

# COMMITTEES REVIEW – ENGAGEMENT REPORT OCTOBER 2021

## Executive summary

The direct engagement process with operational committees was undertaken over a four week period. The level of response and attendance at the meetings was quite low in some instances, perhaps reflecting disengagement with a particular committee or with the Committee Review Process.

The notes of the eleven meetings held indicate the following key themes:

- Majority endorsement of the Committee restructure with 10 of 12 committees in general support of their proposed committee classification
- Committee members are passionate about the work of their committees and have achieved great outcomes in the past
- Some committees note a frustration in not achieving their goals or projects and ask for greater council support either in staff resources or council budget or both
- Regularity and efficiency of meetings has at times been impacted by volunteer fatigue and limited Council resources
- Focus of many of the committees is on facility development and improvement, which is well suited to the Community Reference Group model
- The use of the Merit Service Request system needs to be maximized for operational issues.

## Background

The Committee Review process commenced in February 2021, following approval of Council.

The objective of the review, is to make Council's committee structure as modern and efficient as possible, providing appropriate community engagement as per IAP2 principles.

Changes recommended as part of this review must:

- be compliant with the new Local Government Act 2020
- maintain or improve engagement with our community
- create efficiencies
- reflect industry best practice
- be consistent in approach across Council – that is to have a consistent structure for the same types of committees within Council, giving equal resources across Council.

## Activities completed

- Formation of working group
- Review of Committee list and membership (database)
- Desktop audit of active committee minutes over two year period (pre and during COVID)

What this told us –

- Some Committees have been quite active and meet regularly, while others no longer operate
- There are few recommendations being made by Committees that require decisions by Council

We identified internal council committees' that have community members for the purposes of a member survey

- Benchmarking exercise with 8 similar-sized Councils to review their committee structures and any changes made in response to the new Local Government Act

What this told us –

- There is no consistent approach across these Councils.
- Some Councils had many advisory committees and community asset committees while others did not
- Most Council's had a high level of community membership
- Councillor attendance on their committees was reduced or eliminated by some Councils
- Very few had had time to review their committee structure in response to the new Act
- The resource load for volunteers, Councillors and staff was generally recognised as a challenge

- Review of new Local Government Act requirements

What this told us –

- Under the new Local Government Act, there are now only 2 formal types of committees.
  1. Community Asset committees for the purpose of managing a community asset (noting specific requirements) and,
  2. Delegated committees where specific powers of Council are delegated to the committee
- The new local Government Act is silent on the establishment of Advisory Committees but Council may also choose to use such committees to provide advice and feedback on specific one-off matters or on any ongoing matter for council.

- Survey of Committee Members

In April this year, we sent 192 surveys to committee members of 31 committees and received 45 responses representing 22 committees

What this told us –

- Some Committees have been quite active and meet regularly, while others no longer operate
- There was strong ownership and commitment of community members on active committees
- The benefits of getting groups of people together to share experiences and understand issues
- Active committees require large time commitments from our community members, often with community stalwarts carrying the load
- Some committees had been established for a particular purpose and were never formally 'wound-up' at the end
- The large number of current committees requiring staff support provides a big resource strain on Council staff. As a result:
  - Staff are not always available for regular meetings
  - Some committees have ceased to operate without being formally wound up
  - Committee Terms of References have not been reviewed regularly and are out-of-date
  - Membership of committees has not been reviewed regularly

- Development of draft Committees Policy – endorsed by Council for engagement (Briefing 13/09/2021)

- Development of draft Committees Structure - endorsed by Council for engagement (Briefing 13/09/2021)

- Development of Engagement Plan – endorsed by Council (Briefing 13/09/2021)
- Engagement with Committees – Sep/Oct 2021

## Purpose of engagement with committees

- Ensure Committees understand the proposed classification of their committee in the new draft structure and what that means for them
- Hear feedback from committees about their future and where they believe they fit in with the new structure
- Allow Councillors to hear feedback from committees and supports a collective decision on the proposed new structure
- Discuss the need for a revised Terms of Reference – this will be developed with service managers and individual committee groups
- Reach a conclusion and process for moving forward with the committee structure

