

Agribusiness Advisory Committee

Terms of Reference



1. Background

With more than 40 commercially grown products, including almonds, olives, stone fruit, table and wine grapes, vegetables, cereals, legumes, lucerne, sheep, beef and dairy, it is easy to see why the Rural City of Swan Hill is an important part of Victoria's food bowl. Agriculture is also a key driver in the local economy with almost one in five jobs directly employed in the sector and many other industries relying on a vibrant and active agricultural sector for their income.

2. Purpose

The role of the Agribusiness Advisory Committee ("The Committee") is to help guide Council decisions pertaining to the agricultural sector and to advise Council on the role that Council can play in further supporting and developing the sector for the benefit of the local economy and local community.

3. Objectives

- Advise Council and Council Employees on agriculture and agriculture related matters.
- Identify the issues or opportunities facing agribusiness across the region.
- Provide a united voice when dealing with issues of commonality e.g: water.
- Identify opportunities to attract funding to further develop the agribusiness sector.
- Collaborate and get involved in new ventures.
- Identify the role that each of the stakeholders have in developing the sector.
- Provide an advocacy role for agribusiness in the Council area.
- Assist Council in sourcing external funding opportunities to support advancement of the agribusiness sector in the Council area.

4. Membership

Membership of the Committee must reflect the key stakeholders and industries that drive agriculture in the region. In order for good, timely, decisions to be made the total number of members for the Advisory Committee should not exceed 15. Membership should include:

- A Councillor
- Council Officer
- Primary producers (covering the various sectors)
- Peak Bodies (eg: VFF, Summer Fruits Growers Association, Table Grape Association)

The quorum for any meeting of the Committee shall be half the members plus one. Members can nominate a proxy.

Other groups that could be considered for observer status include, but not limited to:

- Related businesses in the agribusiness supply chain (eg: transport, power, water)
- Government Department representatives (DEPI, RDV)

Representatives from other areas can be brought in by the Committee on an 'as needs' basis. These representatives do not have voting rights.

a. Selection process and criteria for community members

The Council can seek applicants for the Agribusiness Advisory Committee membership through direct approach to appropriate peak bodies and through public notices.

Applicants are appointed by Council following consideration of a recommendation outlined in a report prepared by officers and sanctioned by the CEO and Mayor of Council. As far as practical, the membership shall reflect diversity in gender, cultural background and group representation.

Committee members are appointed for two years and eligible for re-appointment.

b. Chairperson

Once selected, the Committee elects a Chairperson from their number. The Chairperson liaises with Council's support officer in the development of agendas and acts as the key liaison between Council and the Committee.

The Chairperson must be a primary producer.

In the absence of the Chairperson, a member agreed to by the Committee acts as Chairperson.

The Chairperson has a casting vote.

The Chairperson is appointed for two years and eligible for re- appointment.

5. Role of Committee

The Committee functions to provide advice to Council on how best to deal with issues or opportunities facing the sector in the Rural City of Swan Hill and the region and to provide background knowledge and assistance to Councillors and/or Council Employees

The Committee does not have the authority to make decisions on behalf of Council.

The Committee has no delegated authority to act or to incur expenditure on behalf of Council.

6. Role of Council

Council convenes the Committee and provide support for the Committee to undertake its meetings. This includes:

- Access to meeting rooms.
- Staff time to develop agendas, collate minutes, source information and develop reports.
- Access to research that Council has undertaken except where this research is confidential.
- Provide the necessary budget to ensure the Committee is adequately resourced to fulfill its role.

- Facilitate initiatives recommended by the Committee when appropriate.

7. Member responsibilities

Members must declare any personal interest, connection or association with any matter brought before the Committee.

Members must not make improper use of information acquired as a consequence of membership of the Committee.

If matters of a confidential nature are discussed by the Committee, members must respect that confidentiality.

Membership of the Committee may be terminated for any of the following reasons:

- failure to attend three consecutive meetings without prior notice.
- conduct unbecoming a member, for example, a breach of confidentiality.

If Council intends to make a decision to terminate a membership of the Committee it will give the member written notice setting out the intended decision and the grounds on which it is based. The member will have the opportunity to address the Committee prior to it making a decision.

8. Insurance

Members of the Committee are covered by Council's insurance policies while performing as a member of the Committee.

9. Meetings

The Committee meets on a quarterly basis on a time/day agreed by the majority members of the Committee. Meetings are not opened to the public and are conducted every 3 months (or as deemed necessary by the Committee) throughout the term of the project.

The Director of Development and Planning shall after every meeting of the Committee forward the Minutes of that meeting to the next Ordinary Meeting of the Council.

The Committee reports annually to Council on the activities and issues that have been considered and provides input and advice to Council on issues that affect the agricultural sector in the municipality.

All members of this Committee shall participate voluntarily, as such receive no compensation or remuneration for their involvement with the committee.

10. Evaluating Performance

The Committee evaluates its own performance, on an annual basis.

11. Conflict of Interest

In accordance with Section 79 of the Local Government Act 1989 as amended (the Act), members of the Committee are required to disclose all Conflicts of Interest and may not be eligible to vote on a matter or attend a meeting at which the subject of the conflict will be considered, depending on the nature of the conflict.

Members of the Committee are expected to be aware of the provisions of the Act with regard to conflicts of interest and disclosure thereof. Failure to comply with the provisions of the Act with regard to conflicts of interest may result in the member's appointment being terminated.

12. Review, Amendment, Modification or Variation

This Terms of Reference may be amended, varied or modified in writing after consultation and agreement by the Council and the Committee.

The Terms of Reference must be reviewed after 12 months. Any changes must be approved by Council.