

7.3 REPORT ON ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

Submitted by Environmental Advisory Committee

RECOMMENDATION

That Council note the range of activities and discussions that the Environmental Advisory Committee has contributed in 2018 and 2019.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to provide an update on the activities of the Environmental Advisory Committee. As per the Terms of Reference of the Environmental Advisory Committee is required to report to council on its activities.

BACKGROUND

The purpose of the Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) is to inform and advise Council on environmental and sustainability related issues and Council's role in improving the natural environment of Monash. The EAC has advisory capacity only and has no delegated authority to make decisions as if they were Council. Advisory Committees provide advice to Council and staff to assist them in their decision making.

Since 2007, EAC has provided advice on Council's environmental sustainability programs and has, in particular, advised on the implementation, monitoring and review of the 2016-2026 Environmental Sustainability Strategy actions and resulting strategic projects.

EAC is represented by 13 community members and three Councillors. The term for the community membership is 2 years. Community members are appointed by Council following a public expression of interest. The current membership is from June 2018-2020.

DISCUSSION

EAC meets 6 times per year (usually every second month). The format of the meetings is:

- Welcome, Attendance and Apologies
- Strategy or priority project presentations relating to Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2016-2026
- Update on other Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2016-2026 activities
- Update from working groups
- Outstanding actions and other the business

Councillors have had 97% attendance at meetings since June 2018, and the Community Committee members have a 73% attendance record with many attending 90% of the time. .

One member resigned in this time and was replaced from the list of delegates in the 2018 Expression of Interest by Gary Codner. All appointments are taken to Council for approval, as per Terms of Reference.

Key initiatives

In this current term of the committee, these are the following projects that the committee has been involved directly or following investigation by working groups:

1. Responsible Investment
 - After significant research by the working group and committee, EAC advocated for council to adopt a positive screening process for Council's investment and to actively invest in fossil fuel free investments. This was supported by Council.
 - Council's investment policy has been updated to reflect the changes and financial institutions have been notified.
2. Review of Emission Reduction Strategy brief and report
 - A working group provided feedback on the brief prior to release
 - The committee provided feedback on the full and summary draft reports.
3. Review of Water Feasibility Study
 - A working group provided feedback on the brief prior to release
 - The committee provided feedback on the full and summary draft reports.
4. Prioritising Council's response to Climate Change
 - This paper to council was initiated by the committee to prioritise actions to address climate change and emission reduction
5. Evaluation of City Power Partnership and Take 2
 - The committee evaluated a selection of public pledge programs and recommended council to participate in Take 2 and City Power Partnership. This was supported by Council.
6. Community Gardens policy development
 - Through the development of a working group, a review of previous research and other council approaches to community garden has been investigated and a draft policy developed.
7. Recyclable coffee cup review
 - To reduce waste in the community, a working group was set up to investigate what recyclable paper coffee cups were available on the market and reuse options beyond the 'BYO cup'.
 - Findings showed that there are currently no recyclable coffee cups in Australia but they are being introduced soon.
8. Review and feedback on Biodiversity Strategy
 - Prior to the strategy going out for community consultation, the committee had the opportunity to provide valuable feedback on the draft document.
9. Review and feedback on Green Shoots
 - Provided input in the early stages of the development of Green Shoots -community engagement program supporting Biodiversity and related strategies.

10. Review and feedback on FOGO roll out
 - o Provided input in the early stages of the development of Food Organics in the green bin project and communications.
11. Review and feedback on Eastern Alliance for Greenhouse Action projects
 - o Provided input on Energy performance contracts, solar savers and Local Government Power purchase agreements
12. Review and feedback on Litter Action Plan
13. Review and Feedback on Living Links Partnership along Dandenong Creek
14. Review and Feedback on recycling status for Monash, Circular Foods, Toner Pave and Australian Paper/SUEZ waste to energy facility

In addition to this, the successful Monash Open Gardens events were initiated following a suggestion for the committee to improve communities pride in their gardens.

Work over the coming 12 months

The term for the current committee will end in June 2020. Expressions of interest will go out in April and current members are able to continue on the committee.

Over the next 12 months, the Committee program will include:

- 1) Review of the State Government Circular Economy Policy and feedback to council on how this might be integrated or will impact into current practice.
- 2) Completion of the Community Gardens policy for council to consider and finalise.
- 3) Review of the Achieving Zero Carbon within the Planning System project at City of Moreland and feedback to council on the value of considering a similar approach at Monash.
- 4) Support council to develop a strategy to address Climate change which will look to include building community resilience, and reducing our corporate impact.
- 5) Provide feedback on the key activities and make suggestions to support council staff in the delivery of the Environmental Sustainability Strategy and related programs and strategies.
- 6) Consider how Monash council can provide more support to our business community to reduce GHG emissions and waste.

Current Working Groups

1) Community Gardens - development of a draft policy based on review of existing policies from other councils. Will still need to be reviewed internally and submitted to council for approval.

2) Nature Strip Guidelines - provided advice on the current guidelines which are up for renewal. Staff have taken this advice to initiate review.

3) Review of City of Moreland Motion (on hold) – this is a watching brief on the City of Moreland Achieving Zero Carbon Within The Planning System project. No activity to date.

4) Circular economy and buying recycled (on hold) - awaiting release of the Victorian Government's Circular Economy Policy.

5) Action Plan to address Climate change – Following the delivery of the Carbon Neutral Modelling Report, the Committee is interested in providing support to develop an Action Plan.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

As per the Terms of Reference, EAC provide advice and guidance on the delivery of Council's Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2016-26 actions.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

EAC provides the opportunity to access community perspective to support the delivery of the Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2016-26. Community membership is based on public invitation and members selected to provide a balanced representation of the community.

CONCLUSION

That Council acknowledge the range of activities and discussions that the Environmental Advisory Committee has contributed to over the last two years.