



City of Greater Bendigo Youth Council

Terms of Reference

27 September 2023

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1. Purpose

The City of Greater Bendigo Youth Council is an advisory and advocacy committee whose role is to represent the voice of young people who live, work and/or study in the City of Greater Bendigo (the City). Youth Council achieves this by:

- + Providing advice to the City of Greater Bendigo Council on plans, strategies, policies and projects so that they better align to the needs of young people;
- + Engaging with young people to identify their priorities; and
- + Advocating on issues that directly impact young people.

2. Goals

The goals of the Youth Council are to:

- + Provide opportunities for young people to have their say and influence Council plans, strategies, policies and projects.
- + Promote young people as valuable citizens who make a positive contribution to the community.
- + Provide opportunities for young people to develop leadership skills.
- + Provide the opportunity for Councillors to meet, hear and learn from young people.
- + Provide opportunities for young people to consult with the wider community.

3. Objectives

The objectives of the Youth Council are to:

- + Represent and promote the voice of young people in the City;
- + Provide a platform for young people to advocate on priorities that are important to their lives;
- + Advise the City of Greater Bendigo Council on current and emerging issues affecting young people;
- + Provide opportunities for young people to influence youth-focused programs and projects delivered by the City;
- + Provide a mechanism for young people to oversee the implementation of the City of Greater Bendigo's Youth Action Plan 2023-2024, and oversee the review and renewal of the Youth Action Plan every two years;
- + Identify services gaps and opportunities for improved cooperation, coordination, and advice and feedback to young people and partnerships that will improve outcomes for young people;

- + Provide opportunities for young people to have a say in the activities offered through the YO Bendigo youth facility;
- + Build a sense of civic pride about young people in the community;
- + Provide opportunities for young people to be engaged in civic activities and events;
- + Include young people from diverse backgrounds in decision-making processes;
- + Strengthen professional development opportunities for young people; and
- + Develop young people's confidence and leadership skills.

4. Membership and Eligibility

The City of Greater Bendigo Youth Council will comprise a minimum of fifteen and a maximum of eighteen members who live, work and/or study within Greater Bendigo. Members must be aged between fourteen and twenty-four years, and a majority must reside within Greater Bendigo.

To be eligible to be a member of the City of Greater Bendigo Youth Council members must:

- Be between the age of 14 and 24 years (Youth Councillors are required to resign when they turn 25).
- Live, work and/or study in Greater Bendigo.
- Hold a valid Working with Children Check and Police Check (volunteer level) if 18 years and older.
- Not be an employee of the City of Greater Bendigo.

This includes young people from all backgrounds and experiences, living in all areas of Greater Bendigo, who are eager to develop leadership skills, advocate for young people and make a difference in the community.

Membership will be determined via a selection process, including a City of Greater Bendigo Youth Council Expression of Interest form addressing the key selection criteria, an interview and a referee check.

Expressions of Interest for the Youth Council can be submitted when the applicant is thirteen years of age and are open to persons up to twenty-four years. This will allow for the young person to turn fourteen at the start of their first year or finish their term when they turn twenty-five years.

5. Casual Vacancies

The Youth Council may choose to fill a vacating Youth Councillor position/s during a Youth Council term through a Casual Vacancy process. If Youth Council membership falls below the minimum of fifteen members and is before six months to a full-term the Casual Vacancy process must begin.

A casual vacancy takes place when a Youth Councillor:

- + Resigns in writing to the Youth Council, or;

- + Without prior leave of the Youth Council is absent from three consecutive meetings and does not show cause; and a majority of Youth Councillors have agreed to terminate the absentee Youth Councillor's membership (in accordance with section 10.2).

When a Casual Vacancy occurs during a Youth Council term the vacancy may be filled via consideration of the unsuccessful candidates from the previous Expression of Interest round. Members of the interview panel will meet to discuss unsuccessful candidates and examine them in order of each candidate's score (count back process), with the candidate of the highest score being given the option to fill the casual vacancy (if the panel deem the candidate worthy). If that candidate is unwilling or unable to accept the causal vacancy position, then the candidate with the next highest score will be considered and so on until a candidate is selected and has accepted. If no candidate is selected via the count back process a Casual Vacancy Expression of Interest process will begin.

