



Merri-bek City Council

Terms of Reference for Advisory Committees and Reference Groups

1. Classification	This Terms of Reference applies to all Advisory Committees and Reference Groups established by Council.
2. Delegation	Advisory Committees and Reference Groups have no formal delegation. Their role is to provide advice to: (a) the Council; or (b) a Delegated Committee; or (c) a member of Council staff who has been delegated a power, duty or function of the Council.
3. Accountability	The Advisory Committees are accountable to Merri-bek City Council. Reference Groups are accountable to their Convenor. This is the Council officer responsible for coordinating each Reference Group.
4. Term	The Advisory Committees and Reference Groups are established by Council resolution dated 13 August 2025 and will sunset on 30 June following a General Election.
5. Role and Responsibilities	The specific role and responsibilities of each Advisory Committee and Reference Group are detailed in Attachments A and B.
6. Council Membership and Chairperson	Advisory Committees established by Council will be chaired by a Councillor as appointed in accordance with Council Governance Rules. If the Councillor is an apology and unavailable to attend a meeting, they may nominate an Acting Chairperson from the Committee (that is not a member of Council staff), for that meeting only. The Chairperson is a standing Member of the Committee. Reference Groups may be chaired by a Councillor or alternatively they can be chaired by a Council officer or a community member.
7. Community Membership	In accordance with the Council resolution, the Members appointed to each Advisory Committee and Reference Group are detailed in Attachment A.

	A community member may not serve more than two consecutive Council terms on an advisory committee. or a reference group. Extraordinary appointments of members due to vacancies are made via a recommendation contained in the Governance Report, if there is a waiting list of eligible candidates from the initial expression of interest process or following the calling of a new round of expressions of interest, where no waiting list applies. Guests may be invited to observe meetings or to make a presentation to meetings in accordance with the Terms of Reference.
8. Role of Staff Member(s)	Council officers will provide a support role to each Advisory Committee and Reference Group. Council officers may participate in meetings but must not actively influence the discussions and recommendations of the Committee. or Group. Council administration will appoint appropriately skilled Council officers to provide secretariat support, including minute-taking and other administrative functions, to each Advisory Committee and Reference Group. This may also include: (a) Preparation of an agenda for each meeting in liaison with the Chair; (b) Preparation and distribution of all papers required for each meeting; and (c) Notification to all other external parties or invitees who are required to attend any meeting for specific agenda items. The officer support function provided by Council's administration for each Advisory Committee and Reference Group is detailed in Attachments A and B.
9. Meeting Frequency	Times and dates of meetings for the Advisory Committee and Reference Group shall be determined at the discretion of the Chairperson and/or Convenor, after seeking the views of all other Members of the Committee or Group. Unless otherwise determined by the Chairperson, Advisory Committees and Reference Groups will generally meet on a quarterly cycle. Less or additional meetings may occur subject to approval of the Chairperson.
10. Notice and attendance of Meetings	Agendas, meeting minutes and any reports will be circulated ten (10) days prior to the meeting, wherever possible, in a suitable format. The meeting Agenda shall be determined by the relevant officer in consultation with the Chairperson.