## Committee Engagement

The level of engagement with committees was based on the following:

1. [Committee no longer active or functioning](#) – letter to be forwarded advising of the outcome of the committee review - Committee to be formally discontinued
2. [Committee where no change was proposed](#) – letter to be forwarded advising of no change to their committee
3. [Committee where the draft structure proposes changes to committee type](#) - a face to face meeting with the committee to be held to discuss proposed changes. Councillors requested the opportunity to hear from committee members as part of this process.

### Face to Face committee meetings

Over a four week period from 28 September 2021, meetings were held with the following twelve committees:

Aerodrome	Racecourse Reserve	Bicycle Advisory Com
Domestic Animal Management	Art Gallery	Public Art Committee
Dudley Cornell Reserve	Haven Reserve	Tidy Towns
Older Persons Group	Aquatic Centre	Regional Livestock Exchange

Note:

- Meeting invite also sent to Sunnyside Reserve committee, with no response received
- Meeting still to be arranged with the Local Advisory Fire Protection Committee regarding the work of this committee being undertaken under the Municipal Fire Management Planning Committee managed by CFA.

## Summary of feedback from meetings and recommendations

**Aerodrome Committee – 1 attendee**

[Recommended Committee Structure – Advisory Committee](#)

As an Advisory Committee, the purpose of the committee will be to provide ongoing advice to Council about the Aerodrome and also to feed into Council through recommendations and participation in planning forums

<b>Committee Comment/Issue</b>	<b>Response</b>
The proposed structure of Advisory Committee is perfect. An Advisory Committee is extremely valuable for all stakeholders and the council because it allows the right decisions to be made about the future of the aerodrome	<b>Support Committee Structure</b>

### **Racecourse Reserve Advisory Committee – 1 attendee**

#### [Recommended Committee Structure – User Group](#)

As with other recreation reserves, the draft structure recommends that the Racecourse Recreation Reserve Advisory Committee becomes a User Group that meet autonomously of council, concentrating on collaborative programming of the facilities and increasing club/group participation.

<b>Committee Comment/Issue</b>	<b>Response</b>
Membership and purpose of the RRC has changed greatly - there is little need to share facilities and groups can operate quite separately and autonomously of each other	Autonomous use of space means that regular meetings regarding operational issues are less needed
Members lost interest when the committee changed from a S86 CoM to an Advisory Committee – loss of ownership - are they really listening to us? Have we got a lot of input? Why are we coming out to meetings?	One attendee from 9 committee members and three responses to survey
Consistency of meetings is important. It is important to have meetings if we are discussing shared spaces, but these meetings don't have to be organised by Council	Operational issues can be lodged as Service Request system
Committee are happy with the proposed structure of a User Group and to organise their own meetings as required	<b>Support Committee Structure</b> , with nominated Council Officer for advice if needed. Future Precinct Planning to involve a Community Reference Group as required

### **Art Gallery and Public Art Committee - 5 attendees**

#### [Recommended Committee Structure – be part of Creative Horsham Advisory Committee](#)

As an Advisory Committee, the purpose of the committee will be to provide ongoing advice to Council about all elements of Creative Art on an equal basis and to feed into Council through recommendations and participation in planning forums.

<b>Committee Comment/Issue</b>	<b>Response</b>
I don't see why we need to combine the committees. I'm there because I'm a trustee of the Art Gallery and investment trust. I don't	The proposed model reflects the direction of the Creative Horsham plan – a strategy that encompasses all aspects of Arts and Culture.