6. Expression of Interest

6.1. Criteria

Interested young people who meet eligibility requirements must complete an Expression of Interest form, undertake an interview and provide a referee. Applicants are selected according to the following selection criteria:

- + Their ability to constructively participate in an advisory capacity;
- + The ability to represent a broad range of views that reflects the diversity of the Greater Bendigo community;
- + A thorough understanding of the local community and its social, environmental and economic influences on young people;
- + Good knowledge and understanding of the local issues that are relevant to young people;
- + A willingness to contribute positively to meetings in a fair and unbiased manner;
- + The ability to look beyond personal interests for the benefit of the community;
- + The ability and willingness to encourage participation from the community;
- + The capacity to commit to the Youth Council and its expectations for the duration of the Youth Council term; and
- + A willingness to celebrate the success and achievements of young people in Greater Bendigo.

6.2. Process

Expressions of interest will be open for three weeks (21 days). Engaged Communities Staff will short list applicants for interview.

- + Successful applicants will be contacted for an interview.
- + The interview panel will consist of at least three members, be of mixed gender and have at least one City Councillor and one City Officer.

- + For casual vacancy positions the interview panel must also include a serving Youth Councillor.
- + Unsuccessful applicants will be notified via email no more than 5 working days after the interview process is complete.

7. Term of Office

Each Youth Council term will be for a period of two years. Youth Councillors reserve the right to reconsider their role on Youth Council according to work, study or personal commitments.

7.1. Executive

The Youth Council elects a Youth Mayor and two Deputy Youth Mayors annually. The election will be conducted via an anonymous ballot. The Youth Council must first seek nominations for each executive position. Nominees for each position will be asked to present a candidate speech to the Youth Council explaining why they should be elected to this role. The ballot will be facilitated by Engaged Communities staff.

All Youth Councillors are eligible for election to the position of Youth Mayor or Deputy Youth Mayors.

Youth Mayor or Deputy Youth Mayors hold their positions for a 12-month term. The current Youth Mayor and Deputy Youth Mayors are eligible for re-election to executive positions within their current Youth Council term.

The Youth Mayor and Deputy Youth Mayor positions become vacant if the incumbent ceases to be a Youth Councillor, by submitting a written resignation to a Youth Council meeting.

When the Youth Mayor is unavailable, it is the responsibility of the Deputy Youth Mayors to undertake duties of the Youth Mayor.

If a Youth Mayor resigns before the end of their term, is required to leave because they are no longer in the appropriate age range, takes a Leave of Absence, or is unwell for one month or more; Youth Councillors shall appoint a Deputy Youth Mayor as an Acting Youth Mayor. This shall be determined by a ballot if both Deputy Youth Mayors are available and willing to be the Acting Youth Mayor. Youth Council may also determine that both Deputy Youth Mayors shall be joint Acting Youth Mayors if deemed appropriate.

All Youth Councillors wishing to nominate for an Executive position are encouraged to talk to support staff about the expectations, responsibilities and workload of the relevant executive position.

8. Priority Areas

The Youth Council must establish an annual list of priorities that will guide their strategic direction during their term. Each priority area will form its own working group to be chaired by a Youth Councillor. The priorities must be selected and presented to City of Greater Bendigo Councillors in the first three months of the term.

There are three standing Youth Council priorities, they are: Advocacy, Engagement and Experience.

9. Working Groups

9.1. Purpose and role

The role of each working group is to explore and develop options on Youth Council priority areas and then make recommendations to the Youth Council for consideration. Working groups do not have decision-making powers.

Additional working groups may be formed as the Youth Council deems necessary. Working groups may focus on specific projects, events, or activities that align with the Youth Council priority areas and/or the Youth Action Plan 2023-2024.

When deemed necessary by a majority of Youth Council, Youth Council may delegate a specific item to the relevant Working Group for the Working Group to develop and present as a proposal for Youth Council to consider at a future date.

