

EARLY YEARS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Directorate	Community Services
Responsible Officer	Manager Family and Children's Services
Committee Group	Advisory
Approval Date:	25 June 2018
Review Date:	30 June 2021

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Early Years Advisory Committee (EYAC) is to provide advice to Council on the implementation of the Key Life Stages Plan 2017-2021 and emerging issues affecting families and young children within the Knox municipality throughout the appointed term of the Committee.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Committee will be to:

1. Provide advice and recommendations to Council on the implementation of the Key Life Stages (early years) focus areas as incorporated in the Key Life Stages Plan 2017-2021.
2. The advice and recommendations in relation to this plan will include:
 - a. Agreed priorities; and
 - b. The ongoing outcomes and achievements of the Key Life Stages Plan (early years) focus areas.
 - c. Effective communication and consultation strategies to facilitate engagement with the community and other key stakeholders on the development and implementation of the Key Life Stages Plan (early years) focus areas.
3. Provide advice to Council on emerging issues affecting families and children and the related services within the Knox community;
4. Identify emerging key research, policy and legislative issues that might impact on the implementation of the Key Life Stages Plan 2017-2021.
5. Consider advice and information made available through other Council advisory and community consultation processes related to families and children and/or local early year's services.

Many of the eight Community and Council goals are life stage-related and have informed the implementation plan. In particular Goals 6 and 7 – ‘*We are happy, healthy and well*’ and ‘*We are inclusive, feel a sense of belonging and value our identity*’ – respectively, are particularly relevant to key life stages cohorts and have strongly influenced the Implementation Plan.

Advisory Committees when established under this policy will be aligned to one of the following groups:

- Life Stages Group
- Sustainable Development Group
- Inclusive, Active and Creative Community Groups
- Grants Evaluation Group

Whilst the individual committees will meet at the designated times within its terms of reference each ‘group’ will meet once annually, this will generally be between October to December each year. A designated Directorate will be responsible for coordinating group meetings. The purpose of these meetings will be to:

- Provide feedback to group on priorities for individual committees;
- Update group of progress of key issues; and
- Identify synergies between groups and links to progressing the Community and Council Plan.

In addition to group meetings, all committees will be provided with an opportunity to meet together annually. The ‘annual advisory committee’ sessions will generally be held between April or May each year and will be co-ordinated by the Governance team. The purpose of these meetings will be to:

- Report on progress by Council against Community and Council Plan;
- Provide overview of industry trends and Council priorities for the upcoming year;
- Consider synergies and opportunities for sharing information and collaboration; and
- Deliver training to support committees.

3. MEMBERSHIP, PERIOD OF MEMBERSHIP AND METHOD OF APPOINTMENT

The Early Years Advisory Committee shall comprise the following:

- Two (2) Councillors, appointed annually by Council.
- A maximum of six (6) community members representing diverse perspectives and experience.
- A maximum of four (4) industry members (including any relevant government/community agency representatives)

3.1 Selection and Recruitment of Community and Professional Industry Representative Members

The process to appoint community and professional members will involve a comprehensive campaign including an advertisement in local newspapers, advertisement on Council’s internet site and information distribution through local networks and other established committees. Applicants must complete an application via an expression of interest process.

Eligible community members may include individual residents and/or representatives of Knox focused organisations who have an interest in, and understanding of issues impacting families and children and are not directly employed by Knox City Council.

Eligible professional members would include people with specialist knowledge and experience of the early years' service system, other levels of government and professional practice and/or research, who can represent a Knox focused organisation who have an interest in, and understand the issues impacting families and children and who are not directly employed by Knox City Council.

The approach and method for appointing representatives will include the following:

- Community and professional/ industry members will be selected by a panel comprising a Councillor and 2 Council Officers from the relevant service unit;
- The method of appointment will be via an expression of interest process;
- Members will be appointed for a two year term;
- All members will be eligible to re-apply for appointment, however continuous membership for longer than four years will not be considered;
- Council will be responsible for appointing all Councillor, community and professional/industry representative members; and
- Casual vacancies which occur due to community members being unable to complete the full term of their appointments may be filled by co-opting suitable candidates from a previous selection process for the remainder of the previous incumbents' terms. The selection panel will make a recommendation to the CEO, who will have the authority to appoint the recommended candidate to the committee for the remainder of the previous incumbent's term.

Professional/industry representatives unable to attend a committee meeting are able to nominate a proxy or alternate member from the organisation they represent. Any proxy attendance should be notified to Council's nominated officer at least 24 hours prior to the meeting. It is expected the appointed professional/ industry representative will provide an appropriate briefing of the committee purpose and objectives and relevant meeting notes to enable active participation and contribution of the proxy representation to the meeting.

The committee may invite observers to meetings from time to time. This is at the discretion of the committee.

Guests may also be invited to attend and participate at meetings, this would generally be for a specific purpose and/or specified period of time. This is at the discretion of the committee.

Commitment from Members

- To provide consistent representation.
 - To attend meetings as required.
 - To carry out specified tasks as designated.
-

3.2 Councillors

Council will appoint Councillor representation annually.

Unless otherwise appointed to the committee by Council, the Mayor is, by virtue of the Office, an ex officio member of the Committee. It is important that whilst the Mayor may not chair these meetings, appropriate recognition should be given to the presence of the Mayor if in attendance.