	Members may request items to be included on the agenda by advising the relevant officer at least fourteen (14) days prior to the scheduled meeting. Inclusion of the items on the proposed agenda shall be at the discretion of the Chairperson, based upon their judgement as to whether the item is consistent with the specific scope and core responsibilities of the Committee or Group. An Advisory Committee or Reference Group Member shall endeavour to advise the relevant Officer of non-attendance at any meeting. Any Member of an Advisory Committee or Reference Group unable to attend three (3) consecutive meetings shall notify the Chairperson in writing as to their availability to continue as a member. Where this provision has not been met, the Chairperson will deem the member resigned from the Advisory Committee or Reference Group. Meetings may be conducted via electronic means such as Teams or in a combination of in person attendance and via electronic means (known as a hybrid meeting), with the consent of the Chairperson. In the event that an Advisory Committee is required to make an urgent recommendation to Council on a matter, and it is not practical to convene a meeting, the committee may seek member endorsement of a matter via the conduct of an online poll of all members. Responses must be received from more than 50% of the current membership, to consider the committee's position on endorsing a matter.
11.Quorum	(a) A quorum is the majority (more than half) of the current Members of an Advisory Committee or Reference Group which must include either the Chairperson or Acting Chairperson. (b) If a quorum is not present within 30 minutes of the time appointed for the commencement of the meeting, the meeting shall lapse. If a quorum fails after the commencement of the meeting, the meeting shall be rescheduled. (c) If a meeting has not commenced, those members remaining present may hold general discussions, but cannot consider the agenda items of the rescheduled meeting within 14 days. (d) A committee member attending a meeting via electronic means is considered part of the Quorum. (e) Business that is unfinished at the completion of a meeting may, at the discretion of the Chairperson, be referred to the next meeting. (f) A quorum for a reference group is a minimum of 4 members which must include either the Chairperson or Acting Chairperson.

12.Code of Conduct	All Members of an Advisory Committee and Reference Groups are expected to comply with the following expectations in order to ensure safe, respectful and effective conduct of meetings: (a) Prepare for each meeting and be active participants. (b) Regularly contribute to discussions during meetings, provide advice and opinions on topics of discussion and respond to Council requests for input or feedback. (c) Treat others with respect, dignity and courtesy always. Harassment, intimidation, abuse or any behaviour deemed offensive or hurtful will not be tolerated. Any Member displaying these behaviours will be asked to stop immediately. Should this continue, the person can be asked to leave the meeting. Council, at its discretion, will take appropriate action in the event of gross misconduct by an Advisory Committee or Reference Group Member. (d) In the first instance of conflict between Members, any complaint should be brought to the Chairperson, who can bring the parties together to seek a resolution. Where the dispute involves the Chairperson, the issues will be brought to the Council primary contact officer. Mediation through an agreed mediator can be arranged with the consent of all parties.
13.General Conflicts of Interest (COI)	A well-established system for identifying, disclosing and managing a conflict of interest (COI) increases Merri-bek City Council's public accountability and reduces the risk of corruption, misconduct and bias in Council's operations and decision-making processes. All Members will approach the declaration of conflicts of interests with the following principles: (a) <u>Obligations and good practice</u>: Council, and Advisory Committees and Reference Groups of Council, must comply with statutory obligations under relevant legislation in a manner which is supported by good governance practice. (b) <u>Public interest</u>: COIs must be avoided wherever possible. Where a conflict exists, it must be declared and managed in the public interest. (c) <u>Real, potential or perceived</u>: COIs exist whether the conflict is real, potential, or perceived. (d) <u>Transparent and accountable</u>: The process for declaring and managing COIs is transparent, accountable and consistent with the Victorian Directors' Code of Conduct.

	(e) <u>Culture of integrity</u> : Council and Advisory Committees and Reference Groups of Council must foster and lead a culture of integrity. Members are supported to raise their own COIs and to speak up if they believe another Member may have an undeclared conflict.
14. Specific Conflict of Interest	(a) The Chairperson is responsible to manage all declared conflicts of interest at each meeting. Conflicts of interest may be raised at the commencement of the meeting in response to an Agenda item, where this cannot be anticipated, upon the conflict of interest being realised/presented. (b) All Members have a duty to place the public interests above their private interests when carrying out their official duties, role and functions or in representing the Merri-bek City Council. (c) All Members are individually and collectively responsible to consider their personal interests in the context of Agenda items and discussions at each meeting. (d) At the time indicated on the Agenda, Members with a conflict of interest must declare their real, potential or perceived conflict of interest and the matter in which the conflict arises. (e) At the time for discussion of that item, those Members with a conflict of interest must excuse themselves from the meeting for the duration of the discussion and must abstain from communicating on that matter with any Members of the meeting thereafter. (f) Where there is no Agenda or where the matter raising the conflict could not be anticipated, Members with the conflict of interest must declare a real, potential or perceived conflict of interest as soon the matter arises, in an effective manner. (g) Where a Member has excused themselves from the meeting as a result of a real, potential or perceived conflict of interest, they must not participate in the discussion of that matter which has come before the Advisory Committee or Reference Group for deliberation, decision, or where a decision will be made by a Member of staff acting under delegation. (h) Any and all declared conflicts of interest will be recorded in the Minutes of the Meeting by the meeting secretariat. (i) Where there are no Minutes kept of the meeting, the declared conflict of interest will be recorded in a Meeting record and provided to the Governance team to be registered and managed accordingly.