9.2. Working Group Membership

Youth Council working groups must have at least four Youth Councillors as members (including the Chair) and a maximum of six. Youth Council working groups will be chaired by a Youth Councillor who is not a member of the Youth Council Executive. However, members of the Executive may be a member of a working group. The Chair of the working group is responsible for facilitating the group's deliberations and reporting on the progress of the group back to the Youth Council. Working Group Chairs hold their positions for 12 months.

10. Meetings

10.1. Quorum

The quorum for a Youth Council meeting must be at least a majority (half plus one) of the members of the Youth Council. For a Youth Council comprising of all eighteen Youth Councillors, the quorum will be ten. For a vote to be successful a majority (half plus one) of members in attendance must vote in favour of the proposed motion. If the vote is a draw (even) the vote is then deemed unsuccessful because it is not a clear majority of half plus one vote.

If a quorum is not present within fifteen minutes after the scheduled start time of a Youth Council meeting, the Youth Council will not be able to make any binding decisions. The notes from this meeting can be ratified at the next meeting, provided a quorum is present at that meeting. However, if Youth Councillors advise that they will be arriving late and specify an exact time for when they will arrive, and therefore quorum will be achieved; then binding decisions can be made after the time when quorum is achieved.

10.2. Attendance

Youth Councillors are required to provide an apology if they cannot attend a Briefing or Meeting at least 24 hours before the meeting. Youth Councillors are required to have a reasonable excuse for not attending meetings.

Apologies within 24 hours of the meeting will be accepted for unforeseen circumstances.

All apologies are to be provided to Youth Council Support Staff.

Youth Councillors who fail to provide an apology before a Briefing or Meeting will be considered as absent from a meeting without notice.

If a Youth Councillor is absent for more than three consecutive briefings/meetings without notice or does not provide a timely or adequate apology, the Youth Councillor will be considered under review.

Youth Councillors under review will be required to meet with Youth Council Executive and Youth Council support staff to show cause.

If a Youth Councillor is absent for three consecutive briefings/meetings without notice and has not shown cause, the Youth Council may vote to decide if the absentee Youth Councillor should continue as a member of the Youth Council.

A motion must be passed to terminate the membership of a Youth Councillor under review. Written notice must then be provided to the absentee Youth Councillor for termination to be in effect.

A Youth Councillor may apply for a Leave of Absence when circumstances require a Youth Councillor takes leave from Youth Council duties because they are unable to fulfil them. A Leave of Absence must be provided in writing to Youth Council Support Staff. A Leave of Absence does not impact Youth Council Honorarium payments (Section 12.4).

10.3. Dates and Times of Meetings

The City of Greater Bendigo Youth Council is in session from February to November each year. Briefings will be held from 6:00pm – 8:30pm in the Green Room at the YO Bendigo Youth Facility or online when required. Meetings will be held in the Reception Room of the Bendigo Town Hall from 6:00pm – 8:30pm or online when required. Where possible a hybrid option of both in-person and online meetings will be arranged.

An attendance register will be kept for all City of Greater Bendigo Youth Council Briefings and Meetings. Youth Councillors who are unable to attend a Briefing or Meeting will inform the Youth Mayor or Engaged Communities Staff prior to the Briefing or Meeting.

Meetings scheduled on public holidays will be rescheduled to the next available working day.

Youth Council Briefing and Meeting dates can be found in and annual Youth Council Calendar.

10.4. Special Meetings

A special meeting of the Youth Council can be called by the Youth Mayor or at least two (2) Youth Councillors by a written notice to the Youth Mayor.

- + The notice must specify the date and time of the special meeting and the business to be transacted;

- + Notice must be given at least one week prior to the meeting;
- + City of Greater Bendigo Engaged Communities staff must call the special meeting as specified in the notice or resolution.

Unless all Youth Councillors present unanimously agree to deal with another matter, only the business specified in the notice or resolution is to be transacted.

11. Reporting

The Youth Council will provide a minimum of quarterly progress reports to the City of Greater Bendigo Council to report on their progress and deliberation. The Youth Council will report back to Councillors where appropriate. Quarterly written progress reports will be provided to the City of Greater Bendigo Council.

12. Expectations

12.1. Dress Code

Youth Councillors are encouraged to wear smart casual attire for Youth Council Briefings, Meetings and other City events and activities.

