



City of Whittlesea

Youth Council agenda

Monday 1 June 2026 at 6pm



Council Chamber,
25 Ferres Boulevard, South Morang



**City of
Whittlesea**

Artwork © Mandy Nicholson, 2017



Youth Councillors

Youth Cr Emma Fasciani

Youth Mayor

Youth Cr Gabby Charman

Deputy Youth Mayor

Youth Cr Ahmed Abumeis

Youth Cr Alana Luscombe

Youth Cr Charlize Pommier

Youth Cr Clare Joseph

Youth Cr Caleb Whitehall

Youth Cr Dhyan Bhavsar

Youth Cr Ethan Kosumo

Youth Cr Hemal Sharma

Youth Cr Osama Akkad

Youth Cr Mannat Sooch

Youth Cr Suad Issa

Youth Cr Theresa Yan

Officers

Jacinta Stevens

Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

Justine Smith

Unit Manager Council Governance

Order of Business

1 Opening	4
1.1 Meeting Opening and Introductions.....	4
1.2 Apologies/Absent	4
1.3 Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners Statement	4
1.4 Youth Council Charter	4
1.5 Acknowledgements	4
2 Declarations of Conflict of Interest.....	4
3 Confirmation of Minutes of Previous Meeting/s	4
4 Officers' Reports	5
4.1 Advocacy Briefing	5
4.2 Draft Economic Growth Strategy for Feedback	7
4.3 Youth Plan Endorsement	11
4.4 Youth Council Priorities	15
5 Notices of Motion	19
6 General / Urgent Business	19
7 Closure.....	19

1 Opening

1.1 Meeting Opening and Introductions

The Youth Mayor will open the meeting and welcome everyone in attendance.

1.2 Apologies/Absent

1.3 Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners Statement

The Chair will read the following statement:

“On behalf of Council, I recognise the rich Aboriginal heritage of this country and acknowledge the Wurundjeri Willum Clan and Taungurung People as the Traditional Owners of lands within the City of Whittlesea.

I would also like to personally acknowledge Elders past, present and emerging.”

1.4 Youth Council Charter

The Chair will read the following statement:

“We the members of the City of Whittlesea Youth Council, commit to advocating for and being the voice of the youth within our municipality. We ensure a safe space for all, to engage in constructive collaboration on matters affecting young people. We aim to empower and foster community connectedness in our youth so they feel valued and supported to achieve their aspirations.”

1.5 Acknowledgements

2 Declarations of Conflict of Interest

3 Confirmation of Minutes of Previous Meeting/s

Recommendation

THAT the Youth Council confirm the Minutes of the Youth Council Meeting held on 4 May 2026, as circulated.

4 Officers' Reports

4.1 Advocacy Briefing

Director/Executive Manager: Director Customer & Corporate Services

Report Author: Chief Customer Officer

In Attendance: Chief Customer Officer
Unit Manager Advocacy & Research
Advocacy & Stakeholder Engagement Advisor

Executive Summary

This briefing is to inform the Youth Council of the role the Advocacy Team in liaising with all levels of Government, industry and the community in seeking funding and support for major initiatives, as well as championing key policy changes.

The session will also be used to highlight the City of Whittlesea's Advocacy Prospectus 2025-29 and the campaign for the upcoming Victorian State Election in November 2026.

Officers' Recommendation

THAT the Youth Council note the function ahead of the State Election.

Background / Key Information

The City of Whittlesea is committed to advocating for the needs and services of our growing community to both State and Federal Governments. Our advocacy priorities are informed by the Whittlesea 2040 vision, the Community Plan and our supporting goals and strategies.

Implementation Strategy

Communication

N/A.

Critical Dates

Victorian State Election – November 2026.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

Attachments

Nil

4.2 Draft Economic Growth Strategy for Feedback

Director/Executive Manager: Director Planning & Development

Report Author: Industry Development Officer

In Attendance: Manager Economic Development
Unit Manager Investment Attraction & Growth
Industry Development Officer

Executive Summary

This report and presentation (Attachment 1) provide an overview of the draft Economic Growth Strategy 2026–2036 (Attachment 2) and seek the Youth Council’s feedback as part of public consultation.

The draft Economic Growth Strategy 2026–2036 sets out how Council will support economic growth over the next ten years. It replaces the Strong Local Economy Strategy 2022–2026 and is guided by *Whittlesea 2040: A Place for All*.

Economic development matters because it helps create local jobs, strengthen skills and training pathways, and support the services and infrastructure young people rely on as the community grows.

