Community Priorities Focus Group
Engagement Summary
February 2025

Introduction

The City of Whittlesea is currently developing the 2025-26 Budget, Council (Community) Plan 2025-29, Financial Plan 2026-35, Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan and the Disability Action Plan.

To involve the community in shaping these key plans, focus groups were established to provide opportunity for valuable insights to be shared that will help identify, assess, and prioritise community interests. This approach will enable us to achieve balanced outcomes that are informed by the community's perspectives.

The focus groups followed two phases of community consultation in which we heard from 1,060 people who identified what matters most to them across the municipality. The information shared through these phases informed content presented to focus group participants.

How we engaged you

For this third phase of consultation, Council held three identical community focus groups held in different locations across the municipality reducing travel for participants and enabling a place-based lens to the feedback captured.

Recruitment for the focus groups took place via an Expression of Interest (EOI)
from 5 August 2024 to 13 January 2025 with recruitment placed on hold during the official caretaker period between 17 September and 26 October 2024. The opportunity was promoted via various channels including the *Engage Whittlesea* platform, Councils social media channels (LinkedIn and Facebook), electronic direct mail to registered multicultural, senior and sports clubs and in newsletters distributed by local area networks and the Hume Whittlesea local learning and employment network.

The project page on the *Engage Whittlesea* platform featured general information about the focus groups including the purpose of the consultation as well as a project timeline. Focus Group Terms of Reference (Appendix 1) were developed and published on the project Engage page along with the digital EOI form.

Three focus groups were held during February, as below:

- Whittlesea Community Activity Centre, Tuesday 11 February, 6-9pm
- Civic Centre, South Morang, Saturday 15 February, 9am – 12pm
- Lalor Library, Thursday 20 February, 6-9pm.

Confirmed participants were sent a pre-reading information pack that was anticipated to take 30 minutes to complete.

Format of the focus groups
Each focus group ran for three hours and included two small group activities. The first activity centred on development of the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan and the Disability Action Plan and saw table groups generate ideas for three key questions with participants asked to place dots on the ideas generated by others that they supported.

The questions posed for deliberation were:

- What would help you be socially active and connected with your community?
- What are the most effective ways we can improve mental wellbeing for individuals in your community?
- How can we prevent homelessness in your community?

The second activity looked at various Council service areas and participants explored which were their particular focus for increased Council priority and investment. The group also weighed up the cost of delivering services and an understanding that all could not increase and remain within the budget amount.

These service areas were:

- Ageing well
- Children and family
- Resource recovery and waste management
- Community strengthening
- Biodiversity, land management, sustainable planning and design

- Animal management
- Public health and safety
- Youth services
- Creative communities
- Local business.
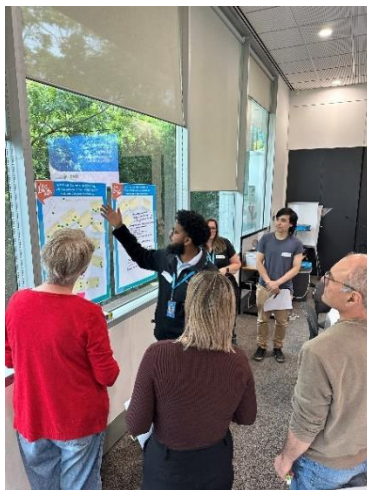
Above: Exploring Council service areas

Above: Deliberating priorities

Participation

A total of 46 community members participated in the three focus groups. The session with the highest number of participants was South Morang with 19 participants, followed Lalor with 15 participants and lastly Whittlesea with 12 community members participating.

While there was a mix of ages and demographics, the following were some key statistics.

24% of participants were living with or caring for a person with a disability

56% Female, 44% Male

While there was a diverse age range, the main age groups represented were 36-45 years (35%) and 46-55 years (26%)

41% of participants spoke a language other than English at home.

30% of participants described their household structure as a couple with children

4% identified as members of the LGBTQIA+ community and 41% did not answer.

Participants lived in 14 suburbs across the municipality

What we heard

Participants attended the workshops and deliberated with other community members and project staff, they gained a better understanding of the service categories level expectations and challenges faced. Participants told us that they would like to see an increased focus on local business, youth services, public health and safety, waste management and ageing well.

Participants, working in small groups generated 192 ideas in response to the three questions related to health and wellbeing priorities. These ideas predominantly centred around education and awareness campaigns, social connection initiatives, housing options, addressing financial barriers, safety in the community and specific research.

At the completion of the focus groups participants commented that the workshop was well structured with clear directions and appreciated the opportunity for discussion. Council staff were seen as friendly and welcoming with majority of participants feeling included and displaying respectful behaviour. The facilitator and project staff were clear and concise with directions, they were helpful and understanding when assisting and participants felt valued and listened to.