	(j) The meeting Minutes or record will also reflect the duration of the discussion and whether the Member excused themselves from the Meeting.
15. Confidentiality	(a) Advisory Committee and Reference Group Members must not release information that the Member knows, or should reasonably know, is confidential information in accordance with the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i> .
16. Member Support	(a) Members will be provided with the resources, facilities and support reasonably required for them to be effective in their role. (b) Members will be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses that are bona fide expenses, have been reasonably incurred in the performance of their role and are reasonably necessary for the Member to perform this role.
17. Reporting Requirements	(a) Meeting minute records and reports of Advisory Committees (only) will be presented to Council for noting and inclusion on the public record. (b) Written reports of Advisory Committees must include any disclosures of conflicts of interest and record whether the person who disclosed a conflict of interest was excused from the Meeting for the relevant discussion. (c) There are no such formal reporting requirements for Reference Groups although reporting to Council and the public may occur on an as needs basis.
18. Transparency Requirements	In order to maintain transparency of Advisory Committee operations, the following information will be published on Council's website in respect of each Advisory Committee: (a) The Terms of Reference (b) The names of all Members (c) Reports of Committee activities (in Agenda/Minutes of Council Meetings) There are no such transparency requirements for Reference Groups although relevant information may be published on Council's website on an as needs basis.
19. Compliance	All Members of the Advisory Committees and Reference Groups must comply with the requirements of Council's Governance Rules and Framework for Advisory Committees and Reference Groups.

20.Review	These Terms of Reference for Advisory Committees and Reference Groups will be reviewed every 4 years, at the beginning of each new Council term, or as otherwise directed by Council.
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Attachment A. Details of each Advisory Committee

Name	Environmental Sustainability and Climate Resilience Advisory Committee
Role and responsibilities	The role of the Environmental Sustainability and Climate Resilience Advisory Committee is to share information and collaborate to enhance the collective impact of Council and community-led actions for a flourishing and climate resilient Merri-bek by improving wildlife and nature connectivity, greening and cooling for healthier streets and public realm and engaging in meaningful climate action. The Environmental Sustainability and Climate Resilience Advisory Committee is also responsible for: • providing a forum for information sharing, networking, and collaboration between Council and community groups engaged in fostering local responses to the climate and ecological crisis • advise on biodiversity, greening, water management, climate adaptation, emissions reduction and circular economy initiatives • assisting Council, community groups, and individuals to successfully engage and empower the local community, organisations, and businesses • assisting in collecting information to measure (and share) collective impact • supporting continuous learning and improvement • bringing up issues of community concern that Council should know about or take a role in addressing.
Membership	This Advisory Committee is made up of: • 1 Councillor, who is the Chairperson • 10 community Members • 1 representative invited from each of the following organisations:, CERES, Climate Action Merri-bek (CAM), and Neighbours United for Climate Action (NUCA
Current Members	The current Members are: • Cr xxx (Chairperson) • Community Members: • Organisational representatives: ➤ CERES ➤ Climate Action Merri-bek (CAM) ➤ Neighbours United for Climate Action (NUCA)

