

1 INTRODUCTION

Wollongong City Council (Council) may recognise up to eight Neighbourhood Forums (Forum). Neighbourhood Forums are independent groups run by non-remunerated community members assisting Council with information and knowledge about their local community's aspirations, visions, needs and concerns amongst other things. Forums operate within an agreed locality that encompasses a number of neighbourhoods.

Each Forum will act as one point of contact for Council's broader engagement with the community.

The Forums have been established to provide advice to Council on policies and strategies which relate to their boundary area.

2 PURPOSE OF THIS CHARTER

This Charter establishes the levels of support Council may provide to recognised Neighbourhood Forums. This Charter sets out Council's minimum requirements of Forums, in order to receive support as defined below. In order to receive this support the Neighbourhood Forums must follow this Charter as a minimum standard.

2.1 The Forum will engage with its local community providing:

- 2.1.1 Advice and peer support to community members on local issues;
- 2.1.2 Advice to Council on community aspirations, visions, needs and concerns;
- 2.1.3 Feedback on Council plans, projects and policies;
- 2.1.4 Increased opportunities for Council and the community to create a trusted relationship;
- 2.1.5 Work in partnership on special projects;
- 2.1.6 Engage with Council and the community in setting priorities for the Forum area; and
- 2.1.7 Establish their own rules of meeting, consistent with the requirements of this Charter.

This Charter (2014) replaces the Neighbourhood Forum Charter adopted 2008.

2.2 Level of Support:

Council will, where appropriate, provide the following support to the Forums:

- 2.2.1 Use of Council owned community facilities will be provided free of charge to the Forum for meetings. Forum Convenors will be required to ensure the Forum members comply with facility hirer agreements. The bookings of Council facilities will be co-ordinated by Council staff on an annual basis and will be subject to availability. The number of meetings will be funded and supported up to 10.
- 2.2.2 Council officers as guest speakers on specific topics, with prior notice and agreement.
- 2.2.3 Information on current Council engagements and activities in the local area.
- 2.2.4 Forum attendees may be recognised as volunteers when requested to participate in activities instigated by Council and when working on behalf of Council, as per Council's Volunteer Policy.
- 2.2.5 Reimbursement of expenses occurred in the management of the forum (up to \$250 per forum, per annum, with receipts and completed Neighbourhood Forum Expenses Reimbursement Form to be presented by 31 May, for the current financial year period). These expenses should relate directly to tasks completed for Forum business and will be reimbursed at the discretion of Council.
- 2.2.6 Quarterly Convenor's meetings with Engagement Team representatives will be offered.
- 2.2.7 Advertising of Forums in Council pages in The Advertiser. Meetings will be advertised twice prior to each meeting date.
- 2.2.8 Annual promotional article in Council's community newsletter on Forums.

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- 2.2.9 Printing of up to 2100 DL (210mm x 99mm) flyers per Forum, per annum. Responsibility for design will rest with the Forum, but must be approved by and acknowledge Council support in the form of Council's logo. Distribution is the responsibility of the Forum.
- 2.2.10 Publication of Forum agendas and minutes on Council's website when provided by Forum Convenor. Please note that Council reserves the right not to publish agendas and minutes or any other documents that, in Council's opinion, contain defamatory or offensive statements.
- 2.2.11 A dedicated page on Council's engagement hub may be provided so that Forums can enter into dialogue about local issues with the community.
- 2.2.12 Council's social media channels will be used to promote Forums.
- 2.2.13 Responses to issues raised by Forums to Council will be provided in accordance with Council's Customer Service Charter.

3 RESPONSIBILITIES AND FUNCTIONS

The responsibilities and functions of each Forum are to:

- 3.1 Develop and maintain communication and understanding between community and Council regarding current policies and future plans.
- 3.2 Encourage the participation of the local community in engagement with Council. By engaging with Council the community can help identify and resolve issues at an early stage, ensure good planning and mutually beneficial outcomes.
- 3.3 Provide comment and feedback to Council on strategic projects and Council policies related to, or that may impact on, the Forum boundary area.
- 3.4 Develop their own rules of meeting consistent with the requirements of this Charter.
- 3.5 Ensure open communication between the Forum and Council.
- 3.6 Actively engage with the community and provide feedback to Council on local aspirations, visions, needs and concerns.

4 ATTENDANCE AND FORUM COMPOSITION

The Forum is to be made up of:

4.1 Neighbourhood Forum Convenor/Co-Convenor

Each Forum will elect a Convenor and Co-Convenor.

Other office bearer positions can be added if desired by the Forum but are not required under the conditions of this Charter.

The role of the Neighbourhood Forum Convenor is to:

- 4.1.1 Chair Forum meetings effectively, ensuring acceptable conduct of members and balanced discussion.
- 4.1.2 Create an Agenda listing issues raised by Council and community.
- 4.1.3 Promote the Forum positively to the community.
- 4.1.4 Seek a representative participation for the Forum.
- 4.1.5 Liaise with Council officers on Forum business.
- 4.1.6 Provide a balanced view on issues to be presented.
- 4.1.7 Approve speakers who seek to address the Forum.
- 4.1.8 Disseminate relevant information to Forum attendees.
- 4.1.9 Notify Council of change of Convenor or Co-Convenor.

The role of the Neighbourhood Forum Co-Convenor is to:

- 4.1.10 Fulfil all responsibilities of the Convenor when acting in that position.