- 93% gained much more/ little more informed about health and wellbeing priorities
- 93% felt much more/ little more informed about the challenges faced when developing a Community Plan and a Financial Plan
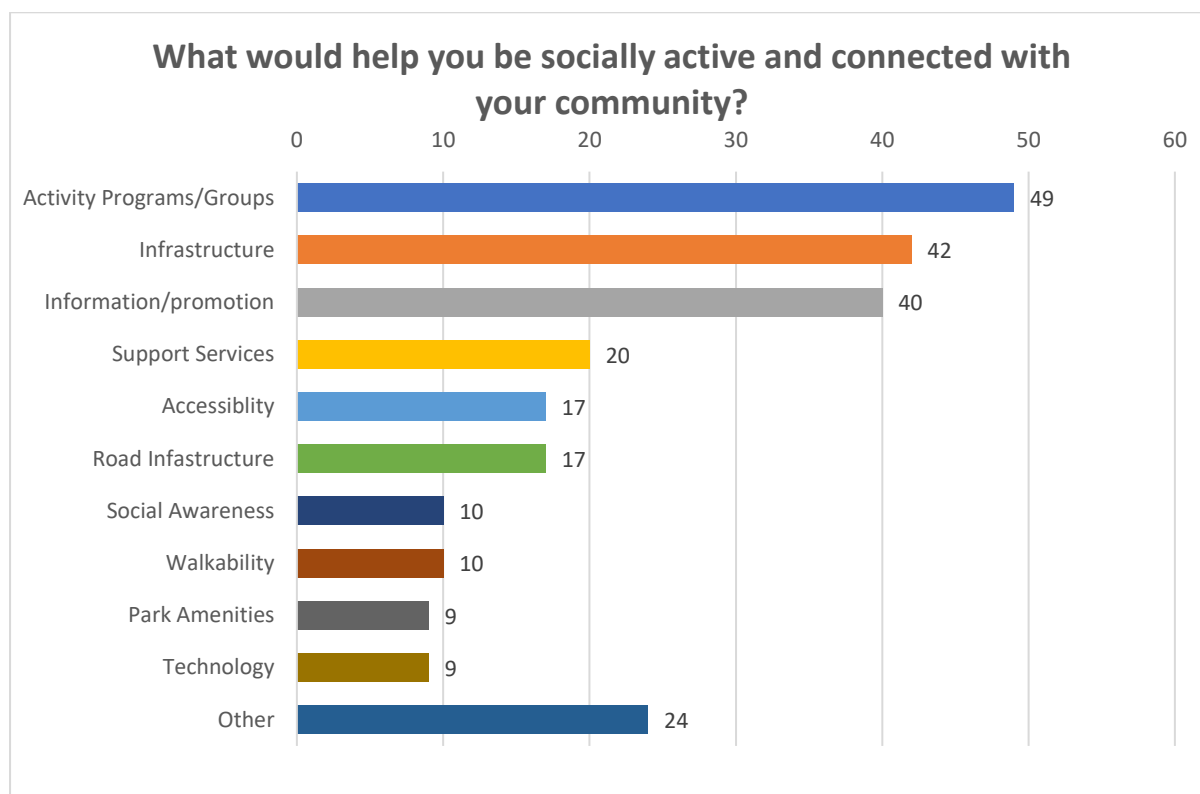- 96% will definitely/highly likely to participate in future focus groups.

At the workshop

The first activity focused on health and wellbeing priorities, with three questions posed to participants. Each table group spent 10 minutes deliberating each question in a world café style activity. Each rotation invited participants to use a sticky dot to show support of comments already captured and/or to add new comments. Below are the ideas generated by participants for each of the questions. All ideas captured can be seen in appendix 3.

What would help you be socially active and connected with your community?
A total of 73 ideas were captured across the three focus group.

We have themed the ideas below in order of the most popular based on number of similar ideas and level of support as shown.

What would help you be socially active and connected with your community?

Theme	Value
Activity Programs/Groups	49
Infrastructure	42
Information/promotion	40
Support Services	20
Accessiblity	17
Road Infastructure	17
Social Awareness	10
Walkability	10
Park Amenities	9
Technology	9
Other	24

Other themes included community volunteers (6), green spaces (6), markets and events (4), financial barriers (3), safety (3), neighbourhood connection (1), employment opportunities (1).

The most suggested/supported theme was activity programs/group with a total of 14 ideas suggested with 35 people in support of these ideas.

