



GUNNEDAH SHIRE COUNCIL

Working Group Terms of Reference

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Working Group Goals

Advise Council about key aspects of the Working Group, provide a community perspective on key considerations, and be a sounding board for project deliverables.

Work towards consensus among Working Group members on the desired project goals.

Outcomes

The Working Group will be considered a success if:

1. Clear, consensus-based recommendations on the most efficient and effective method of achieving objectives are established.
2. The public is engaged in a meaningful way via participation in the Working Group and the community is consulted as a whole and given the opportunity to provide input.
3. Decisions fit into the context of the Working Group Purpose (as listed in the Register of Committees and Working Groups).
4. The schedule for actions take the least amount of time and makes the most effective use of limited project funding.
5. Appropriate regulatory and technical staff are involved throughout the process.

Terms of Membership

Members agree to volunteer their participation as a member of a Gunnedah Shire Council Working Group.

A member's position on the Working Group may be declared vacant if the member:

- Resigned from the Working Group – this should be forwarded to the Chairperson in writing and forwarded to Council.
- Fails to attend more than two meetings without prior notice.

In a case where a member's position is declared vacant, Council may appoint an alternative representative from the same interest group to fill the position.

Working Group Operating Guidelines

Convening of Meetings

Meetings will be held at the time and place as determined by the Working Group in the course of their meetings or as and when the Chairperson calls an urgent meeting.

Working Group members will be informed of meetings a minimum of three business days prior to the meeting via email or direct mail, depending on his/her preference.

Members wishing to submit items for inclusion on the Agenda of the Working Group Meeting must forward their request to the Responsible Officer one week prior to the scheduled meeting.

Communication

The minutes of Working Group meetings will be forwarded to members no later than three business days after the meeting via email or direct mail, depending on his/her preference.

Any changes to the record of the past meetings shall be in writing and forwarded to the Responsible Officer prior to the next meeting.

Quorum

Unless specified in the Register of Council Committees, Reserve Trust Committees of Management and Working Groups, the Working Group does not require a quorum to hold a meeting. The Chairperson shall use his/her discretion to determine if any item on the agenda should be deferred to a future meeting if it is considered there are insufficient members at the meeting.

Conduct of Meetings

1. Meetings will open to all Councillors however only nominated Committee Representatives will be entitled to vote.
2. As the Working Group has an advisory role, no recommendation is deemed to be a decision of Council unless the matter is referred to Council for determination via the Responsible Officer.
3. Administration of the Working Group will be undertaken by a staff member reporting to the Responsible Officer.
4. Informed alternates are acceptable and encouraged if the Working Party member cannot attend.
5. All cell phones will be turned off during the meetings.
6. Meetings will end with a clear understanding of expectations and actions for next steps.
7. Council will keep a record of meeting attendees, declarations of interest, key issues raised, and actions required.
8. Comments from individual members will generally not be attributed and a verbatim record of the meeting will not be prepared.

Meeting Ground Rules

1. Speak one at a time – refrain from interrupting others.
2. Wait to be recognised by the Chairperson before speaking.
3. Chairperson will call on people who have not spoken before calling on someone a second time for a given subject.
4. Ensure that all members who wish to have an opportunity to speak are afforded a chance to do so.
5. Maintain a respectful stance towards all participants.
6. Listen to other points of view and try to understand their interests.
7. Share information openly, promptly and respectfully.
8. If requested to do so, hold questions to the end of each presentation.
9. Remain flexible and open-minded, and actively participate in meetings.

Chairperson

The Mayor, if elected by Council to the Group is not automatically the Chairperson of the Group.

The Chairperson is to have precedence at the meeting and shall determine the order of proceedings generally as set by the agenda.

In the absence of the Chairperson, another Council member of the Working Group or Responsible Officer shall Chair the meeting.

Role and Responsibilities

Working Group members agree to:

1. Provide specific local expertise, including identifying emerging local issues;
2. Review project reports and comment promptly;
3. Attend all meetings possible and prepare appropriately;
4. Complete all necessary assignments prior to each meeting;
5. Relay information to their constituents after each meeting and gather information/feedback from their constituents as practicable before each meeting; and
6. Act in accordance with all Gunnedah Shire Council policies.

The Responsible Officer agrees to:

1. Coordinate the preparation of meeting notices, reports, meeting minutes and invitations of the Working Group;
2. Manage logistics of meetings; and
3. Effectively manage the scope, schedule and budget;
4. Determine if any individual recommendations are required to be reported to Council for determination;
5. Keep Working Group members informed of progress;
6. Provide documentation to support recommendations;
7. Provide technical expertise;
8. Provide public meetings necessary to inform and engage the community;
9. Explain the reasons when deviations are taken from Working Group recommendations.
10. Coordinate any presentations from guest speakers.

Decision Making

Gunnedah Shire Council Working Groups are primarily advisory. In those areas where it has some decision-making authority, members will strive to reach agreement by consensus at a level that indicates that all partners are willing to “live with” the proposed action. Members will strive to work expeditiously and try to avoid revisiting decisions once made. If agreement cannot be reached on a particular issue, the Chairperson will retain final decision-making authority.

Conflict Resolution

When an issue arises that cannot be easily resolved, Working Group members agree to:

- Remember that the controversial projects are unlikely to receive funding, so the intent of all parties is to resolve issues so the project can progress.
- Determine if the issue should be resolved within or outside the Working Group and participate however is appropriate.
- Ensure the appropriate decision makers are at the table to resolve the issue.

Code of Conduct

All Working Group members are required to comply with Gunnedah Shire Council Policies including the Gunnedah Shire Council Model Code of Conduct.

All Working Group members are required to declare any pecuniary, non-pecuniary but significant or non-pecuniary and less than significant interests:

- **Pecuniary.** The pecuniary interest is an interest that a person has in a matter because of a reasonable likelihood or expectation of appreciable financial gain or loss to the person or another person with whom the person is associated.
- **Non-pecuniary but significant.** You are unable to remove the source of conflict.
- **Non-pecuniary and less than significant.** Therefore, whilst this declaration is made, you will remain in the Chamber during consideration of the item.

Members must also be specific with relation to their interest and include information such as:

- The names of any person or organisation with which you have a relationship.
- The nature of your relationship with the person or organisation.
- The reason(s) why you consider the situation may (or may be perceived to give rise to) a conflict between your personal interests and your public duty as a Councillor.