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4.2 General Attendance and Voting

Adults who live, work or own real property in the Forum boundary area are able to vote on motions put before Forum meetings and for office bearers at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). All others are welcome to attend meetings and participate in discussions and activities.

Representatives from local community organisations or groups are encouraged to attend and participate in Forums.

Council staff, Government officers, advisors or individuals may be invited to attend meetings from time to time to provide expert advice, information or presentations in relation to the Forum's business.

Councillors are welcome to attend Forum meetings, to provide information and seek feedback on non-confidential Council business.

There is no remuneration for Convenors, Co-Convenors or attendees of Forums.

5 TERM OF APPOINTMENT OF CONVENOR

Term of appointment is to be up to two years.

The election of Neighbourhood Forum Convenor and Co-convenor will be:

5.1 Where they have been elected to hold office for two years:

5.1.1 at every second AGM; or

5.1.2 as needed if either or both of the positions are vacant.

5.2 Where they have been elected to hold office for less than 2 years:

5.2.1 at the meeting closest to the cessation of the period of time for which they were elected; or

5.2.2 as needed, if either or both of the positions are vacant, at AGMs to be held in March each year.

Nominations can be made by attendees prior to the meeting.

Each Forum will hold an Annual General Meeting. The meeting will be advertised up to one month prior to the meeting*. The running of elections that are fair, transparent and accessible to attendees is the responsibility of the Forum.

**Note: It is the responsibility of the incumbent Convenor to notify Council of the intention to hold an election, with six weeks' notice for Council officers to arrange advertising.*

6 MEETINGS

Meetings will be chaired by the Convenor or Co-Convenor in accordance with their Rules of Meeting.

Forum meetings shall be held monthly, up to 10 per year for up to two (2) hours each. A Forum can apply to the General Manager to hold an eleventh meeting in a year to be funded as per section 2.2.1.

Previous meeting minutes and agendas will be distributed prior to the meeting by:

- Convenor or nominated representative to attendees
- Council website*
- Paper copies available in Council libraries*

**Note: For this condition to be met, it is the responsibility of the Forum Convenor to ensure that these are received by the Engagement Coordinator no less than three (3) working days prior to the desired distribution date.*

7 PROMOTION

Wollongong City Council may commit to the promotional activities outlined in Section 2.2 Level of Support. Other promotional activities are the responsibility of the Forum, under the direction of the Convenor. The Forum does not have decision making authority, the power to bind the Council, or to speak on behalf of Council.

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All media statements being issued by the Forum must be approved by the Convenor and must clearly state that it is the view of the Forum and not Council. No other attendee may attempt to represent the Forum to the media.

8 EVALUATION AND REVIEW

An evaluation of each Forum will be undertaken by Council every 24 months in line with election processes, or when the following trigger points are reached, to ensure the purpose, membership and operation of the Forum is effective and to make appropriate changes.

Triggers for an evaluation process:

- 8.1 Election of a new Convenor/Co-Convenor;
- 8.2 The end of the 24 month Forum cycle;
- 8.3 If a Forum fails to meet regularly or reaches less than its Quorum for more than three (3) consecutive months excluding December and January;
- 8.4 If no one stands for the position of Convenor or Co-convenor at the AGM; and/or
- 8.5 Council receives more than three (3) complaints about the conduct of the Forum from individuals.

The evaluation process:

- 8.6 Evaluation of the forum will include, but not be limited to, participation numbers, effectiveness of venue, meeting date and time, awareness in the community of the Forum and its work, and community satisfaction.

As part of an evaluation:

- 8.7 Council can determine to meet with community leaders, group and agency representatives to discuss the need for a Forum in the area. Council may determine to promote an extra-ordinary meeting of the Forum to discuss how members of the community can get involved.

Where complaints have been received:

- 8.8 Council can determine to meet with the Forum's office bearers to discuss the complaints and create an action plan to resolve any issues.

If, following an evaluation, Council is of the view that a Forum is no longer viable, Council can determine to remove support and recognition of the Forum. Former Forum attendees can chose to coordinate their own meeting but will not receive the support of Council as listed in Section 2.2 of this Charter. If a new individual or group approach Council to create a new Forum for an area where a Forum is not currently recognised by Council, Council can consider that application and may approve that application at its discretion.

ADDENDUM

As at April 2014 the recognised forum areas are:

- 1 Helensburgh area incorporating 2508 postcode: Helensburgh, Darkes Forest, Maddens Plains, Otford, Stanwell Tops, Stanwell Park and Coalcliff.
- 2 Clifton, Coledale, Scarborough and Wombarra.
- 3 Austinmer, Bulli, Thirroul and Woonona.
- 4 Balgownie, Bellambi, Corrimal, East Corrimal, Fairy Meadow, Fernhill, Mount Ousley, Mount Pleasant, Russell Vale, Tarrawanna and Towradgi.
- 5/6 Coniston, Figtree, Gwynneville, Keiraville, Mangerton, Mount Keira, Mount Saint Thomas, North Wollongong, West Wollongong, Wollongong, Cordeaux Heights, Farmborough Heights, Kembla Heights, Mount Kembla and Unanderra.
- 7 Berkeley, Cringila, Lake Heights, Port Kembla, Primbee, Spring Hill, Warrawong and Windang.
- 8 Avon, Avondale, Brownsville, Cleveland, Dapto, Dombarton, Haywards Bay, Horsley, Huntley, Kanahooka, Kembla Grange, Koonawarra, Marshall Mount, Penrose, Wongawilli and Yallah.

Council reserves the right to alter these boundaries.