- *Create simple activities/groups such as board games, social meet ups and low socialisation activities*
- *Connection for youth – larger variety of activities offered at an array of times*
- *Group activities such as hiking and walking groups.*

There were 12 ideas captured that related to infrastructure with 30 people in support of these ideas.

- *More flexibility - spaces and places for culturally sensitive activities*
- *Community market stalls need to be more accessible as well as parking*
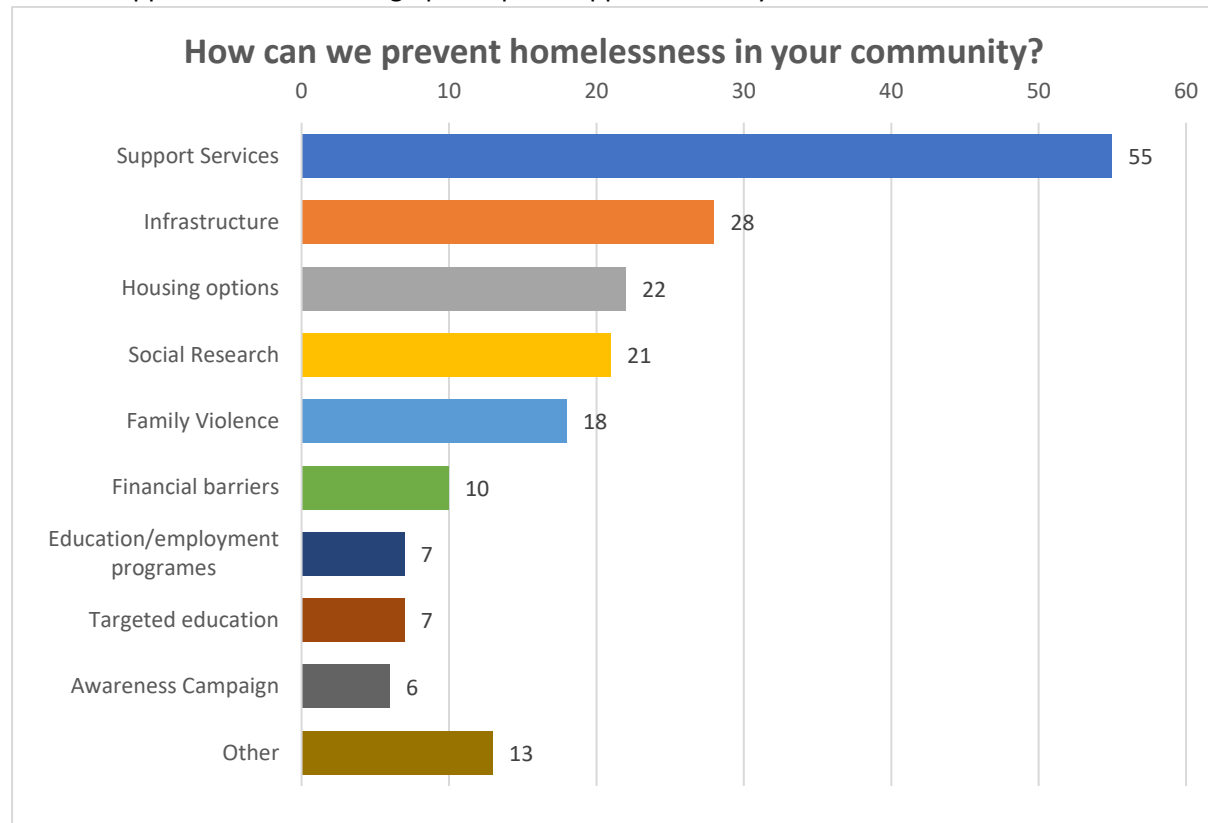- *Utilising existing spaces.*

Participants suggested 14 Ideas related to information/promotion of available health and wellbeing services with 28 people in support.

- *Let community know what's available for them to access*
- *Promotion of activities i.e.: at local shopping centres*
- *Create a community calendar with all events*
- *More communication boards in central spaces.*

How can we prevent homelessness in your community?

A total of 66 recommendations were captured across the three focus groups.

We have themed the ideas below in order of the most popular based on number of similar ideas and level of support as shown through participant support via sticky dots.

How can we prevent homelessness in your community?

Theme	Value
Support Services	55
Infrastructure	28
Housing options	22
Social Research	21
Family Violence	18
Financial barriers	10
Education/employment programes	7
Targeted education	7
Awareness Campaign	6
Other	13

Other themes included child safety (5), elder abuse (2), empower community (2), planning (2), advocacy (1), police involvement (1).

Support services was the most suggested/supported themed idea with 17 ideas suggested and 38 in support.