The role of Councillors is to participate in the meetings, listen to community and stakeholder views and keep the Council informed, through reports on committees by Councillors at Council meetings, on issues of community interest being considered at meetings.

3.3 Council Officers

Council officers will be nominated to support the committee by the CEO as required to provide advice and administrative support to the committee.

4. DELEGATED AUTHORITY AND DECISION MAKING

The committee acts in an advisory capacity only and has no delegated authority to make decisions on behalf of Council.

5. MEETING PROCEDURES

The Early Years Advisory Committee will meet on a bi-monthly basis and an annual schedule of meetings will be agreed upon at the first meeting of the committee in each year. The committee will also participate in the 6 monthly Group Meetings and the annual advisory committee forum.

The committee is not required to give public notice of its meetings and its meetings are not open to the public. At the commencement of each financial year the committee will develop a work plan for the upcoming year. This will generally be aligned with the Community and Council Plan. The committee may also highlight any emerging issues which will also be documented. For efficiency purposes the business of the committee throughout the ensuing year should align with the work plan and list of emerging issues.

Meetings will follow standard meeting procedure protocols, which are in summary:

- Commence on time and conclude by the stated completion time;
- Be scheduled and confirmed in advance with all relevant papers distributed (as appropriate) to each member;
- Encourage fair and reasonable discussion, participation and respect for each other's views;
- Focus on the relevant issues at hand; and
- Provide advice to Council as far as possible on a consensus basis.

6. CHAIR

The position of Chairperson shall be held by a Councillor and shall be reviewed annually immediately following Councillor appointments to committees. The position of Chairperson is to be agreed upon between Councillors. When this cannot be achieved, the Mayor of the day shall determine the Chair.

If the Chairperson is not present at a meeting, any other Councillor who has been appointed to the Committee shall be appointed Chairperson. In the absence of any other Councillor representative/s, a staff member appointed by the relevant Director may Chair the meeting.

7. AGENDAS AND MEETING NOTES

Agendas and meeting notes must be prepared for each meeting.

The Agenda must be provided to members of the committee not less than 4 days before the time fixed for the holding of the meeting.

The Chairperson must arrange for meeting notes of each meeting of the committee to be kept.

The meeting notes of a Council Committee must:

- (a) contain details of the proceedings and recommendations made;
- (b) be clearly expressed;
- (c) be self-explanatory; and
- (d) incorporate relevant reports or a summary of the relevant reports considered by the Committee.

Draft meeting notes must be:

- (a) submitted to the Committee Chairperson for confirmation within 7 days of the meeting;
- (b) distributed to all Committee Members following confirmation from the Chairperson and within 14 days of the meeting; and
- (c) submitted to the next meeting of the Committee for information.

Agendas and notes from meetings are not required to be made available to the public.

8. VOTING

As this is an advisory committee, voting on issues is not required. Any recommendations will generally be developed through consensus. Where a matter cannot be agreed the differing opinions should be clearly expressed in the notes of the meeting.

9. CONFLICT AND INTEREST PROVISIONS

In performing the role of the Early Years Advisory Committee member, a person must:

- Act with integrity;
 - Impartially exercise his or her responsibilities in the interests of the local community;
 - Not improperly seek to confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person;
 - Treat all persons with respect and have due regard to the opinions, beliefs, rights and responsibilities of other persons;
 - Commit to regular attendance at meetings; and
-

- Not make improper use of information acquired because of their position or release information that the member knows, or should reasonably know, is confidential information.

Meetings of the Advisory Committee may potentially form an Assembly of Councillors. Councillors and officers are required to comply with the conflict of interest provisions as set down in the Act.

Where a meeting is identified as an Assembly of Councillors, staff must follow the designated procedure.

Where a community member has a conflict of interest or perceived conflict of interest in relation to a matter before the committee, the community member must disclose the matter to the group before the matter is considered or discussed. Disclosure must include the nature of the interest and be recorded in the meeting notes. It will be at the discretion of the Chairperson if the community member remains or leaves the room whilst the matter is discussed, and this must also be recorded in the notes of the meeting.

All members of the Early Years Advisory Committee shall participate in training on the Conduct and Interest provisions which will be run a minimum of annually by the Governance team.

10. REPORTING

The Committee will prepare a formal report on an annual basis in line with their stated objectives. The report must be adopted by the committee and should directly reflect the objectives and the performance measures of the committee as set out in the Terms of Reference. Once adopted by the committee the report will be presented to Council.

11. ADMINISTRATION SUPPORT

Administration support will be provided by the Community Services Directorate.

12. CONTACT WITH THE MEDIA

Contact with the Media by Advisory Committee members will be conducted in accordance with the Councillor and Staff Media Policies. Community members should defer any media enquiries to the Chairperson in the first instance and should take care not to respond as a representative of the Committee.

13. REVIEW DATE

The Early Years Advisory Committee will sunset after 3 years. If the committee continues to have a relevant function, a report must be presented to Council prior to this date that includes a review of the committee's Terms of Reference and seeking endorsement from Council to continue act in an advisory capacity.

14. MEAL

The provision of refreshments during the course of a committee meeting will be provided in accordance with the Meals and Beverages for Council Committees Policy.
