

City of Whittlesea Business Advisory Panel

Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

The Business Advisory Panel (the Panel) will enable business members to work together with Council in delivering the key objectives and advocacy for a Strong Local Economy (one of the four overarching objectives in Council's 2040 Plan).

The Plan, endorsed in 2020, outlines the need for the City of Whittlesea to be home to successful, innovative local businesses, who offer employment and education for our community.

2. Membership

Membership is comprised of up to 19 members, including:

- a) Up to 15 Business Industry Professionals
- b) Up to two City of Whittlesea Administrators or Councillors or one with substitute
- c) Director Planning and Development
- d) Manager Economic Development

The Business Industry Professionals must own or operate a business located within the City of Whittlesea. Applications to the Panel will be via an Expression of Interest responding to selection criteria. Each representative shall be appointed for a term of two years with all positions undertaken on a voluntary basis. Two members will be selected from Council's Whittlesea Business Network. Administrator/Councillor representatives shall be for a one-year term.

Business representatives must be:

- A local business owner, operator or manager located in the City of Whittlesea
- Willing to commit up to 10 hours per annum (up to five meetings) and additional hours when required per annum for post meeting related activities
- Willing to attend key business-related functions and events (e.g. Women in Business)
- Willing to act as an ambassador for the Panel and Council's business-related activities
- Willing to participate in and provide input to stakeholder engagement activities to the support the strategic activities of Council. This will include deliberative engagement activities of Council as required by the Local Government Act 2020.

Business representatives must have:

- Demonstrated business experience
- An understanding of the key issues facing businesses in Whittlesea and the northern region
- An understanding of the challenges and issues experienced by businesses within their industry
- Established networks and/or affiliations with peak industry associations
- The ability to work collaboratively with other businesses, government and key stakeholders.

Co-opted Members

The Panel may invite suitably skilled persons to a meeting of the Panel in an advisory capacity, for a specified purpose and for a specified period. Co-opted members are not entitled to vote.

3. Roles of the Panel

The role of the Panel is to provide considered advice, insight and feedback to Council:

- On the current outlook for the local economy
- On industry specific opportunities and challenges that impact the local business community
- On policies and strategic objective involving its business community
- That will help develop new incentives and programs, assisting activities from the Economic Development Department
- Deliver advocacy efforts in partnership with Council
- Act as a sounding board for future Council funded proposals and projects
- Present and report back to Council twice a year

Where the Panel is unable to reach consensus, a vote shall be conducted, and a simple majority shall be sufficient. Council officers are not entitled to vote.

The Panel's purpose and objectives will be underpinned by a Terms of Reference.

Council will provide secretariat support and officers will coordinate membership of the Panel and provide expertise and context as required. Council officers will prepare documentation including meeting agendas, required readings and all other documents.

4. Chairperson

The position of Chair will be an independent member (not Administrator or Councillor) and will be based on the submission a nomination form to the Manager Economic Development. If multiple nomination forms are received, the position of Chair will be voted on by the Panel members. A new Chair will be appointed every 12 months. In the absence of the Chair, at the beginning of the meeting, the Panel will elect a temporary Chairperson for that meeting.

5. Code of Conduct

All members are expected to:

- Operate with integrity, objectivity, accountability, honesty and openness
- Declare any potential conflict of interest
- Dedicate appropriate time and effort to the functions of the Panel
- Prepare for and actively participate in meetings
- Exercise independent judgment
- Maintain effective working relationships with each other.

All members are also bound by Council's Code of Conduct.

Conflict of Interest

In the event of a conflict of interest arising, a Panel member will disclose the interest prior to the matter being considered. The Chair will determine if the member remains or leave the room whilst the matter is discussed.

The declaration and nature of the conflict of interest will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

6. Resignation or expulsion

Members of the Panel may resign at any time in writing to the Manager Economic Development.

Membership may be terminated for any of the following reasons:

- The member's business (and/or employment) is no longer within the City of Whittlesea.
- Failure to attend two consecutive meetings without prior notice.
- The member does not declare a conflict of interest, breaches confidentiality or exhibits behavior unbecoming a member of this Panel.
- The member expresses views on behalf of Panel or Council.

If members resign or Council is required to terminate membership of any Panel member, the vacancy will be advertised on the Council's website.

7. Meetings

- The Panel will generally meet up to five times per year.
- Meetings shall not proceed without 50 per cent of business representatives in attendance.
- Meetings will be approx. two hours in duration
- Other representatives will attend meetings as appropriate or requested
- Meetings will take place across the City of Whittlesea with the Economic Development Department coordinating locations and venues
- Further Panel meetings may arise from time to time as issues dictate
- Members of the Panel may be approached to provide further input into the development of programs or issues that fall outside of the formal meeting cycle.

Attendance

- Within reason members are expected to attend all meetings
- If a Panel member fails to attend two consecutive meetings a new member will be sought through an expression of interest process.

Quorum

A quorum of members must be present before a meeting can proceed. A quorum is half of the membership. When a quorum is not achieved the members of the Panel may, at the discretion of the Chairperson, continue the meeting, but any decisions made at the meeting must be ratified at the next Panel meeting, or by email within one month.

Panel Papers and Minutes

The agenda and supporting documentation will be delivered to Panel members one week in advance of each meeting. Meeting agendas will be set by the Manager Economic Development, in consultation with the Panel Chair. All members will be asked to provide any meeting agenda items at least eight days prior to the meeting date.

Minutes of Panel meetings will be prepared and disseminated within one week of the meeting. These Minutes will be entitled a 'Record of Proceedings'. This reflects the legal status of the Panel in being an advisory body, providing advice to Council.

Reimbursement of Expenses

In accordance with Council's Volunteer Policy, individual members of the Panel attending as volunteers, may be reimbursed for out of pocket expenses that have arisen whilst undertaking duties on behalf of Council. Prior authorisation by a nominated council officer must be given, otherwise claims for out of pocket expenses may not be met.

Public Statements

Members of the Panel will agree to follow **Council's media policy** and cannot make public statements on behalf of Council.

Terms of reference

The Terms of Reference of the Panel may be reviewed on a biennial basis, however, must be reviewed every four years or earlier if deemed necessary by either Council or the Panel. Changes to the Terms of Reference that have no material effect may be made by the Manager Economic Development.