- *Mental health supports*
- *Increase in support programs available in language that address the factors of homelessness*
- *Increase knowledge of where support can be accessed i.e.: food banks and soup kitchens.*

There were 13 ideas captured relating to infrastructure and 15 in support.

- *Increase the use of temporary building as housing options i.e.: heritage buildings*
- *Need an emergency bed access point and crisis accommodation in City of Whittlesea*
- *Portable dwellings at the back of properties.*

Participants suggested seven ideas related to housing options with 15 in support.

- *Better consideration surrounding rooming house regulations and more programs to ensure rooming houses are at standards and more affordable. If rooming houses were at better standards, and less costly, it could prevent a lot more homelessness in the community.*
- *More support for multi-generational housing.*

What are the most effective ways we can improve mental wellbeing for individuals in your community?
A total of 51 recommendations were captured across the three focus groups.

We have themed the ideas below in order of the most popular based on number of similar ideas and level of support as shown through participant support via sticky dots.
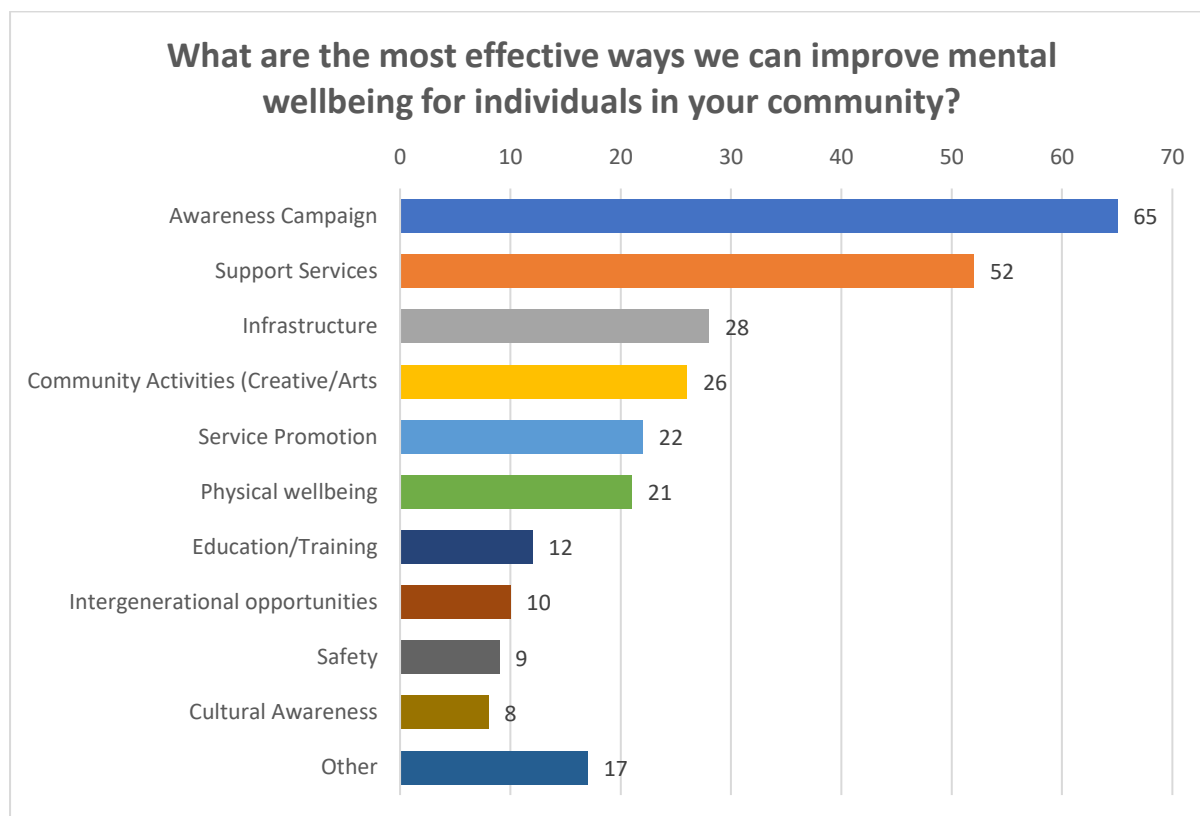
Other themes include support – school focused (5), youth services (5), translated (3), social connection (2), seniors' social connection (1) and social research (1).

The most suggested/supported theme for improving mental wellbeing was creating awareness campaigns. The total level of support was 65 which included ideas generated and support for ideas. Some ideas were similar in nature and were combined.

