



## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### ENVIRONMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

(Adopted on 27 October 2022)

#### 1. Scope

The Inner West community has a strong desire for participation in Council's decision-making. Council recognises that local knowledge, ideas and feedback from the community are essential to ensure Council's decision-making improves community wellbeing and long-term sustainability.

Advisory committees and working groups are part of Council's Community Engagement Framework, providing advice and input to support Council's decision-making and actions. Consisting of community volunteers, advisory committees and working groups do not have delegation or decision-making powers.

#### 2. Purpose Statement

Advisory committees and working groups contribute to achieving community expectations as set out in the the [Inner West Community Strategic Plan – Our Inner West 2036](#):

*Strategic Direction 5, Outcome 5.3 – people are well informed and actively engaged in local decision making and problem solving*

The key purpose of all advisory committees and working groups is to support Council to review and implement the Community Strategic Plan through Council's [four-year Delivery Program and annual Operational Plan](#).

Advisory committees and working groups provide a purposeful forum to deliberate and problem solve.

All Local Democracy Groups will be allocated one to two appropriate policy challenges for deliberation. Quarterly progress reports on deliberations will be submitted to Council (see point 12).

Council may invite committee nominees to participate in Council activities such as annual grant application evaluations.

The purpose of the Environment Advisory Committee is to:

- Provide input on the development and review of Council policy on local, state, and national strategic environment issues and projects
- Provide input on strategic policies and action plans on the environment including the climate emergency, energy efficiency, circular economy, sustainable development, biodiversity, air, water and soil quality
- Consider matters that impact on a sustainable environment and provide input to Council on strategic issues

The policy challenges for this Local Democracy Group as resolved by Council at its meeting in October 2022 (C1022(1) Item 11) are:

- How do we support a network of green habitat for plants, microforests, trees and animals when we have limited open space?
- How do we implement actions arising from the Electric Vehicle Encouragement Strategy?

The Environment Advisory Committee will also:

- Input into development and review of Council's strategic plans
- Serve as a resource for Council in relation to environmental sustainability matters
- Assist in the development of programs in relation to an environmentally sustainable Inner West, including communications, education and behaviour change

### **3. Access and Inclusion Statement**

Council is committed to an inclusive approach in its local democracy groups. Diversity, equity and accessibility is at the core of our approach to community engagement. A variety of perspectives helps generate better ideas and outcomes for the whole community.

Council specifically encourages people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to apply to join its local democracy groups.

### **4. Community Engagement Framework**

All of Council's Local Democracy Groups including advisory committees, working groups and other forums are part of Council's Community Engagement Framework, helping to strengthen local participatory democracy. The Community Engagement Framework guides how Council will engage so that a broad range of perspectives are sought and the community has a strong voice in Council's decision-making. Council engages the community in a range of ways including on specific projects. Members of local democracy groups may also contribute input to specific engagements as individuals.

Effective engagement will:

- ensure community needs and expectations are understood and reflected in the decisions and actions of Council
- result in better, more sustainable decisions
- build trust and improve accountability through transparency of decision-making
- value local knowledge and foster local problem-solving
- improve understanding of Council's planning, prioritising and resourcing
- identify critical issues and opportunities early
- optimise use of limited resources and maximise efficient resource allocation.

Local Democracy Groups include nine advisory committees and four working groups:

### **Advisory Committees**

1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee
2. Access Advisory Committee
3. Arts and Culture Advisory Committee
4. Environment Advisory Committee
5. Housing and Affordability Advisory Committee
6. Multicultural Advisory Committee
7. Planning and Heritage Advisory Committee
8. Social Strategy Advisory Committee
9. Transport Advisory Committee

### **Working Groups**

1. Bicycle Working Group
2. LGBTIQ Working Group
3. Seniors Working Group
4. Young Leaders Working Group

Both advisory committees and working groups are valued parts of Council's local democracy. They comprise interested or expert citizens who meet regularly to deliberate on information and provide ongoing advice to Council.

Working groups are less formal and more action-oriented than advisory committees, for instance they may assist to deliver activities and events while advisory committees are more focused on the provision of strategic advice to inform Council's long-term planning.

## **5. Code of Conduct**

Council's Code of Conduct applies to members

<https://www.innerwest.nsw.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/955/Code%20of%20Conduct.pdf.aspx>

## **6. Timing of Meetings**

The Environment Advisory Committee will meet 4-6 times annually, on:  
Thursdays 6.30pm-8.30pm at Petersham Service Centre

In general, advisory committees and working groups meet four to six times per year as required, in agreement with members. Meetings are held either face-to-face or online as determined by each group.

Meetings should not be held on Tuesday nights to avoid clashes with Councillor briefings or meetings.

## **7. Membership and roles**

Advisory committee and working group members are selected by a recruitment panel comprising relevant Council Directors (or their delegates) and three Councillors (determined by Council resolution) following an Expression of Interest process. Groups comprise between 8-15 members. Casual vacancies will be recruited on an ad hoc basis by the Convenor.

Members appoint a Chairperson at their first meeting. Council encourages community members to chair meetings. If the elected Chairperson is absent, members elect a Chairperson for that meeting. If a member resigns, a replacement will be recruited.

Members contribute through subject matter expertise or lived experience. Members are required to attend meetings and provide input on matters of discussion. If members are absent from three consecutive meetings without agreed prior notification to the Chairperson, their membership will lapse and a new member for the group will be recruited.

Councillors are encouraged to attend meetings of advisory committees and working groups. However, Councillors are not eligible to propose motions or vote on recommendations at advisory committees or working group meetings as these forums are for community representation. As elected officials, councillors may be required to make final decision on recommendations at a meeting of Council.

One or more Council staff members will be appointed as convenors of the advisory committee. The convenor will develop the agenda in consultation with members, attend meetings, advise members about Council policy where relevant and take notes of recommendations resulting from agenda items.

## **8. Quorum**

Local Democracy Groups have unique access to Council and ability to influence its decision making. They can play an important role in positively influencing outcomes affecting the whole community. Although advisory committees are not a decision-making body, a quorum is required for recommendations. The quorum for meetings is 8.

## **9. Meeting principles**

Members are expected to:

- participate in discussions and offer opinions and knowledge
- treat others with respect and have due regard to the opinions, rights and responsibilities of others
- act with integrity
- attend each meeting where practical
- declare conflicts of interest
- maintain the confidentiality of information where relevant

## **10. Agendas**

Convenors circulate agendas to members one week prior to the meeting.

If an advisory committee or working group is deliberating on a significant matter, documents may be provided to members with additional notice.

Council may refer items to advisory committees or working groups for advice/recommendation by resolution.

## **11. Media**

The Mayor and the General Manager are the designated media spokespeople for Council in accordance with Council's Media Policy. Advisory committee and working group members may speak to the media about their own views but must not purport to represent Council.

## **12. Reporting and transparency**

Minutes will be published on Council's website within seven days of each meeting.

Manager Corporate Strategy and Engagement prepares a quarterly progress report on all Local Democracy Groups, based on summaries provided by Convenors. The reports will be submitted to Council.

Should recommendations require referral to Council outside the quarterly progress report timeline, Convenors will prepare a separate report.

Convenors will monitor the progress of any recommendation to Council and report the outcome back to the group.

## **13. Term**

The term of the advisory committees and working groups will end in September 2024 in line with the Council resolution of May 2022.