12.2. Volunteer Registration

Youth Councillors are deemed to be City of Greater Bendigo volunteers therefore Youth Councillors are required to be registered in the City volunteer management system – Better Impact. This includes providing signed parental/guardian consent forms for members under 18 years and providing evidence of a Working with Children Check and a Police Check for those 18 years and above.

12.3. City Values and Behaviours

All Youth Councillors are expected to be aware of and adhere to the City of Greater Bendigo's six values and behaviours: *We Lead, We Learn, We Contribute, We Care, We Respond, and We Respect* found in the City's [Volunteer Handbook](#).

Youth Councillors are also expected to adhere to the City of Greater Bendigo's Code of Conduct also found in the Volunteer Handbook.

Further information on Youth Councillor expectations can be found in the [Youth Councillor Position Description](#).

12.4. Youth Council Honorarium

In recognition of Youth Council's considerable time commitment and contribution to the City and community, Youth Councillors shall be paid an honorarium. The honorarium is to reward and recognise Youth Councillor volunteer contribution and not payment for services rendered.

Youth Council honorarium payments will be tiered to recognise the different levels of commitment and time required by individual Youth Councillors. The Youth Council honorarium tiered structure shall be:

- All non-Executive Youth Council members (members who are not the Youth Mayor or Deputy Youth Mayors) will receive the base level of honorarium payment (paid to a maximum of 15 members).
- Youth Councillors whom Chair a Youth Council Working Group will receive a loading in addition to the non-Executive base payment.
- Both Deputy Youth Mayors will receive a separate higher level of payment to recognise the higher level of commitment required for the position.
- The Youth Mayor will receive the highest level of payment to recognise the very high level of commitment required for the position. An Acting Youth Mayor will also receive the Youth Mayor rate if the period of acting is one month or longer.

Honorarium payments will be made twice yearly with 50% of the total amount paid with each instalment. Parental consent forms will be required for payments for Youth Councillors under 18 years.

Youth Councillors are required to adhere to Section 10.2 (Attendance) of the Youth Council Terms of Reference in order to receive an honorarium payment.

The Youth Council honorarium and the amount will be reviewed and determined by the Executive Management Team (City of Greater Bendigo senior management).

13. Confidentiality

During the course of their duties Youth Councillors will receive information they are required to treat as confidential. This may be information that is either commercially sensitive or is personal or private to a particular individual or organisation. Youth Councillors must not breach confidentiality when communicating with the media or members of the public.

14. Conflict of Interest

The Local Government Act identifies direct and indirect conflicts of interest which require disclosure as they arise.

If a Youth Councillor has a particular bias or interest in an issue or discussion, or believe others might perceive that they do, there may be a conflict of interest. If this occurs, the Youth Councillor must alert the Youth Mayor at the beginning of the meeting when requested.

A Conflict of Interest register will be kept by Youth Council Support Staff.

15. Resolution of Grievances

In the event that a conflict occurs between Youth Council members, the Youth Mayor/Deputy Mayor(s) and Youth Council will work with Engaged Communities staff to resolve it. If a Youth Councillor has a grievance or concern, it should be raised according to the following:

- + If the grievance is about a fellow Youth Council member, the issue should be raised with the Youth Mayor; or
- + If the grievance is about the Youth Mayor, the issue should be raised with Engaged Communities staff; or
- + If the grievance is about an Engaged Communities Staff member, the issue should be raised with the Youth Mayor and the Engaged Communities Coordinator; or
- + If the grievance is about an Engaged Communities Staff member and/or Coordinator, the issue should be raised with the Youth Mayor and the Manager Community Partnerships; or
- + If the grievance is about a member of staff from another department of the City, the issue should be raised with the Youth Mayor and the Director of Healthy Communities and Environments.

All conflicts will be addressed and resolved in accordance with the City's code of conduct and volunteer policies.

16. Communication

16.1. Media and Social Media

All communications with the media will be conducted under the guidance of and with the support of Engaged Communities Staff and the Communications Unit at the City.

Media statements/releases on behalf of the City of Greater Bendigo Youth Council will be issued by the Youth Mayor or Engaged Communities staff through the Communications Unit.