- *Fight stigma - encourage talking about mental health to normalise it and know you're not alone*
- *Creating awareness -*

- *Promote inclusion*
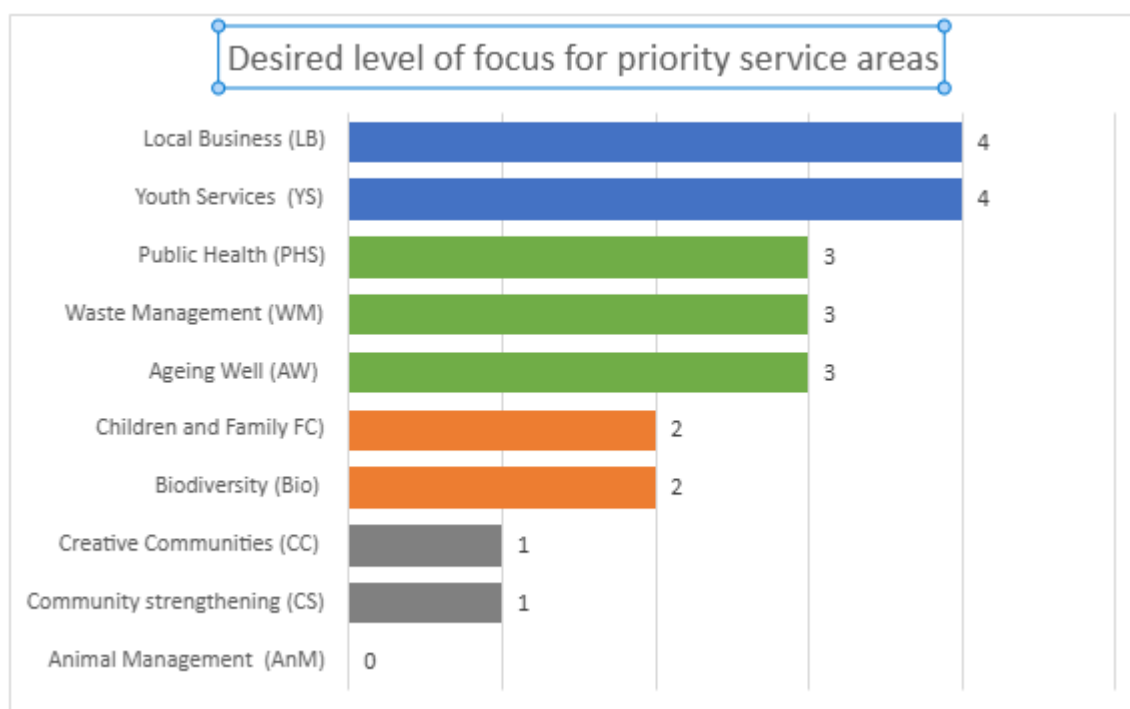- *Information about prevention/ lifestyle choices.*

There were 11 ideas captured related to support services and 41 in support.

- *Intentional programs that meet the needs of a variety of cultures*
- *More awareness/prevention about community programs*
- *Help with access to services to give more confidence accessing them (not just transport)*
- *More frequent walking groups, new resident packs tailored to each area*
- *Respite for carers and parents.*

Activity 2 – Levels of service

The second activity focused on the ten service areas the community told us mattered most to them through the first two phases of consultation. Each table was presented with ten coloured balls that were each labelled with a different service area. Each table group spent 30 minutes deliberating and placing their balls into one of three tubs to indicate the level of focus they thought Council should have on each area. Not surprisingly, participants wanted to see more of a focus on many of the service areas, with all nine groups coming in over budget when the value of each ball was revealed. The second part of the activity required groups to deliberate to trade off the level of focus of each service area to balance the financial impact of the budget, revealing the service areas they saw as highest priority.

Overall, the group emphasised local business, youth services, public health, waste management, ageing well, children and families and biodiversity as their key priority areas.

Desired level of focus for priority service areas

Service Area	Value
Local Business (LB)	4
Youth Services (YS)	4
Public Health (PHS)	3
Waste Management (WM)	3
Ageing Well (AW)	3
Children and Family FC)	2
Biodiversity (Bio)	2
Creative Communities (CC)	1
Community strengthening (CS)	1
Animal Management (AnM)	0

Next steps

Feedback captured through the focus groups is being collated and will help to inform the development of several draft documents. These include the:

- The proposed 2025-26 Budget which will be available for further comment in April 2025
- The proposed Financial Plan 2026-35 which will be available for further comment in April 2025
- The draft Community Plan 2025- 29 that will feature the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan and the Disability Action Plan, which will be available for further comment in June/ July 2025

Council delivers over 140 services and feedback captured can help shape these services. Some suggestions may be outside the remit of Council but will use the ideas in our advocacy efforts or to support other authorities to deliver their services.

