

7.1 REPORT ON ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

Responsible Committee: Environmental Advisory Committee

RECOMMENDATION

That Council notes the range of activities and discussions that the Environmental Advisory Committee has contributed in 2020.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to provide a report on the activities of the Environmental Advisory Committee for 2020, in accordance with the committee Terms of Reference.

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 with a focus on the implementation, monitoring and review of the 2016-2026 Environmental Sustainability Strategy actions and resulting strategic projects.

EAC is represented by 13-15 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.

DISCUSSION

Membership for the 2018-2020 EAC concluded in June 2020 and a new committee was formed for 2020-2022. Eight 2018-2020 EAC members renewed their membership and seven new EAC members were appointed in accordance with the terms of reference. New appointments were endorsed by council in July 2020 but due to elections, the first meeting for the 2020-2022 committee was held in December. Steve Owens decided to resign in January 2021 because he has now moved out of Monash. So the current membership is 14 community members.

EAC met six (6) times over the last 12 months, three attended by the 2018-2020 EAC and three by the 2020-2022 EAC. Meetings typically occur very second month but the 23 March meeting was cancelled due to COVID restrictions for face to face meetings. A progress report was provided to the committee on Environmental Sustainability Strategy activities in lieu of the

meeting. Meetings moved to online using Zoom from May 2020 and will continue in this format until restrictions allow for face to face meetings.

The format of the meetings for the EAC 2018-2020 was:

- Welcome, Attendance and Apologies
- 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

To allow for more input by members, the EAC 2020-2022 has moved to conducting workshops during the meeting time with all members to allow them to provide feedback on priority issues during the meeting and moving to monthly online meetings to allow for more input by EAC.

Councillors have had 89% attendance at meetings since January 2020, and the Community Committee members have an 85% attendance record with many attending 100% of the time.

Key Initiatives

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

Provided feedback on the Carbon Neutral Modelling report by CarbonetiX, to assist in the development of the council paper and best presentation of this complex information. This contributed to the successful Council commitment to becoming Carbon Neutral by 2025 in February 2020.

EAC also completed a workshop in July to provide feedback on the draft Zero Net Carbon Action Plan to clarify council and community commitments, and strengthen and expand community commitment and including funding options. This Action Plan was endorsed by council in August 2020.

EAC also provided feedback on the following:

- 1) Collateral for the Food waste in the green bin collateral.
- 2) Environmental Sustainable Design Policy for buildings and infrastructure.
- 3) GreenShoots framework and community engagement.
- 4) Nature strip guidelines.
- 5) Litter Action Plan and Clayton Zone project.
- 6) Community engagement policy including a number of members participating in additional online workshops.
- 7) Collating information to support drafting a Community Gardens Policy for council which will be finalised by staff.
- 8) Integrating Sustainability in council procurement process.

The 2020-2022 EAC have identified a number of key themes that they would like to focus on in their first 12 months:

- 1) Communications: Improving communication of sustainability activities with the community; understanding the strategic link of actions undertaken by council to the Council Plan.
- 2) Vegetation: Improving tree canopy and density, understory; sustainable and community gardening, guidelines for developments.
- 3) Zero Net Carbon: Reducing emissions in the community, solar micro grids, improve efficiency in older housing stock.
- 4) Circular economy: improve recycling and avoidance of waste through reuse (reusable cups, avoid single use plastics, ban bags, repair shops), also links to procurement.

To date the committee have provided input on Communications and Vegetation. EAC input will support the development of a new Sustainability communications plan and provide input in to the new Tree Management Policy and vegetation management by council.

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 year.