City of Wodonga

104 Hovell St,
Wodonga, VIC 3690
PO Box 923,
Wodonga, VIC 3689

Phone: (02) 6022 9300
Fax: (02) 6022 9322
info@wodonga.vic.gov.au
wodonga.vic.gov.au
ABN: 63 277 160 265

Revenue and Rating Plan Reference Group

Terms of Reference

Schedule

1. **Definitions**

In this Schedule unless contrary intention appears:

Revenue and Rating Plan Reference Group (Reference Group) will advise Council with regards to reviewing Council's current Revenue and Rating Plan and in particular the rating strategy included in that plan and offering suggestions for improvement.

Reference Group means the persons who are appointed to the Special Reference Group in the manner hereinafter provided.

2. **Objectives of the Reference Group**

The objectives of the Revenue and Rating Plan Reference Group shall be to act as an advisory group and provide a report to Council setting out recommendations for input into the development of the next Revenue and Rating Plan. The report of the Reference Group must be presented to councillors by December 2023.

In particular the objectives of the reference group are to:

2.1 Identify and recommend principles that Council should consider when striking general rates, particularly with regard to the creation and maintenance of any differential rates.

2.2 Provide input regarding the equitable sharing of the rates burden between various categories of ratepayers – eg, Residential, Commercial, Industrial, Rural.

2.3 Make suggestions regarding changes to the structure of current charges and their relationship to general rates, eg. Garbage, waste and Municipal Charges.

2.4 Identify any other special rates or charges or levies it believes Council should consider.

Other issues the group may consider include:

- Garbage charges cost reflectivity;

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- Incentives, disincentives and other pricing signals (eg. Incentives to encourage protection of heritage values);
- Mechanisms for raising funds for neighbourhood works;
- Balance between general rates funding and specific user pays fees and charges (public benefit v's individual benefit);
- Transparency of cross subsidies;
- Usage/consumption of services v's ability to pay;
- Cost reflectivity;
- Equitable share of burden; and,
- Capacity to pay.

3. Items outside the Scope of this Review

Issues the Reference Group will not be asked to consider or comment upon:-

3.1 The amount of total rates revenue to be collected;

3.2 Strategies and policies of Council in general, except to the extent they relate directly to rating strategies;

3.3 Cost effectiveness and efficiency of providing Council services;

3.4 The merit or otherwise of the range of services and facilities provided by Council; and,

3.5 Council's capital works program.

4. Council's Responsibility to the Reference Group

4.1 Council will provide the Reference Group with the appropriate information, data and expert advice to enable it to reach its recommendations.

4.2 Council will support participation of Officers as required to inform the meeting, support meeting processes and other meeting requirements.

4.3 Council may use the information provided from the Reference Group and consult further with the wider Wodonga community.

4.4 Council will use this information that has been obtained from the Reference Group and the wider Wodonga community as part of its decision making process.

4.5 Council may amend the recommendations of the Reference Group based on the information obtained during any subsequent consultations.

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4.6 Council retains the ultimate discretion to accept all, part, or none of the recommendations of the Reference Group.

5. Composition and Proceedings of the Reference Group

5.1 The Reference Group shall be appointed by resolution of Council.

5.2 The group will include two Councillors with one acting as Chairperson, the Director Corporate Services, and representation from a range of rate paying stakeholders including, but not limited to, representation from the different rating categories currently in existence.

5.3 Organisations such as the Wodonga Chamber of Commerce, tourism groups, community based service providers, and environmental groups, may also be represented.

5.4 Council staff will also attend to provide advice, technical input and administrative support.

5.5 All persons nominated to serve on the Reference Group shall be subject to the initial and continued approval of Council. All Reference Group members remain in office until completion of the review, or June 2023, whichever is the earlier.

5.6 A Councillor shall be appointed as Chairperson.

5.7 If a member of the Reference Group has a conflict of interest in any matter in which the Reference Group is concerned, the member must disclose the nature of that interest at the meeting at which the matter is discussed.

5.8 Members with a conflict of interest must abstain from the proceedings, including removing themselves from the meeting while the item is under discussion.

5.9 For the purpose of clauses 5.7 and 5.8 it is accepted that all members of the Reference Group are likely to be ratepayers and may potentially benefit from any changes recommended by the group. It is also accepted that such potential benefit, or disbenefit, may vary disproportionately in its financial effect between members of the Reference Group. This is in itself would not be deemed to be a conflict of interest.

6. Meetings of the Reference Group

6.1 Meetings of the Reference Group shall be held as determined by the Reference Group Chairperson.

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6.2 The Reference Group shall keep a record of each of its meetings and the Chairperson shall ensure that the minutes of the meeting are submitted to the next meeting for confirmation.

6.3 When the minutes are confirmed the Chairperson at the meeting must sign the minutes and certify that they have been confirmed.

6.4 A quorum need not be established to conduct business at any meeting of the Reference Group.

6.5 All recommendations will be by consensus. Dissenting views will be noted and reported to Council.

7. Indemnity

7.1 The Council will indemnify members of the Reference Group against any action liability claim or demand on account of any matter or thing done by them on behalf of the Reference Group when they are acting in accordance with this Terms of Reference by that member of the Reference Group in the honest and reasonable belief or under a mistake of law that the member was properly exercising any function or power of the Reference Group.

7.2 All materials, information and references provided in the course of Reference Group meetings will be deemed confidential unless approved by Council as not being confidential.

8. Term of Appointment

8.1 This Reference Group shall cease in June 2023 unless otherwise extended in writing by the Council.