<p>want to spend 2 hours at a meeting talking about other things. Art Gallery wants to talk about things specific to them. If it's not broken, why try to fix it?</p>	<p>Under the current structure the breadth of all arts activity is not getting equal consideration i.e. where is the focus on: event attraction, performing arts, conferencing, use of Wesley, Sound Shell and Jubilee hall, First Nation programming, Youth arts, the Performing Arts? - Council don't have an advisory committee for each of these areas. The proposed structure provides equity across the arts/culture portfolio of Council</p>
<p>How big will the new committee be? Don't want really long meetings with the extended agenda</p>	<p>The ToR will be developed in early 2022, following completion of the Creative Horsham Strategy</p>
<p>Volunteers - Through the committee we are able to identify issues associated with the volunteers. Good for committee to hear issues, as well as staff. If we combined into a larger group, the other members on the committee wouldn't be interested.</p>	<p>Volunteers are a critical to Council's activities. Most of our current volunteers help to deliver services at the Town Hall i.e. Performing arts, Visitor Information and Art Gallery. Council will continue to encourage and support volunteers as part of the Creative Horsham strategy</p>
<p>We have a fantastic opportunity to have public art and art gallery aligned, but don't devalue the Art Gallery</p>	<p>The Art Gallery is recognized as Council's most valuable asset (in monetary terms) and will continue to be supported appropriately</p>
<p>Disappointed that there are no Councillors on committee</p>	<p>Having a Councillor representative on a committee can't make things happen or happen any faster. Councillors can't influence operational processes. The new Advisory Committee will report to Council (minutes) and will be able to make recommendations to Council.</p>
<p>I support integration. I'm interested in access and equity for users and creators. The bigger the audience the more ears.</p>	<p>Supports recommendation</p>
<p>If we become "Friends of Groups" how will this have any teeth or impact? How will we feed ideas to Council?</p>	<p>The Friends of Groups can feed ideas into the Advisory Committee, which have a formal link with Council. The Groups will also be invited to participate in the strategic planning forums to be implemented in 2022 by the new Strategic Planning Committee</p>
<p>How will funds be distributed? Would the largest group get the most? Arts hardly got a look in the Council plan and budget</p>	<p>It's a question of equity, there is currently unevenness in representation of the various genres of arts/culture. The new structure will ensure equity of access to funding</p>
<p>Unsure about structure – need to discuss further</p>	<p><b>Support Committee Structure</b> Propose smaller groups establish an ongoing autonomous "Friends Of" to pursue specific areas of interest. Further discussion required to expand on the benefits of being part of the new Advisory Committee. Resources of Council must be allocated in an equitable manner</p>

### Bicycle Advisory Committee – 3 attendees

Recommended Committee Structure – Community Reference Group/Project Committee with name change to Active Transport Committee

As a Community Reference Group, the purpose of the committee will be to undertake specific projects for Council including updating the Bicycle Strategy and development of active transport projects. The committee will collaborate with Council to provide optimum outcomes for the community. It is recommended that the name of the group be changed to the Active Transport Advisory Committee

Committee Comment/Issue	Response
The proposed model looks like a better use of our time. The model suggests we will be looking at the bigger picture – linking our thinking with other issues, rather than acting as a silo group	Committee will have strategic input into a range of projects involving Active Transport
Expanding the remit of the group will diversify the topics a bit. We will need to manage our time and our focus	This will be an expanded role for the Committee
Suggest that the public profile of all Council committees is raised, through media channels	A “get to know your committee” will be suggested as a regular feature of Council media focusing on one committee at a time
Request yearly evaluation of the new structure with a survey of members	The new structure to be reviewed after 12 months including the completion of the first Council Planning cycle
Suggest a Councillor “meet and greet” session with Council committees when new Councillors are appointed	Recommend that this be part of the Councillor induction program
Committee are happy with the proposed new structure	<b>Support Committee Structure</b>

### Domestic Animal Management Committee – 1 attendee

Recommended Committee Structure – Community Reference Group/Project Committee

As a Community Reference Group, the purpose of the committee will be to review and update the Domestic Animal Management Plan every four years (legislative requirement). The committee will be called together for this specific purpose and for any other specific projects as required from time to time