Council Officer Support	Council officer support is provided by: • Zero Carbon Campaigns Lead – Primary contact for Members and Agenda preparation / Minute Taker
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Name	First Peoples Advisory Committee
Role and responsibilities	The role of the First Peoples Advisory Committee is to provide input and advise on the implementation of the <i>Statement of Commitment to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities in the City of Merri-bek</i> and associated commitments to First Peoples. The Committee plays a key role in advancing self-determination – the rights of First Peoples to make decisions about their lives, communities, and futures — and in strengthening respectful relationships between Council and First Peoples. The Committee is responsible for: • advising on Council policies, strategies, and plans that affect First Peoples • identifying issues, barriers, and opportunities impacting First Peoples in Merri-bek • promoting visibility, cultural integrity, equity, and inclusion of First Peoples • supporting advocacy, partnerships, and projects that reflect First Peoples' priorities • collaborating with other Advisory Committees and stakeholders to ensure First Peoples' voices are central to decision-making
Membership	This Advisory Committee is made up of: • 1 Councillor, who is the Co-Chairperson • 8 First Peoples Community Members, one of whom will Co-Chair • 1 representative from 3 Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (proposed organisations Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage, Aboriginal Corporation; Aboriginal Community Elders Service. Victorian Aboriginal Health Service and Ballerit Mooroop Corporation) Note: First Peoples Advisory Committee members will be paid \$100 per meeting to recognise the multiple responsibilities First Nations people have to their cultural obligations both through their work roles and wider community responsibilities. It also acknowledges and values Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members' cultural knowledge, advice and guidance.

	The Community Co-Chair will receive a higher sitting fee to reflect the increased responsibilities and standing of this role
Current Members	The current Members are: • Cr xxx • Community Members: Organisational representatives: <i>to be confirmed</i>
Council Officer Support	Council officer support is provided by: • Unit Manager Community Development and Social Policy – Primary contact for Members • Social Policy Officer – Agenda preparation / Minute Taker

Name	Health, Wellbeing and Social Inclusion Advisory Committee
Role and responsibilities	The role of the Health, Wellbeing and Social Inclusion Advisory Committee is to provide input and advice to Council to be an inclusive organisation, support accessible facilities, inclusive services and promotes community wellbeing, and connection for all ages, abilities, genders, and cultures. This work is guided by the Human Rights Policy and associated action plans. The Health, Wellbeing and Social Inclusion Advisory Committee will provide information, and advice on the following: • strategies, programs, and initiatives which increase access, inclusion, and participation of people from priority groups in the community • providing a structure through which the views and interests of the Merri-bek community can be articulated for the attention of Council and its staff on human rights and inclusion matters • considering and endorsing recommendations from relevant reference groups to put forward for Council endorsement • drawing on and sharing the expertise of specialists, as appropriate. The Health, Wellbeing and Social Inclusion Advisory Committee will take advice and recommendations from the following reference groups: • Gender Equality Reference Group • LGBTIQ+ Reference Group • Disability Reference Group • Older Persons Reference Group
Membership	This Advisory Committee is made up of: • 1 Councillor, Co-Chairperson with a Community Member • 12 Community Members • 2 representatives from the First Peoples Advisory Committee • 1 representative from up to 3 not for profit/community organisations working to prioritise access, inclusion and equity each of the following organisations: to be confirmed

Current Members	The current Members are: • Cr xxx (Chairperson) Community Members: First Peoples Advisory Committee representatives: to be confirmed Organisational representatives: not-for-profit/community organisations with a focus on equity, access and inclusion: to be confirmed
Council Officer Support	Council officer support is provided by: • Manager Community Wellbeing and Coordinator Community Development and Inclusion – Primary contact for Members • Coordinator Community Development and Inclusion – Agenda preparation / Minute Taker