The draft Strategy is structured around four Key Directions:

- Skills and Knowledge for the Future.
- Investment and Infrastructure for Industry Growth.
- Business Growth and Innovation.
- Vibrant and Inclusive Economy.

The draft Strategy has been informed by community engagement and targeted stakeholder input. A supporting background paper consolidates engagement findings with research and data analysis to provide the evidence base. The background paper can be found on the draft Strategy Engage page as reference. In the Youth Council session, members will be asked for feedback on the draft Strategy, including what would help young people access local jobs, training and business opportunities. This feedback will be considered alongside broader public consultation to finalise the Economic Growth Strategy 2026–2036.

Officers’ Recommendation

THAT the Youth Council provide feedback on the draft Economic Growth Strategy 2026-2036.

Background / Key Information

Background

In 2022, the Strong Local Economy Strategy 2022–2026 was endorsed after consultation with the community, businesses, and education providers. It was guided by Whittlesea 2040: A Place for All, the city's long-term vision for an inclusive and thriving community.

Economic development helps create local jobs and strengthen skills and training pathways, while supporting the services young people rely on. It also supports local businesses and attracts investment that helps the City respond to growth.

Developing the Next Strategy

Council's current economic development work has been guided by the Strong Local Economy Strategy 2022–2026. With this strategy ending on 30 June 2026, a new Economic Growth Strategy 2026-2036 has been developed to provide a longer-term framework for Council's economic development role over the next ten years.

This strategy is being developed with Urbis and will follow five phases:

- Phase 1: Pre-consultation with key stakeholders (complete)
- Phase 2: Discussion papers and consultation (complete)
- Phase 3: Draft Strategy development (complete)
- Phase 4: Community consultation on the draft (In progress)
- Phase 5: Final endorsement (Aug/Sept 2026)

Phase 1 Summary

- 67 stakeholders engaged through focus groups and interviews, including the Youth Council.
- Key strengths: multicultural community, strong small business sector, strategic location, growing population.
- Challenges: transport reliance, rising costs and skills gaps.
- Future trends: tech change, automation, rising living costs, competition from other regions

Phase 2 Summary

- Four discussion papers developed: Unlocking business growth and innovation; Building jobs, skills and training; Driving investment, infrastructure and industry forward; Growing economies through culture and connection.
- 47 stakeholders engaged through focus groups and interviews, including the Youth Council
- Over 20 responses from community through the City of Whittlesea Engage Page.
- Opportunities: Clear roadmap and delivery, place-based investment, stronger planning and business support, clearer identity and investor positioning

Phase 3

The draft Strategy has been developed using feedback through earlier engagement, alongside research and data analysis, which has been summarised in the supporting background paper.

Based on this work, the following key directions have been developed:

- Skills and Knowledge for the Future.
- Investment and Infrastructure for Industry Growth.
- Business Growth and Innovation.
- Vibrant and Inclusive Economy.

For each Key Direction, the draft Strategy outlines Council’s role, priority focus areas for the next decade, and what success will look like.

In the Youth Council session, members will be asked to provide a youth perspective on the draft Strategy, particularly the Key Directions and opportunities, and what would make local jobs, skills, services and infrastructure more accessible for young people. This input will be considered alongside broader public consultation to finalise the Economic Growth Strategy 2026–2036.

Implementation Strategy

Communication

Public consultation on the draft Strategy is open from 25 May to 14 June 2026. The community is invited to provide feedback via the Engage Whittlesea page or at one of five pop-ups during the consultation period.

Youth Council input will be captured alongside broader community feedback and used to refine the draft Strategy before finalisation and endorsement.

Critical Dates

Dates	Activity
25 May – 14 June 2026	Phase Four <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Draft Strategy consultation ○ Youth Council engaged 1 June 2026
August – September 2026	Phase Five <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Final Strategy endorsed

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

Attachments

1. Attachment 2 - Draft Economic Growth Strategy 2026-2036 [4.2.1 - 30 pages]
2. Attachment 1 - Presentation - Draft Economic Growth Strategy [4.2.2 - 8 pages]

4.3 Youth Plan Endorsement

Director/Executive Manager: Director Community Wellbeing

Report Author: Youth Development Officer

In Attendance: Youth Development Coordinator
Youth Development Officer

Executive Summary

The City of Whittlesea is currently developing the **Youth Plan 2026–2029**, which will guide Council's work with and for young people over the next three years. The draft Plan has been informed by extensive engagement with young people, schools, community organisations and stakeholders across the municipality.

As CoW's peak youth advisory body, Youth Council has an important role in ensuring the draft priorities reflect the experiences, aspirations and needs of young people. Youth Councillors are therefore being invited to review the draft priorities of the Youth Plan and provide feedback on the proposed focus areas and language used throughout the document.