Thank you again to everyone who participated in the community engagement by sharing comments, feedback and participating in activities and focus groups. The community will be updated on further developments via the Community Priorities | Engage City of Whittlesea project page. We encourage you to register and follow the page to be kept updated on the project.

City of Whittlesea Community Priorities Focus Group- Terms of Reference

1.   Purpose

The purpose of the Focus to provide valuable insights to help inform the 2025-26 Budget and other key documents that will guide Council's essential 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 inform the 2025-26 Budget and other key documents that will guide Council's essential activities over the next 5-10 years.

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 but will be held between within the first two weeks of February 2025.

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 Councillor for the City of Whittlesea.

Appendix 2 – Workshop resources

Activity 1 – health and wellbeing information for questions posed

Health and Wellbeing Priority Descriptors
Activity 1

What do you need to be socially active and connected with your community?

Social interaction and the opportunity to participate in community life is known to support good health and wellbeing. It creates a sense of belonging and connectedness and strengthens life satisfaction.[1] Nearly two-thirds of Australians with disability face barriers to social participation, including lack of access, cost and discrimination.[2] They are twice as likely to report experiencing social isolation and loneliness as people without a disability. [3] While many City of Whittlesea residents report staying regularly connected with friends and family outside of their household, (Community Insights Survey 2023) members of the Whittlesea Disability Network have consistently identified the need for more support with social connection and participation as a priority concern (WDN community meeting feedback 2023 – 2024)

[1] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare: Social determinants of health
[2] Australian Bureau of Statistics Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers 2022 - People with Disability Australia
[3] People with disability in Australia, Social inclusion and community support - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

What are the most effective ways to improve mental wellbeing for individuals in your community?

Good mental health is central to maintaining quality of life. It strengthens our capacity to enjoy meaningful relationships, pursue satisfying work and make crucial life decisions.[4] Approximately one in five Australians experience a mental illness each year,[5] with young people – particularly females aged 16 – 24 years—Aboriginal People and members of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, known to be at increased risk.[6] In 2020, nearly one in three (30.6%) of adults in the City of Whittlesea were experiencing high or very high levels of psychological distress (Victorian Population Health Survey)

[4] World Health Organisation: Mental health
[5] Australian Institute of Health & Wellfare Prevalence and impact of mental illness

How can homelessness be prevented in your community?

Secure and appropriate housing is crucial to health and wellbeing. It reduces risks to our physical and mental health, including depression and anxiety, substance abuse and violence.[7] Across Australia, homelessness is on the rise in all its forms—people sleeping rough in public places and cars, living in crisis accommodation, rooming houses and over-crowded dwellings and couch surfing. Since 2006, the rate of homelessness in the CoW has increased by 150% (ABS, Census, 2021)

[7] Homelessness and homelessness services - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Activity 2 – service category descriptions

City of Whittlesea Key Service Categories
Activity 2

Ageing well (AW)

We support older residents to age well by providing services, programs and activities such as delivered meals, domestic assistance, personal care, seniors' clubs support, positive ageing programs and social connection. We help older residents to access user-directed aged care services and facilitate partnerships for services and infrastructure

Youth (YS)

Our Youth Services provide a range of programs, activities and events for young people aged 10-25 years and their families. Council also facilitates networks and advocates for inclusive social and physical infrastructure that support all young people, and work closely with a range of external organisations.

Family and Children (FC)

We aim to improve health, social and educational outcomes for children and families within the City of Whittlesea. We provide high quality, evidence-based services, programs and activities to strengthen family wellbeing, capacity and connection. Key services include maternal and child health and early years management and support.

Public health and safety (PHS)

We protect and enhance community health, safety and wellbeing by:
• educating the community about their responsibilities to contribute to public health and safety
• enforcing state and local laws
• delivering immunisation programs
• working with emergency service agencies to plan and respond to emergencies
• deliver evidence-based projects and programs to address major health and wellbeing issues faced by the community

Animal management (An M)

We ensure people, and their pets can live together harmoniously and safely in our community. We reunite lost pets with their owners, facilitate pet adoptions, operate the wat djerring Animal Facility, investigate animal incidents and complaints, establish and monitor measures put in place to mitigate the risks posed by dangerous and restricted breed dogs, attend to wandering livestock, and audit animal-related businesses to ensure welfare standards are upheld. We keep a register of cats and dogs that live in the City of Whittlesea and promote responsible pet ownership through a series of communication campaigns and events each year.

Community strengthening (CS)

We build inclusive, empowered and connected communities through the planning and delivery of evidence-based place-based programs and services in partnership with relevant stakeholders.