Name	Merri-bek Arts Advisory Committee
Role and responsibilities	The role of the Merri-bek Arts Advisory Committee is as the principal consultative body advising and assisting Council to make a lively and inclusive Merri-bek where the economy supports local business and industry growth, celebrates artistic and creative expression, and connects the community through vibrant cultural experiences. . The Merri-bek Arts Advisory Committee is also responsible for: • developing and advising Council on annual priorities relating to the arts and creative industries • encouraging community involvement through networks and promotes participation in the arts across Merri-bek • making recommendations to Council regarding acquisitions for the Merri-bek Art Collection • providing a structure through which the views and interests of the Merri-bek community can be articulated for the attention of Council and its staff • contributing to the development and future review of Council's Arts and Culture Strategy and subsequent policies and plans • acting as a representative of the Merri-bek Arts Advisory Committee on grant assessment and programming panels
Membership	This Advisory Committee is made up of: • 1 Councillor, who is the Chairperson • 10 community Members • 1 representative from Next Wave
Current Members	The current Members are: • Cr (Co-Chairperson) Community Members: Brunswick Mechanics Institute management representative:
Council Officer Support	Council officer support is provided by: • Unit Manager Arts and Culture – Primary contact for members, Agenda preparation / Minute Taker

Name	Liveability Advisory Committee
Role and responsibilities	The role of the Liveability Advisory Committee is to develop, promote, and advise Council on urban planning, affordable and social housing, urban design improvements and placemaking and the Transport Strategy. The Liveability Advisory Committee is also responsible for: • advising Council on priorities, processes, and programs • facilitating partnerships and developing opportunities among Council, the community and transport agencies, providers, and operators • identifying key strategic transport, land use, affordable and social housing, urban design improvements and placemaking opportunities • providing a consultative forum and link to a wider network of community transport and urban planning organisations • promoting community support for the implementation of projects and programs • generating discussion on and evaluating transport policies and initiatives as they impact upon urban planning, affordable and social housing, urban design improvements and placemaking and the Transport Strategy. The Liveability Advisory Committee will be supported by, and will also convene the following working group: • Strategic Transport Reference Group
Membership	This Advisory Committee is made up of: • 1 Councillor, who is the Chairperson • 12 community Members
Current Members	The current Members are: • Cr xxx (Chairperson) Community Members: • Organisational representatives: <i>to be confirmed</i>
Council Officer Support	Council officer support is provided by: • Manager City Design and Economy – Primary contact for Members

	• Administration and Project Support Officer – Agenda preparation / Minute Taker
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Attachment B. Details of each Reference Group

Name	Disability Reference Group
Role and responsibilities	The role of the Disability Reference Group is to collaboratively advise council of current and emerging needs of people with disability in the community: The Disability Reference Group is also responsible for: • contributing to development, and implementation of relevant Council policies, strategies, and plans. For example, the Disability Action and Inclusion Plan • assisting council to ensure the perspectives and lived experiences of people with disability are considered in Council services, programs and projects • promoting knowledge, visibility, equality and inclusion of people with disability in the community • assisting to identify opportunities for advocacy, projects and partnerships that reflect the needs of people with disability in the community • informing, consulting and collaborating with relevant Advisory Committees on issues relating to people with disability • participating in event planning, consultation processes, and other forms of engagement relating to relevant issues.
Membership	This Reference Group is made up of: • Councillor/s where nominated to Chair • 9 community Members
Current Members	The current Members are: • Councillor/s: subject to Council resolution • Community Members: subject to Council resolution
Council Officer Support	Council officer support is provided by: • Disability Planner – Primary contact for Members and Agenda preparation / Minute Taker

Name	Gender Equality Reference Group
Role and responsibilities	The role of the Gender Equality Reference Group is to collaboratively advise Council of current and emerging gender equality issues in the community. The Gender Equality Reference Group is also responsible for: • contributing to development, and implementation of relevant Council policies, strategies, and plans. For example, the Gender Equality Community Action Plan • assisting council to ensure the diverse perspectives and lived experiences of gender are considered in Council services, programs and projects • promoting knowledge, visibility, equality and inclusion of all genders in the community • assisting to identify opportunities for advocacy, projects and partnerships for gender equality in the community • informing, consulting and collaborating with relevant Advisory Committees on issues relating to gender equality • participating in event planning, consultation processes, and other forms of engagement relating to relevant issues.
Membership	This Reference Group is made up of: • Councillor/s where nominated to Chair • 9 community Members, one of whom will Chair
Current Members	The current Members are: • Councillor/s: <i>subject to Council resolution</i> • Community Members: <i>subject to Council resolution</i>
Council Officer Support	Council officer support is provided by: • Social Policy Officer-Human Rights and Wellbeing – Primary contact for Members and Agenda preparation / Minute Taker