Specifically, Youth Council is being asked to:

- Review the draft Youth Plan priorities.
- Provide a 200–250 word statement to Youth Services team, and Councillor Support Officer prior to the Youth Council meeting, outlining Youth Council's support for the proposed priorities and direction of the Youth Plan.
- Provide feedback for consideration on whether the priorities reflect the needs of young people in the City of Whittlesea, and consider whether the language and messaging are clear, engaging and youth-friendly.

Feedback received from Youth Council will be considered as part of the finalisation process before the Youth Plan is presented to Council for adoption.

Officers' Recommendation

THAT the Youth Council:

- 1. Review the draft Youth Plan priorities.**
- 2. Provide feedback for consideration on:**
 - a) whether the priorities reflect the needs of young people in the City of Whittlesea, and consider whether the language and messaging are clear, engaging and youth-friendly; and**
 - b) the statement outlining Youth Council's support for the proposed priorities and direction of the Youth Plan.**
- 3. Note the Youth Plan will be brought back to the July meeting for approval.**

Background / Key Information

The City of Whittlesea is currently developing the **Youth Plan 2026–2029**, a strategic document that will guide Council's work with and for young people over the next four years. Strategic plans provide a long-term roadmap for Council by identifying key priorities, goals and actions that will guide decision-making, service delivery and investment. The Youth Plan aligns with the broader **City of Whittlesea Community Plan 2025–2029** and other Council strategies, ensuring that the needs and aspirations of young people are considered across Council's work.

The purpose of the Youth Plan is to:

- Guide how Council supports young people across the municipality.
- Inform future youth services, programs and initiatives.
- Influence funding priorities and advocacy efforts.
- Ensure young people's voices are reflected in Council decision-making.
- Provide a framework for how the Youth Development Team engages with and supports young people.

The development of the draft Youth Plan has been informed by extensive engagement undertaken throughout 2025. More than 3,000 young people, community members and stakeholders contributed feedback through a range of consultation activities, including:

- Youth Survey (391 responses)
- Youth Summit (90+ participants)
- School and community pop-up engagements (1,000+ responses)
- Community surveys
- Principal's Breakfast (23 schools represented)
- Consultation with local service providers and community stakeholders.

To support the development of the Youth Plan, the City of Whittlesea partnered with La Trobe University to independently analyse the consultation findings and prepare a research report identifying the key themes, challenges, priorities and opportunities raised by young people across the municipality. The findings and recommendations contained within the draft Youth Plan are informed by this research and community engagement process. Young people identified the following priorities for future investment:

- Mental health and wellbeing support
- Opportunities for social connection and belonging through regular programs and groups
- Community safety
- Free and low-cost youth events
- Support for parents, carers and community to better understand young people
- Employment and career pathways.

Young people also expressed a desire for increased:

- Skill development opportunities
- Entertainment and youth-friendly events
- Sport and recreation activities.

As a result of this engagement, the draft Youth Plan aims to:

- Improve mental health and wellbeing outcomes
- Create more inclusive spaces and opportunities
- Increase youth participation and engagement
- Improve safety and perceptions of safety
- Expand youth programs, services and supports.

Youth Council is now being invited to review the draft priorities and language within the Youth Plan to ensure it reflects the needs, experiences and aspirations of young people across the municipality before the Plan is finalised.

Implementation Strategy

Communication

Youth Councillors were invited to an informal workshop on **20 May 2026** to build their understanding of the purpose of the Youth Plan and review key findings from the La Trobe University Report.

This report seeks Youth Council's feedback on the draft Youth Plan priorities and language, and support in developing a collective support statement for consideration as part of the final Youth Plan.

Youth Councillors are encouraged to continue sharing ideas, feedback, and questions throughout the implementation of the Youth Plan to ensure young people's voices remain central to Council's work.

Following the approval of the final Youth Plan in July, Youth Councillors will be kept informed of opportunities to participate in the launch and promotion of the Youth Plan, including media, photography, and community engagement activities.

Critical Dates

29 May 2026 – Provide the Youth Services team and Councillor Support with a 200-250 word statement outlining Youth Council's support for the proposed priorities and direction of the Youth Plan.

1 June 2026 – Provide the Youth Services team their feedback for consideration around the Draft Youth Plan Priorities.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

Attachments

1. Draft Youth Plan 2026 2029 Priorities (1) [4.3.1 - 1 page]

4.4 Youth Council Priorities

Director/Executive Manager: Director Community Wellbeing

Report Author: Youth Development Officer

In Attendance: Youth Development Officer
Councillor Support Officer

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to commence the process of establishing the key priority areas for the 2026–2027 Youth Council term.