Creative communities (CC)

Through arts and culture, we bring people together and provide great experiences, regardless of background, income, age or ability Our strategic approach:
• enables a creative sector that is vibrant and viable
• delivers events that showcase and celebrate our strengths and cultural diversity
• preserves and promotes our history, our living traditions and the co-creation of cultures
• ensures that Aboriginal, historic cultural and natural heritage places, assets and features are retained, conserved and integrated into the urban design and neighbourhood character of our municipality

Waste management (WM)

We provide sustainable solutions for the collection, disposal and recovery of waste materials generated within the community and through our own operations. We develop strategic policy, education programs and operational maintenance activities to avoid, minimise and recover waste and keep our city clean, healthy and safe. We undertake compliance and enforcement for illegal waste dumping in our municipality. We support and empower the community transition to a circular economy.

Local business support (LB)

We support our businesses by guiding and making it easy for them to engage with Council, promoting funding and employment opportunities, facilitating networking with complementary businesses, promoting business initiatives to increase customer base, coordinating special rate schemes, supporting trader associations, and case managing issues and planning applications.

Biodiversity, land management, sustainable planning and design (Bio)

Through our role as a statutory authority, we play a crucial role in delivering an environmentally sustainable city. We facilitate sustainable land management and biodiversity conservation on public and private land across urban and rural areas. We educate and empower the community to undertake biodiversity conservation activities and sustainable land management.

Appendix 3 – Focus Group recommendations from Activity 1

What would help you be socially active and connected with your community?

WCAC (21 Recommendations)		
Dots	**Recommendation**	**Theme**
2	Using mobilised wheelchairs need more access	Accessibility
1	Accessibility for people with disabilities	Accessibility
4	Create simple activities/ groups such as board games, social meet ups and low socialisation activities	Activity Programs/Groups
3	Donnybrook feeling isolated want more support for advertising and accessibility for different groups - builds momentum - not enough activities geographically challenged	Activity Programs/Groups
5	Connection for Youth - activities more choices and flexibility, more different times to access	Activity Programs/Groups
1	Volunteer opportunities - more information to involve community	Community Volunteers
1	Let community know what's available for them to access	Information / Advertising
3	Advertise more	Information / Advertising
4	How to reach out with others in the community - carers or parents of children with disabilities are isolated and limited to connect with community limited disability focused events	Information / Advertising
3	APPs- have tools in these to provide information to community and connecting others	Information / Advertising
8	More flexibility - spaces and places for culturally sensitive	Infrastructure
3	outdoor areas are difficult to use- need shade	Infrastructure
3	Infrastructure of roads -lack of road safety - pedestrian crossings	Infrastructure
2	Community market stalls need to be more accessible as well as parking	Infrastructure
3	Access to parking places	Infrastructure
1	Build positive acceptance and awareness in the community	Social awareness
1	Interact with different places such as schools, scouts	Social awareness
2	Access to NDIS for social participation	Support Services
1	More support for those who want to exercise such as cycling	Support Services
1	Need more carers to be available	Support Services
10	More walkable places to attend	Walkability
Civic - Fountain View Room (23 recommendations)		
	Bus drivers now drive with a ramp and need more training	Accessibility
	Website is not disability friendly. Doesn't meet standards - look for USERWAYS	Accessibility
6	Accessible public transport and more options (no bus after 9pm)	Accessibility
5	Face to face education opportunities with group discussion with interpreters	Activity Programs/Groups

	More online groups versus too many online groups	Activity Programs/Groups
	More free activities in community, recreation and leisure	Activity Programs/Groups
	Leadership program for seniors and youth	Activity Programs/Groups
	Connecting more with neighbours and more support improving connections such as meet your neighbour and or street party activities	Community Connection
3	Not easy to volunteer	Community Volunteers
	More employment opportunities for PWD	Employment Opportunities
	Council to approach gymnasium to link activities for community with financial disadvantage	Financial barriers
1	Cost barriers for recreation and leisure attendance - create opportunity such as positive ageing activity	Financial barriers
3	Information to become active in the community	Information/Advertising
2	Information by Council to help integrate and provide information about activities	Information/Advertising
	All free gym activities equipment and their locations and how to access it	Information/Advertising
7	Lack of road safety: dedicated crossing at lake boulevard, DDA compliant for growth area and growing fear of violence	Road Infrastructure
8	Streetlights and lack of safety: bridge inn Rd, Findon Rd, South Morang and Donnybrook station pathway not accessible	Road Infrastructure
2	PWD feeing unsafe with increasing assaults community reluctant to support	Safety
5	Education around disability and awareness	Social Awareness
6	Lack of support system	Support Services
3	Establishing link to provide support	Support Services
4	Technology education with people with disabilities versus a void retention in technology	Technology
3	Technology for communications but none for socialising	Technology
Lalor Library (29 recommendations)		
2	More parking / accessible spaces will encourage people to use parks	Accessibility
2	More free spaces for community to access i.e., local parks	Activity Programs/Groups
2	More opportunities to connect - i.e., street meets (bring a dish, multicultural)	Activity Programs/Groups
1	Group activities such as hiking and walking groups	Activity Programs/Groups
1	Weekend activities fitness focused	Activity Programs/Groups
6	Cultural activities to increase social connection open to all	Activity Programs/Groups
3	Connect to walking groups	Activity Programs/Groups
3	More sports activities available for community to access - suburbs to compete against each other	Activity Programs/Groups
	Encourage connection in green spaces	Green Spaces
4	Plan for more green corridors	Green Spaces