Name	LGBTIQA+ Reference Group
Role and responsibilities	The role of the LGBTIQA+ Reference Group is to collaboratively advise council of current and emerging needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and gender diverse, Intersex, Queer and Asexual and Aromantic communities. The LGBTIQA+ Reference Group is also responsible for: • contributing to development, and implementation of relevant Council policies, strategies, and plans. For example, the LGBTIQA+ Action Plan • assisting council to ensure the perspectives and lived experiences of LGBTIQA+ community Members are considered in Council services, programs and projects • promoting knowledge, visibility, equality and inclusion of LGBTIQA+ communities • assisting to identify opportunities for advocacy, projects and partnerships that reflect the needs of LGBTIQA+ communities • informing, consulting and collaborating with relevant Advisory Committees on issues relating to LGBTIQA+ communities • participating in event planning, consultation processes, and other forms of engagement relating to relevant issues.
Membership	This Reference Group is made up of: • Councillor/s where nominated to Chair • Community Members (number to be confirmed)
Current Members	The current Members are: • Councillor/s: <i>subject to Council resolution</i> • Community Members: <i>subject to Council resolution</i>
Council Officer Support	Council officer support is provided by: • Social Policy and Projects Officer – Primary contact for Members and Agenda preparation / Minute Taker

Name	Older Persons Reference Group
Role and responsibilities	The role of the Older Persons Reference Group is to collaboratively advise council of current and emerging needs of older people in the community: The Older Persons Reference Group is also responsible for: • contributing to development, and implementation of relevant Council policies, strategies, and plans. For example, the Living and Ageing Well Framework • assisting council to ensure the perspectives and lived experiences of older people are considered in Council services, programs and projects • promoting knowledge, visibility, equality and inclusion of older people in the community • assisting to identify opportunities for advocacy, projects and partnerships that reflect the needs of older people in the community • informing, consulting and collaborating with relevant Advisory Committees on issues relating to older people • participating in event planning, consultation processes, and other forms of engagement relating to relevant issues.
Membership	This Reference Group is made up of: • Councillor/s <i>where nominated to Chair</i> • 10 community Members
Current Members	The current Members are: • Councillor/s: <i>subject to Council resolution</i> • Community Members: <i>subject to Council resolution</i>
Council Officer Support	Council officer support is provided by: • Living and Ageing Well Lead – Primary contact for Members and Agenda preparation / Minute Taker

Name	Strategic Transport Reference Group
Role and responsibilities	The role of the Sustainable Transport Reference Group is to develop, promote, and assist Council to develop and implement a new Transport Strategy. The Sustainable Transport Advisory Committee is also responsible for: • advising Council on priorities, processes, and programs • facilitating partnerships and developing opportunities among Council, the community and transport agencies, providers, and operators • identifying key strategic transport and land use opportunities • providing a consultative forum and link to a wider network of community transport organisations • promoting community support for the implementation of projects and programs • generating discussion on and evaluating transport policies and initiatives as they impact upon the Transport Strategy and its implementation.
Membership	This Advisory Committee is made up of: • 1 Councillor, where nominated to Chair • 12 community Members • 1 representative invited from each of the following organisations: Bicycle Network, Victoria Walks, Public Transport Users Association, Merri-bek Bicycle Users Group and Walk-on Merri-bek.
Current Members	The reference group is made up of: • Councillor/s subject to Council resolution • Community Members: <i>subject to Council resolution</i> • Organisational representatives: <i>to be confirmed</i>
Council Officer Support	Council officer support is provided by: • Unit Manager Transport Planning – Primary contact for Members • Strategic Transport Lead – Agenda preparation / Minute Taker