Committee Comment/Issue	Response
The Committee have been able to achieve some good stuff such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- development of the off lead areas.</li> <li>- We reviewed the processes of the PAWS group</li> <li>- Rehousing groups are now all incorporated bodies.</li> <li>- PAWS, Phoenix and vets have great relationships with Council officers</li> <li>- We were involved in the development of the Animal Management Plan</li> </ul>	The committee has achieved great outcomes that have had a long lasting impact on the management of domestic animals within HRCC. Much of the key strategic work has now been completed
Public need to know there is an avenue to feed things back through. Dog faeces is a particular	The Council Service Request system is the best method of raising operational concerns. The

concern. The community can approach the Committee rather than Council if they prefer	establishment of a voluntary and independent Friends User Group could provide the continuity and support to the community who are not confident in presenting to Council.
Outside of specific projects, the community didn't know the group existed. Things have fallen in a heap. Raising awareness of the group in local media with photos taken and an article promoting the work of the DMAG would be good	A CRG is established to undertake a specific project (Review the Animal Management Plan). The Animal Management Plan is a statutory obligation and a CRG will be established to review the Plan. The Animal Management Plan will be reviewed next year and will be a 6-9 month project. Council will promote the work of the CRG throughout this process
Poor attendances at recent meetings	CRG will be a focused role on updating the Animal Management Plan and Council will be advertising for interested community members to be part of the group
Consider meeting 2-3 times per year to review the DAMP	That can be considered by the CRG as part of the initial project
	<b>Support Committee Structure</b> Provide the existing committee members with the opportunity to establish a Friends User group independent of Council operations.

### Haven Recreation Reserve Advisory Committee

#### [Recommended Committee Structure – User group](#)

As with other recreation reserves, the draft structure recommends that the Haven Recreation Reserve Advisory Committee becomes a User Group that meet autonomously of council, concentrating on collaborative programming of the facilities and increasing club/group participation

<b>Committee Comment/Issue</b>	<b>Response</b>
The role of the Committee has changed since it was a S86 committee and the group now lodge a service request for any maintenance items. The issues we identified as an Advisory Committee were completed by Council and we didn't have to do it. The work council does is appreciated	Operational issues are best lodged through the Service Request system
Fee Structure - Could have different fees for people who hire the facility occasionally versus people who hire the hall more often and who contribute to the community differently	Fee structure to be consistent across all facilities that Council manage
A User Group structure might be what we have been missing to maximise the time and capacity of volunteers. As a User Group we could call meetings as often as we want. Works well for tennis. I didn't like the A/C because I didn't think we had enough meetings and were not seeing outcomes	A key feature of the User Group structure is autonomy to meet without Council staff
Projects - it's a good feeling getting little projects we can get done and completed	The work of community groups needs to fit in with the Council plan and the challenge is

We can do the ground work if we get the support of Council	balancing community immediate interests within the 4 year Council plan. Projects need to be prioritised and decisions must be fair and equitable for all the community
Happy with the proposal to become a User Group	<b>Support Committee Structure</b>

### Tidy Towns Committee

#### Recommended Committee Structure – Community Reference Group/Project Committee

As a Community Reference Group, the purpose of the committee will be to undertake specific projects for Council relating to the annual Tidy Towns competition. The committee will collaborate with Council to provide optimum outcomes for the community.