Youth Councillors directly approached by media outlets will, in the first instance, redirect enquiries to the Communications Unit and/or Engaged Communities staff. Youth Councillors are to seek authorisation before making media statements. This will be done in consultation with the Communications Unit and Engaged Communities staff.

The Youth Mayor is responsible for policy statements about the strategic direction of the Youth Council. The Youth Mayor can delegate their authority to other Youth Councillors under certain circumstances, for example where:

- + The Youth Mayor is unable to respond and/or attend to a request or represent Youth Council;
- + A Youth Councillor has a specific ongoing interest and/or role in an issue;
- + The topic/area of concern aligns with the Youth Councillor's working group;
- + A Youth Councillor has specific knowledge or expertise in the matter; or

- + A Youth Councillor leads a specific Committee e.g. Victorian Youth Week Planning Committee.

16.2. Guidelines for Personal Views

In the interest of free speech, Youth Councillors must feel free to make personal comments on matters important to them, without undermining the Youth Council. When expressing their views:

- + Youth Councillors will make it clear to the media that they are not representing Youth Council;
- + Youth Councillors will not distribute media releases, unless approved as a Youth Council media release;
- + Social media profiles that identify the account holder as being a Youth Councillor must display the following disclaimer: *Any views expressed here are my own and are not necessarily the views of Youth Council.*

The Youth Mayor must be given advance notice of any statements to be made to the media or media releases to be issued. In making media statements or issuing media releases:

- + Youth Councillors must not act to damage or impair the public image of or public confidence in the Youth Council; and
- + Youth Councillors will refrain from publicly criticising decisions made by the Youth Council and the City of Greater Bendigo Council.

17. Youth Councillor Support

The City of Greater Bendigo's Engaged Communities team will provide secretariat support to the Youth Council, assisting with the preparation and development of documents. Further to this, Engaged Communities staff will assist with policy research and development, event planning and other duties.

Transport assistance will be provided in the form of taxis (arranged and paid for by the City) to aid Youth Councillors travelling to and from meetings and official duties. Youth Councillors must provide at least two days of notice if they require a taxi. Youth Councillors can also claim reimbursement for parking costs incurred whilst undertaking their duties if they provide a receipt.

Any support required to enable full participation on the Youth Council will be provided by the City. This includes support for accessing information, e.g. minutes, agenda and documents in Easy English, large print, braille, interpreter and translation services, electronic and hard copy options.

The structure and processes of the meetings will be designed to ensure the voices of all Youth Councillors are heard. Youth Councillors will be provided with name badges, iPads and City of Greater Bendigo email address that are consistent with the City's policies.

18. Training

Youth Councillors will be provided opportunities to attend various training and professional development sessions throughout their term. This may include:

- + Training in meeting procedures;
- + Code of conduct;
- + Governance;
- + Public speaking;
- + Leadership; and
- + Any other training as required.

19. Induction

All Youth Councillors are required to attend an induction to the Youth Council and an induction to the City of Greater Bendigo. Youth Council Induction will include:

- + Roles and responsibilities of Youth Councillors;
- + Expectations of Youth Councillors;
- + Media training;
- + Information about Youth Council's role and processes;
- + Information about City of Greater Bendigo; and
- + Information about the role of local government.

Youth Councillors will also have their photo taken, both as a group and individually to be used in official City publications.

20. City of Greater Bendigo Council

City of Greater Bendigo Councillors will be invited to meet with the Youth Council at the beginning of each Youth Council term and invited to participate in the Youth Councillors' induction and orientation training sessions where appropriate.

The City of Greater Bendigo Mayor will be encouraged to provide specific mentoring for the Youth Mayor, and the Deputy Mayor for the Youth Council Deputy Mayors. Other City of Greater Bendigo Councillors will be encouraged to mentor Youth Councillors.

City of Greater Bendigo Councillors may be invited to or request to attend Youth Council Meetings, and/or as agreed to hold joint meetings with the Youth Council.

21. Review of the Youth Council Terms of Reference

The Youth Council Terms of Reference shall be reviewed and approved by Youth Council in February every year.

