O’Brien

- In attendance**
- | | |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Dom Testoni | Chief Executive Officer |
| Robert Barber | General Manager Corporate |
| Jane Archbold | Manager Community |
| Tom Arnold | Community Development Coordinator |
| Jessica Beaton | Governance Coordinator |

Acknowledgment of Country

We, the Benalla Rural City Council, acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we are meeting. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and to Elders from other communities who may be here today.

Apologies

Recommendation:

That the apology/ies be accepted and a leave of absence granted.

Confirmation of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes have been circulated to Councillors and posted on the Council website www.benalla.vic.gov.au pending confirmation at this meeting.

Recommendation:

That the Minutes of the Finance and Operations Committee Meeting held on Wednesday 1 December 2021 be confirmed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Governance Matters

This Committee Meeting is conducted in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020* and the Benalla Rural City Council *Governance Rules 2020*.

Recording of Council Meetings

In accordance with the *Governance Rules 2020* clause 6.4 meetings of Council will be audio recorded and made available for public access, with the exception of matters identified as confidential items in the agenda.

Behaviour at Meetings

Members of the public present at a meeting must remain silent during the proceedings other than when specifically invited to address the Committee.

The Chair may remove a person from a meeting for interjecting or gesticulating offensively after being asked to desist, and the chair may cause the removal of any object or material that is deemed by the Chair to be objectionable or disrespectful.

The Chair may call a break in a meeting for either a short time, or to resume another day if the behaviour at the Council table or in the gallery is significantly disrupting the meeting.

Disclosures of Conflict of Interest

In accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020*, a Councillor must declare any Conflict of Interest pursuant to Section 130 of the Act in any items on this Agenda.

At the time indicated in the agenda, a Councillor with a conflict of interest in an item on that agenda must indicate they have a conflict of interest by clearly stating:

- the item for which they have a conflict of interest;
- whether their conflict of interest is general or material; and
- the circumstances that give rise to the conflict of interest.

Immediately prior to the consideration of the item in which they have a conflict of interest, a Councillor must indicate to the meeting the existence of the conflict of interest and leave the meeting.

Business

1. Public Question Time

The Council's *Governance Rules 2020* provide the opportunity for members of the public to lodge written questions of broad interest to the Council and the community.

Questions of the Council will not be allowed during any period when the Council has resolved to close the meeting in respect of a matter under section 66 (1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act).

A question may be on any matter except if it:

- is considered malicious, defamatory, indecent, abusive, offensive, irrelevant, trivial, or objectionable in language or substance;
- relates to confidential information as defined under the Act;
- relates to the personal hardship of any resident or ratepayer; or
- relates to any other matter which the Council considers would prejudice the Council or any person.

No more than two questions will be accepted from any person at any one meeting.

All questions and answers must be as brief as possible, and no discussion may be allowed other than by Councillors for the purposes of clarification.

Like questions may be grouped together and a single answer provided.

The Chair may nominate a Councillor, the Chief Executive Officer or another member of Council staff to respond to a question.

Recommendation:

That the question(s) and answer(s) be noted.

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2. Draft *Community Engagement Policy and Community Engagement Framework and Toolkit* – Consideration of Submissions

SF/1604

Tom Arnold – Community Development Coordinator

Jane Archbold – Manager Community

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report considers submissions received on the on the draft *Benalla Rural City Council Community Engagement Policy* and draft *Community Engagement Framework and Toolkit*.

BACKGROUND

At the meeting of the Finance and Operations Committee on 27 October 2021, the Committee, acting under its delegated authority of the Council, resolved:

That the draft Benalla Rural City Council Community Engagement Policy and draft Community Engagement Framework and Toolkit be placed on public exhibition for a period of at least 28 days.

Public notice of the draft *Benalla Rural City Council Community Engagement Policy* and draft *Community Engagement Framework and Toolkit* was given via the Council's website on Thursday 28 October 2021 and in the *Benalla Ensign* on Wednesday 3 September 2021.

Feedback was sought via the Council's website, through Councils networks and promoted on social media.

The submission period closed 5pm Thursday 25 November 2021.

DISCUSSION

At the close of the submission period two submissions were received from (refer **Appendix 1**):

- Michele McCrohan
- Sabine Smyth

In accordance with the Council's *Governance Rules 2020*, submitters were invited to address the Finance and Operations Committee on 1 December 2021. Submitters did not request to speak in support of their submissions.