Committee Comment/Issue	Response
The Tidy Towns Awards presentation is not the core activity of the group. There is a lot more going on in our committee than our awards. The proposed new structure doesn't properly credit the work that has been done by the committee	The dedication and volunteer commitment is exemplary and warrants acknowledgement. However, the Committee's Action list comprises either operational items that can be merited, or proposes projects that required more planning and budget allocation which is outside the scope of the committee. The work of committees need to fit in with the Council plan and the challenge is balancing community immediate interests within the 4 year Council plan. Projects need to be prioritised and decisions must be fair and equitable for all the community and all committees. A structure is needed that acknowledges the key project orientation of Tidy Towns whilst harnessing the obvious enthusiasm and commitment of the members.
Our committee is focused on <i>Keep Victoria/Australia Beautiful</i> . It's about promotion of the city and the broader KVB objectives about sustainability, liveability.	As above
On-going committee that meets monthly. Meetings are important because they keep everyone excited, enthusiastic and keep trying	Meetings will be targeted around key delivery dates for the Tidy Towns competition with appropriate Council resources provided
Committee disappointed with previous Terms of Reference re: membership. The ToR included membership requirements identified: Rotary and other Service Clubs and had nothing to do with anyone who wanted to be on the committee. We just want passionate people	Review of ToR is part of the implementation stage of the Committee Review process. Council Service Managers will review the ToR with committees in line with new templates
Horsham is the only example where the Tidy Towns Committee and the Council have a strong relationship across Victoria. All other committees are stand-alone committees. We think the link with Council is important	Other Tidy Towns Committee have adopted a different operational mode to suit their circumstances, illustrating that an Advisory Committee structure is not absolutely necessary.



Want a Councillor and council officer on the committee so issues can be identified and acted upon	Having a Councillor representative on a committee can't make things happen or happen any faster. Councillors can't influence operational processes.
Disappointed that some things on our action list have been on the list for too long – how can we progress these? Merit system doesn't work	The merit system is reviewed regularly. Council can look at specific items that have taken too long on an individual basis – they may relate to complex matters or items that are not within the current budget. The development of the Strategic Planning Committee will enable community groups to feed into the Strategic Planning process. Instead of feeling an action list is not being worked on – committee members will have the opportunity to prioritise actions through the budget process
Do not support current classification	<b>Support Committee Structure</b> Propose to the Tidy Towns CRG to establish an ongoing voluntary User Group (i.e. Friends of Horsham Landscapes) that can meet independently of Council. Further discussion required to expand on the benefits of being a CRG and involvement with the Strategic Planning Committee. Resources of Council must be allocated in an equitable manner.

#### Dudley Cornell Recreation Reserve Advisory Committee – 4 attendees

##### [Recommended Committee Structure – User group](#)

As with other recreation reserves, the draft structure recommends that the Dudley Cornell Recreation Reserve Advisory Committee becomes a User Group that meet autonomously of council, concentrating on collaborative programming of the facilities and increasing club/group participation

Committee Comment/Issue	Response
Parking an ongoing issue at venue	Part of strategic precinct planning
Need to improve facilities and have a proper all year round running track	Part of strategic precinct planning
Committee members need to be part of the process of planning of what is required at the site	A community reference group will be formed for future precinct planning
When Council staff change, actions 'drop off' and don't occur as planned	Items lodged as a Service Request cannot drop of the system and must be followed up, although not all can be immediately actioned. Nominated Council officer to provide advice as appropriate
Precinct planning – past and future?	Council will shortly be developing a Local Area Plan for Horsham North. Will incorporate precinct planning for Dudley Cornell park. The Plans when endorsed, will help identify prioritised works for the area
Where do community reps fit into the User group?	As an autonomous User Group, the group could include community representatives

Committee are happy with the proposed change as long as user groups still have a voice into the precinct and planning of precinct	<b>Support Committee Structure</b>
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#### **Older Persons Group – 4 attendees**

##### [Recommended Committee Structure – Advisory Committee](#)

As an Advisory Committee, the purpose of the committee will be to provide ongoing advice to Council about older people and also to feed into Council through recommendations and participation in planning forums

<b>Committee Comment/Issue</b>	<b>Response</b>
Not currently operating as a Committee and don't want the committee to be too formal	The suggested change of committee structure reflects the operation of the Committee and the work the committee has been doing – to provide advice to Council. The new model just formalizes this role. The Terms of Reference will be revised to reflect this and the meetings can remain fairly informal but be minuted.
Who decides the issues that are given to us?	Members of the committee can identify priorities – members provide a different perspective. Should continue to focus on the World Health Organisation – identifying what is needed in having an Age Friendly community
How information would be relayed to Council	Recommendations to be relayed as minutes, as a report with recommendations to Council, or via the Nominated Staff Contact Officer
	<b>Support Committee Structure</b>

#### **Horsham Aquatic Centre Advisory Committee – 2 attendees**

##### [Recommended Committee Structure – User group under the auspice of the YMCA \(operators of the facility\)](#)

The day-to-day operations of the Aquatic Centre is managed by the YMCA through a licence agreement and this is keeping with the Y's governance, emergency and customers service commitments. This is also consistent with other leased facilities i.e. Basketball Stadium and Horsham College Oval. Future precinct planning will be undertaken by a Community Reference Group formed for that specific purpose.