As an advisory body to Council, Youth Council plays an important role in identifying issues, opportunities and emerging concerns affecting young people across the City of Whittlesea. Establishing a set of shared priorities will help guide Youth Council discussions, projects, advocacy and engagement activities over the next two years.

Earlier in this meeting, Youth Council considered the draft priorities of the Youth Plan 2026–2029. The Youth Plan consultation findings provide valuable insight into the issues currently impacting young people across the municipality and may assist Youth Councillors in identifying areas they would like to champion throughout their term.

Youth Councillors are invited to begin reflecting on the issues they believe are most important to young people and to discuss these with their peers, schools, workplaces, sporting clubs and community networks before the July 2026 meeting.

Youth Council is required to provide Youth Services team and Councillor Support officer it's its priority areas for the 2026–2027 term prior to the July Youth Council meeting.

Officers' Recommendation

THAT the Youth Council:

- 1. Note the information contained within this report and commence consideration of priority issues, topics and areas of focus for the 2026–2027 Youth Council term.**
- 2. Undertake consultation with peers and community networks prior to the July 2026 Youth Council meeting.**
- 3. Provide Youth Services team and Councillor Support Officer Youth Council priorities by 3 July 2026 for discussion and approval at the July 2026 Youth Council meeting.**

Background / Key Information

One of the key functions of Youth Council is to provide advice to Council on issues affecting young people within the City of Whittlesea.

To support this role, Youth Council traditionally identifies a number of priority areas to guide its work throughout the term. These priorities help inform advocacy activities, consultations, projects, community engagement opportunities and advice provided to Council.

The previous Youth Council identified the following areas of focus:

1. Health & Wellbeing

- A. Mental health
- B. Vaping/substance abuse/addiction
- C. Stigma surrounding mental health in general.

2. Environment & Climate Change

- A. Waste & Recycling
- B. Climate action
- C. Sustainability
- D. Education of climate change effects.

3. Employment & Education

- A. Youth Employment
- B. Youth Mentoring
- C. School Exam stress education/assistance
- D. School environment – safety
- E. School engagement/refusal.

4. Accessibility & Inclusion

- A. Youth Space
- B. Increased safety
- C. Sports & leisure events
- D. Collaboration between schools/communities
- E. Receiving ideas from youth
- F. Receiving ideas from school/community leaders. Google Form/forum
- G. Transport for youth
- H. Catering for people with disabilities.

The issues impacting young people continue to evolve and the newly appointed Youth Council has an opportunity to identify priorities that reflect the experiences and aspirations of young people today.

Youth Councillors may wish to consider:

- Feedback received through the Youth Plan consultation process.
- Issues impacting young people within their schools, workplaces and communities.
- Emerging trends and challenges facing young people.
- Areas where Youth Council can have the greatest impact through advocacy and engagement.

Youth Councillors are encouraged to speak with other young people before the July meeting to gather perspectives and ideas that can help inform the development of Youth Council's priorities.

Implementation Strategy

Communication

Youth Councillors will be provided with information regarding the previous Youth Council's priority areas and the key findings from the Youth Plan consultation process at the 1st June Youth Council Meeting.

Prior to the July 2026 Youth Council meeting, Youth Councillors will be encouraged to reflect on the issues, opportunities and challenges currently affecting young people within the City of Whittlesea and identify potential priority areas for the Youth Council term. Youth Councillors should endeavour to consult with peers and other young people within their networks to ensure the priorities they bring forward reflect the broader experiences, needs and aspirations of young people across the municipality.

At the July 2026 Youth Council meeting, Youth Councillors will be invited to present proposed priorities for discussion and work towards endorsing a set of agreed priority areas to guide the work of the 2026–2027 Youth Council.

Critical Dates

1 June 2026 - Youth Council receives information regarding the previous Youth Council priorities and findings from the Youth Plan consultation process.

June 2026 - Youth Councillors begin considering potential priority areas for the 2026–2027 Youth Council term.

3 July 2026 - Youth Councillors to provide the proposed priority areas for discussion to Youth Services team and Councillor Support Officer.

6 July 2026 - Youth Council considers and approves priority issues, topics and areas of focus for the 2026–2027 term.

August 2026 onwards - Endorsed priorities begin to inform Youth Council discussions, advocacy activities, projects and opportunities throughout the 2026–2027 term.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

Attachments

Nil

5 Notices of Motion

No Notices of Motion

6 General / Urgent Business

7 Closure