

City of Whittlesea Community Priorities Focus Group- Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

The purpose of the Focus Groups is to provide valuable insights to help shape key documents that will guide Council's activities over the next 5-10 years. Your valuable insights will inform the Budget 2025-26, Community Plan 2026-30, Asset Plan 2026-36, Financial Plan 2026-36, Road Management Plan 2026-30 and Revenue and Rating Plan 2026-30. key activities over the next 5-10 years.

2. Participation

Participation in the Community Priorities Focus Group will be capped at 25 people and participants will be chosen to reflect the diversity of the City of Whittlesea community. This diversity will include ages, genders, abilities, cultural backgrounds, suburbs and household structures.

To be eligible to be a participant of the Community Priorities Focus Group you will need to:

- Be a resident of the City of Whittlesea
- Be willing and able to attend all three focus group sessions
- Be willing and able to complete any pre-session reading, assistance can be organised for those requiring it
- Declare membership of any special interest group, community groups, networks such as sporting clubs, craft and hobby groups, seniors' groups, schools etc.
- Not be a current staff member, contractor or Councillor of Whittlesea Council.

If a participant believes that they may have a financial interest in any of the projects discussed during the focus groups, they must discuss that interest with the facilitator. Should the facilitator decide that the financial interest gives rise to a conflict, the participant will not be permitted to contribute to discussions regarding that project.

3. Role of the Community Priorities Focus Group

The 2025 Community Priorities Focus Group will help us shape key documents that will guide Council's activities over the next 5-10 years. Your valuable insights will inform the Budget 2025-26, Community Plan 2026-30, Asset Plan 2026-36, Financial Plan 2026-36, Road Management Plan 2026-30 and Revenue and Rating Plan 2026-30.

We will capture valuable insights from our Focus Group participants to help us identify, assess, and prioritise community interests. This approach will enable us to achieve balanced outcomes that are informed by the community's perspectives.

4. Code of Conduct

All participants are expected to abide by the City of Whittlesea Code of Conduct and:

- Operate with integrity, objectivity, accountability, honesty and openness
- Participate and provide feedback that is in the best interest of the City of Whittlesea as a whole
- Declare any potential conflict of interest (including financial) to the facilitator if it arises during the focus group sessions
- Dedicate appropriate time and effort to the focus groups – approximately 9-12 hours in total over the project period
- Prepare for focus groups by completing pre-reading and actively participate in all three focus group sessions
- Maintain effective and respectful relationships with other participants and facilitators.

5. Focus group sessions

Focus Group participants will be required to undertake pre-reading and attend one of three in-person focus groups and will receive a participatory gift voucher for their time. We will be holding several identical sessions across the municipality. The session dates and times will be advised as soon as confirmed.

Agenda and session pre-reading

The agenda and any pre-reading will be provided to Focus Group members one week in advance of the session. A summary of what we heard will be provided to participants following the focus group session.

Participatory Gift

Focus Group participants will be required to complete all pre-reading and attend the in-person focus group session and will receive a participatory gift voucher for their time.

6. Requirements of participants

Confidentiality

Focus Group participants are expected to maintain confidentiality and refrain from publicly sharing any information related to the focus group materials.

Public Statements

Focus Group participants are not authorised to issue public statements on behalf of Council.

Rescinding members

The City of Whittlesea retains the right to revoke the inclusion in the focus group of any individual who violates the Terms of Reference or Code of Conduct. This includes if you are elected as a Councilor for the City of Whittlesea.