The two submissions made suggestions in relation to working in partnership with the community engagement methods and improving Council meetings for the public.

The vision and purpose of the Policy and Toolkit is to support Council staff to deliver purposeful and accessible community engagement processes, including those highlighted in the submissions.

As feedback received through the two submissions did not specifically address the content of the draft *Community Engagement Policy* or draft *Community Engagement Framework and Toolkit* there are no recommended changes to the Policy or Toolkit.

COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025 IMPLICATIONS

Leadership

- *Good governance.*
- *High performance culture.*
- *Engaged and informed community.*

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Costs associated with reviewing and updating the draft *Community Engagement Policy* and *Community Engagement Framework and Toolkit* have been met from existing operational budget allocations.

LEGISLATIVE AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

It is considered that the Policy is consistent with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* and *Gender Equality Act 2020*.

OFFICER DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any general or material conflicts of interest in this matter.

CONCLUSION

The *Community Engagement Policy* and *Community Engagement Framework and Toolkit* will be considered for adoption at the Council Meeting on 23 February 2023.

Recommendation:

That the *Benalla Rural City Council Community Engagement Policy* and *Community Engagement Framework and Toolkit* be considered for adoption at the Council Meeting on 23 February 2022.

From: Mish L
To: Benalla Council Email
Subject: Feedback on Draft Community Engagement Policy
Date: Tuesday, 16 November 2021 8:58:51 PM

Dear Sir/Madam

Having read through the draft of this policy at: <https://www.benalla.vic.gov.au/Your-Council/Have-Your-Say/Have-Your-Say-Draft-Community-Engagement-Policy-and-Community-Engagement-Framework>

I have only a couple of comments to make.

It was good to see the model of community engagement acknowledged that there are ways to give community members more of a platform to work with council around decisions that impact them.

I would like to see more courage shown in partnering with stakeholders meaningfully, rather than just using engagement methods to tick the box to say it has been done.

There is a lot of knowledge, skill and expertise within the community that doesn't sit within council, and which could be drawn upon to inform positive initiatives. There is a large part of this community that have never really felt like they have a say or responsibility for the way we live everyday, and I would like to see that change.

Giving people a reason to engage - where they see they are listened to and their ideas respected, is one way to build on the contributions each of us makes to our municipality.

A return to in person council meetings would be welcomed in 2022.

Warm regards

Michele

From: noreply@opencities.com
To: Benalla Council Email
Subject: Response Form - Draft Community Engagement Policy and Community Engagement Framework Submitted
Date: Tuesday, 23 November 2021 11:37:37 AM

My written submission on the draft Community Engagement Policy and Community Engagement Framework and Toolkit:

see attached.

Upload a document to support your submission (optional):

Submission-to-Community-Engagement-Policy-and-Toolkit-November-2021.pdf
(Attached)

Would you like to speak to your submission at the Finance and Operations Committee meeting on 1 December 2021?:

No

Name: Sabine Smyth

22nd November 2021

Dom Testoni, Chief Executive Officer &
The Mayor Cr Bernie Hearn & Councillors
Benalla Rural City Council
P.O. Box 227
Benalla VIC 3671

Mr Testoni and Councillors,

This is a submission to your draft community engagement policy and community engagement framework.

The latest community satisfaction surveys showed that Council rates poorly for how it engages with the community. It would be reassuring if your community engagement policy and framework had a vision to actively aim for an improvement in community satisfaction with, a mandatory process to evaluate and review your strategies should they fall short.

The policy states that council commits to 'information being shared in a timely and balanced way so the community understands engagement aims, processes and outcomes' yet in my opinion (as one of your key community partners for Theme 2 Liveability) this rarely occurs.

Council could and should therefore work with the community over time, to develop a mutual understanding of what constitutes clear and transparent information, what are appropriate time frames and methods for consultation.

I would like to make some general suggestions about methods of community engagement:

- Inform & Engage

Council could use social media to provide the community with a brief description of the agenda items of upcoming Council meetings. Wangaratta Council does this very well via Facebook.

Council should invest in a good sound system for the Council Meeting Room. Zoomed Council Meetings are very hard to hear.

- Engage & Empower

Council could develop a better system for responding to/following up with submissions from the community. Here is an opportunity to make the community feel heard, yet currently I feel they might be wasted time.

Regards

Sabine Smyth

Closure of Meeting