

POLICY NUMBER:	75
NAME OF POLICY:	COMMUNITY PLANNING POLICY
DATE AMENDED:	July 2014
DATE OF NEXT REVIEW:	July 2018
DATE ADOPTED:	15 July 2014
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Manager Community and Economic Development
REFERENCES:	<i>Hepburn Shire Council Plan: 2013-2017</i> <i>Hepburn Shire Council Community Planning Strategy</i> <i>Hepburn Shire Council Community Engagement Framework</i>

Best Value Principles

Hepburn Shire Council has the responsibility to provide its ratepayers with best value, with all services provided by Council meeting the expectations in terms of quality and cost. In providing this, all services need to be accessible, responsive to the needs of the community, considerate of the natural environment and subject to continuous improvement.

To achieve the best over life outcome for Council's expenditures, which meets quality and service expectations, there will be periodic review of services against best on offer in both the public and private sectors.

All Council staff members are responsible for supporting best value principles in their normal day to day actions to ensure services are recognised by the community as delivering best value.

1. Introduction

Community planning is a forum for public participation where community members identify community vision and values, what is important to them and what they would like to see happen in their community in the future.

Hepburn Shire Council adopted a Community Planning Framework in 2007 as a way of empowering communities to make decisions and act on what is important for them. The premise of this method is that communities that are empowered to do this will be stronger and more successful.

The Hepburn Shire Council Plan (2013-2017) includes as one of its five strategic objectives:

'In partnership with communities, Community Services will identify community priorities and work to deliver services, programs and projects that promote community health and well-being.'

A Key Strategic Activity is to:

'Work with and support Communities and residents to implement community driven projects through community planning, provision of advice, information and community grants, acknowledging the significant contribution made by community volunteers.'

2. Scope

This policy applies to the whole of Hepburn Shire and replaces previous policies or sections of policies relating to community planning.

3. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to describe Hepburn Shire Council's community planning program.

The aims of this Policy are to:

- Provide a strategic direction for the development of community plans in the Hepburn Shire
- With the Community Planning Strategy, provide a mechanism for initiating, facilitating, developing and reviewing community plans for all communities in Hepburn Shire

- Guide how community plans will be used by Council and incorporated into Council planning and budgeting processes.

4. Definitions

4.1 Community Planning

Community planning is a forum for public participation where community members identify community vision and values, what is important to them and what they would like to see happen in their community in the future.

Community planning can also be called, or can be seen as being a part of, 'Community Governance', 'Participatory Planning' or 'Public Participation'. Community planning has been the method adopted by a large number of Victorian Local Governments as a means of identifying local community priorities.

4.2 Community

This usually refers to a group of people living in a particular local area. It can also refer to a social unit of any size that shares common values.

4.3 Community Planning Group

This is usually made up of members of the community who have participated in the community planning process and are willing to take on a leadership role in their communities by taking action to achieve community priorities listed in the plan.

Members of a community planning group may also be involved in other local committees.

The community planning process only requires the establishment of a community planning group if another group does not already exist in the community to work on community plan priorities.

4.4 Community Plan Priorities

This is the list of priorities identified in the community plan as being important to the community at the time the plan was developed. It is recognised that these priorities may change and should be reviewed to ensure they remain relevant to the community.

5. Policy

5.1 Why community planning?

Hepburn Shire Council values active and engaged communities. Council respects community aspirations and the desire of residents to work toward self-directed goals.

Community planning in the Hepburn Shire is a mechanism to develop and strengthen partnerships within local communities and with all levels of government. Community plans assist Council and other government bodies to understand what is important to each community.

“Local government in Victoria, following on the lead of the UK and New Zealand, are moving toward more devolved processes of decision-making in recognition of the benefits for citizens and government alike.”ⁱ

“Local government’s communities now have a stronger expectation that they will be involved in the decisions which affect them”ⁱⁱ

5.2 Community Planning Strategy

Council’s Community Planning Strategy will guide and inform the community planning process. The Strategy sets out: the roles and responsibility of community members, Council Staff (including contractors) and Councillors in community planning; the process for creating a community plan; guidelines for community engagement (as per Hepburn Shire Councils Community Engagement Framework); the structure and content of community plans; and how community plans will be communicated and integrated into Council processes.

6. Implementation

The Manager of Community and Economic Development will be responsible for implementing this Policy.

7. Evaluation

In line with Council’s Best Values Principles (Page 1) Council will review its community planning program annually.

Evaluation will include the collection of data and anecdotal evidence on the effectiveness of the community planning program to ensure continuous improvement.

Evaluation results will be made available to those who have participated in community planning.

8. Review

The Policy will be reviewed every four years.

ⁱ Hepburn Shire Council Community Planning Framework, 2007

ⁱⁱ Australian Centre for Excellence in Local Government 2012, *Evolution in Community Governance*, vol. 1, February 2012, p. 11