

8 April 2021

## COUNCIL ANNOUNCES COMMUNITY PANEL

Forty people will represent members of the Shire on the Hepburn Together Community Panel, with almost 200 people applying for a place on the group.

Mayor, Cr Lesley Hewitt, said Council was impressed by the enthusiasm and interest from people to join the panel and help to guide the direction of the ten-year Community Vision and four-year Council Plan.

“This demonstrates, once again, that our community has a strong drive to get involved and help to inform Council decision making,” said Mayor Hewitt.

“We understand that other shires, including much larger ones, have not had such interest. We really appreciate the effort that people have made, and we thank all 193 people who applied to join the panel,” she said.

Under the newly adopted Community Engagement Policy, Council has committed to using best practise deliberative engagement strategies, including a community panel, for key projects.

“The Hepburn Together Community Panel is, to the best of our ability, a true reflection of the Shire’s population,” said Mayor Hewitt.

“We selected panel members randomly based on age groups, ward, gender and key demographics such as those who are parents, have English as a second language, identify as LGBTQIA+, live with a disability, and more.

“This means we will hear from a group of people who directly reflect the make up of our community, and who have a diversity of views. This will help us to produce a Community Vision and Council Plan that reflects community sentiment,” she said.

The panel has a mix of targeted random recruitment via letter (12), text and email (12) and self-nominated (16) applicants. This was very clearly the community’s preference in the first phase of engagement for the project.

Panel members will participate in three facilitated sessions in April. Feedback from the panel and the results from the community survey on local priorities will inform the Community Vision and Council Plan, which are required under the new Local Government Act (2020).

**Demographics of panel members:**

Age

0-19 years old	6
20-39 years old	5
40-59 years old	13
60-79 years old	15
80+ years old	1

Gender

Female	22
Male	18

Ward/location

Birch	9
Cameron	6
Coliban	5
Creswick	13
Holcombe	5
Ratepayer outside Shire	1
Work or participate in Shire	1

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