<b>Committee Comment/Issue</b>	<b>Response</b>
The committee has had a perfect working relationship with the Y since they took over	This relationship would be maintained if transferred to a User Group organized by the YMCA. The YMCA have indicated that this will happen once we return to normal business (living with COVID)
We have had no Councillor representative and if we become a User Group there will be no-one	Having a Councillor representative on a committee can't make things happen or

to push for the changes we want. Seem to get more done with a Councillor on the committee	happen any faster. Councillors can't influence operational processes. The work of community groups needs to fit in with the Council plan and the challenge is balancing community immediate interests within the 4 year Council plan. Projects need to be prioritised and decisions must be fair and equitable for all the community
Concerned about being downgraded. We will have lost direct linkage into Council. The contract for management of the aquatic centre will be going out to tender and the next group may not want to have User Groups	Council can stipulate the way we want the operator model to work. Can include in the new contract a requirement to have a User group that might meet monthly and input from the User Group would be included in the monthly contract report presented to HRCC
We should stay as an Advisory Committee. The Aquatic Centre is a major piece of infrastructure. We're the same as the sale yards committee	The operations of the Aquatic Centre is leased to the YMCA, which is different to the HRLE which is directly managed by Council. The YMCA are the appropriate convenors of a User Group.
How will the community have input?	Input at a strategic level will be via the Strategic Planning Committee, where all members of the community can put forward a proposal or idea
How would the user group feed through new options for the pool and future projects – how can the community impact on future priorities i.e. need for hydrotherapy pool and splash park	A Community Reference Group will be formed for future precinct planning at the Aquatic Centre. Council will seek members for this group from stakeholder groups and the general community
Attendees (2) would prefer to stay as an Advisory Committee	<b>Support transfer to a User Group under the YMCA</b> The current Advisory Committee role does not optimise the relationship between the operational managers (YMCA) and users. Council role is a strategic one, to undertake precinct planning and development and to manage the lease arrangements with the YMCA. Note a Community Reference Group will be formed to undertake future precinct planning. Note: Response from YMCA and the Sharks Swimming Club support this recommendation

#### Horsham Regional Livestock Exchange Board

Committee Comment/Issue	Response
The Committee states that it "requires" a Councillor on the Board. It is the only Committee that discussed this issue and formally resolved on its submission to the review.	The Committee has been consistent in its submission and at the meeting in its wish for a Councillor member. This was included in its original survey response
The committee believes that having a Councillor on the Board has been beneficial,	

<p>citing that the recommendations have always been accepted by Council</p>	
<p>It was stated that it is working well and if it is not broken why try to fix it. “We are operating well, so why would you change the way we operate”</p>	<p>It is important that all Committees be treated equally, otherwise there is the potential for a hotch potch of different types of Committees. The policy provides certainty and consistency. The work of committees needs to fit in with the Council plan and the challenge is balancing committee immediate interests within the 4 year Council plan. Projects need to be prioritised and decisions must be fair and equitable for all</p>
<p>With regard to the suggestion that it be a Delegated Committee, it was stated that the committee would need to understand what changes would be involved.</p>	<p>The Delegated Committees have delegated decision making responsibility under the Act that would need to operate without any conflict of interest. Members of the current Advisory Committee have a pecuniary interest in the operations of the Livestock Exchange, therefore necessitating a review of membership composition should such a change be considered.</p>
<p>Support Advisory Committee Structure with a Councillor in attendance at meetings</p>	<p><b>Support Committee Structure</b></p>