

THE CITY OF
GREATER GEELONG

TERMS OF REFERENCE

CENTRAL GEELONG BUSINESS REFERENCE GROUP

VERSION: DRAFT 1

Approval Date: 23 February 2021

Approved by: Council

Review Date: 23 February 2023

Responsible Officer: Director, City Planning & Economy

Authorising Officer: Chief Executive Officer

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Introduction

BACKGROUND

As the City endeavours to navigate through the challenges of COVID-19, there is a recognition by Council that business and property owners in Central Geelong have experiences and viewpoints that can contribute to the recovery of the city's economy by focusing on particular topics that are seen as important strategic areas for review.

In August 2020 Council created a Geelong Central Business District (CBD) Engagement Taskforce consisting of 31 prominent, experienced and respected business people in Central Geelong. A series of workshops were held focusing on:

- Public transport servicing;
- On and off-street parking;
- Central Geelong Marketing committee and levy; and
- Commercial rates.

A Geelong CBD Engagement Taskforce – Findings Report (2020) was presented to Council in September 2020.

Following a Council resolution in February 2021, participants in the Geelong CBD Engagement Taskforce will be invited to participate in an ongoing Central Geelong Business Reference Group (Reference Group) as part of an ongoing deliberative engagement process with business and/or property owners in Central Geelong.

The main function of this group is to assist Council in the consultative process and provide valuable information to support the decision making of Council and in turn, the achievements of its objectives under the Council Plan. The Reference Group would generally have a lifespan beyond one year (subject to a review by the Group members) and be focused in conjunction with relevant City Plans and Strategies.

Advice from the Reference Group will help to achieve Council's objective of providing for the best outcomes for the community to ensure that:

- resources are used efficiently and effectively;
- decision making by the City and Council reflects the best interest of all sections of our community;
- the community has confidence in Council and the decisions that it makes; and,
- the focus is on a thriving and sustainable Central Geelong.

Advice from the Reference Group will also support the City's role, which includes maintaining the viability of Council by ensuring that resources are managed in a responsible and accountable manner.

PURPOSE

The aim of Central Geelong Business Reference Group is to support Council decision making for matters related to COVID-19 recovery and growth of Central Geelong by providing feedback and advice through a deliberative engagement process.

The Reference Group will also provide a platform for prominent, experienced and respected businesspeople to advocate on priorities that are important to the business community in Central Geelong.

OBJECTIVES

To deliver on the aim, the Reference Group will consider the collective interests of the business community in Central Geelong and specifically:

- Provide advice, knowledge and experience to Council on the agreed priority issues of:
 - Public Transport;
 - Car Parking;
 - Central Geelong Marketing;
 - Commercial rates.
- Provide feedback to actions that support the progression of priorities identified in the Geelong CBD Engagement Taskforce - Findings Report (2020) via the Director Economy, Investment and Attraction.

ENGAGEMENT

An Engagement Plan will provide guidance for the Reference Group and Council that aligns with the expectations for deliberative community consultation in accordance with the (2021 draft) Community Engagement Policy. The expectation is that the engagement will be meaningful, appropriate and respectful.

The intent is to follow a deliberative engagement process that brings participants closer to the decision makers than other forms of engagement; where participants are provided with a clear task or question, have access to appropriate resources and information, and are given the time and space required to deliberate and respectfully reach consensus.

Engagement may be delivered virtually or in person.

DURATION

This Reference Group commences on 1 July 2021 and will be in place for a period of more than one year but less than 2 years subject to review by the Reference Group in conjunction with Council.

This Terms of Reference and effectiveness of the Reference Group will be reviewed prior to the conclusion of the 2-year period and a report will be prepared for Council with recommendations on the future of the Reference Group.

MEMBERSHIP

The appointment of members to the Reference Group will occur via the following process:

- The participants of the Geelong CBD Engagement Taskforce will be invited to be members of the Central Geelong Business Reference Group.
- Members of the Central Geelong Business Reference Group must be current business and/or property owners in the Central Geelong Action Plan area.
- Councillors and Council Officers may attend in an observatory capacity.

COMPOSITION

All participants of the Geelong CBD Engagement Taskforce shall make up the composition of this Reference Group.

The Reference Group will be led by a facilitator as appointed by the Chief Executive Officer or delegate.

AUTHORITY

- The Reference Group has no delegated authority to act on behalf of Council.
- The Reference Group has no financial delegation or authority.
- The Reference Group is not a voting forum.
- The Mayor and the Director Economy, Investment & Attraction are the designated media spokespeople for Council in accordance with Council's Media Policy.
- Reference Group members may speak to the media about their own views but must not purport to represent Council.

CODE OF CONDUCT

- Reference Group members must commit themselves to the Terms of Reference of the Reference Group.
- Reference Group members must attend meetings of the Reference Group personally (no proxy allowed) and respond with an RSVP no later than by the designated RSVP date.
- Reference Group members must abide by best practice in the conduct of Advisory Reference Groups.
- Reference Group members must treat others with respect and have due regard to the opinions, rights and responsibilities of others.
- Reference Group members must maintain the confidentiality of all information provided unless otherwise advised.
- Reference Group members shall act in a voluntary capacity.
- Reference Group members who act as a "representative" of an organisation are expected to be able to represent the views and ideas of that organisation while participating in the Reference Group as an individual with their own views, ideas and experience to be contributed for the benefit of the Reference Group.
- If a Reference Group member does not comply with the Terms of Reference, the matter will be referred to the Director Economy, Investment & Attraction or delegate. If a Reference Group member is found to have not complied with the Terms of Reference, termination of their membership from the Reference Group may result.

MEETINGS

- The Reference Group will meet no more than three (3) times per year.
- The Reference Group will be hosted by Council in an appropriate venue or on-line.
- A meeting of the Reference Group will not be called with less than two weeks' notice to all members, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

MEETING PROCEDURE

- The convenor shall convene the engagement meetings, taking account of both the need for efficiency and the importance of accountability.
- If the convenor is not present the meeting will be led by one of the members present.

MEETING QUORUM

- A quorum is **not** required but the convenor will note the numbers attending the meeting.

REPORTING

- The Reference Group shall report to Council providing an update of Reference Group activities as required but, at least annually.
- Distribution time for agendas is one week prior to the scheduled meeting date.
- Notes or artefacts from the Reference Group meeting will be circulated two weeks after the meeting has been held.

FACILITIES & RESOURCES

- The Reference Group will not have a budget for approved activities but will advise Council annually on budget requirements in relation to infrastructure, research, advocacy, promotions and community engagement for inclusion in respective program budgets.
- Reasonable administrative resources shall be provided.

ATTACHMENTS

- Geelong CBD Engagement Taskforce – Findings Report (2020)

Definitions

Central Geelong means all land within the Central Geelong Action Plan Area.

Central Geelong Action Plan area is defined as the land area indicated in the map below.

City means the administrative organisation of the Council, led by the Chief Executive Officer.

Convener means the independently appointed facilitator for this Reference Group.

Council means the Greater Geelong City Council constituted in accordance with the *Local Government Act (Vic) 2020*.

Member means a member of this Reference Group.

Reference Group means the Central Geelong Business Engagement Reference Group (formerly known as the Central Geelong Business Task Force).

Central Geelong Action Plan area map

Map 1 – Action Plan area



Record	Retention/Disposal Responsibility	Retention Period	Location