	Better promotion of activities ie at local shopping centres	Information/promotion
5	Create a community calendar with all events	Information/promotion
1	create a central Facebook page of available activities	Information/promotion
	More communication boards in central spaces	Information/promotion
1	promotion of service and activities libraries offer	Information/promotion
	Visibility of PPTS/ promotion of events	Information/promotion
3	Promotion of community gardens policy	Information/promotion
	More participation and use of available facilities such as dog parks	Infrastructure
	More lighting (sustainable options)	Infrastructure
	More visibility of community centres	Infrastructure
7	More public toilets to use	Infrastructure
1	Utilising existing spaces	Infrastructure
2	More libraries in the northern half of the municipality	Infrastructure
1	Common public areas to be well maintained such as TRAC	Infrastructure
2	More community markets - i.e. crafts, utilising existing spaces	Markets, Events
	More free music events that are family friendly	Markets, Events
4	Water bubbler available at cycling/walking tracks	Park Amenities
3	Availability of bins in local parks to increase participation	Park Amenities
1	Social outreach opportunities	Support Services

What are the most effective ways we can improve mental wellbeing for individuals in your community?

WCAC (9 recommendations)		
Dots	**Recommendation**	
5	Celebrate diversity	Awareness Campaign
7	Fighting stigma - encourage talking about mental health, you're not alone, normalise mental health	Awareness Campaign
9	Creating awareness - through comms strategy and social media	Awareness Campaign
15	Promote inclusion (promotion and awareness were key words)	Awareness Campaign
9	Creating safe spaces - in person, online, sporting venues, youth programs, physical health venues/ hospitals, culturally safe spaces	Infrastructure
8	Physical wellbeing- how to incorporate physical health to improve mental health	Physical wellbeing
1	Supporting parents	Support - Schools
1	Early intervention - focus on youth and school programs	Support - Schools
1	More connection with community development officers	Support Services
5	Promote existing services	Support Services
Civic Centre – Fountain View Room (24 recommendations)		
2	Information about prevention/ lifestyle choices – alcohol policy	Awareness Campaign
2	Alcohol – awareness and addressing the issue	Awareness Campaign
	Gambling and addressing its harms via policies	Awareness Campaign
0	Social media literacy	Awareness Campaign

3	More understanding, less stigma about common mental health problems	Awareness Campaign
3	Mental health literacy	Awareness Campaign
5	Age-appropriate messaging to acknowledge the stressors	Awareness Campaign
0	More awareness about the use of vapes and its harms	Awareness Campaign
7	Music festival, painting and art competitions	Community Activities Creative/Arts
2	More culturally responsive mental health services – cultural awareness/cohort appropriate	Cultural Awareness
4	Encouraging multiculturalism within the mental health space	Cultural Awareness
1	Mental health aid courses	Education/Training
0	More use of open spaces	Infrastructure
0	Increase collaboration – young people and seniors	Intergenerational opportunities
1	Access to sport/active living opportunities	Physical wellbeing
1	More engagement for social connection and active living opportunities for seniors	Seniors - social connection
3	Mental health services need to connect in better to promote what is available	Service Promotion
0	Directory of social groups	Service Promotion
5	Dialogue what services are available – partnerships/ create services to promote social gatherings	Service Promotion
	More social interaction to avoid social isolation	Social Connection
1	Mental health research	Social Research
	School age session/mental health (partnerships)	Support - Schools
2	Intentional programs that meet the needs of a variety of cultures	Support Services
4	Getting people together who have similar situation the bond, help and support each other	Support Services
3	More information regarding dementia – how to slow it down, help for carers	Support Services
5	More awareness/prevention about community programs	Support Services
2	Information sessions to help navigate NDIS that is culturally appropriate	Support Services
2	Programs available in variety of languages	Translated material
1	Avenues for youth to express themselves	Youth services
2	Mental health expression opportunities for youth – festivals etc	Youth services
Lalor Library (18 recommendations)		
1	Lack of awareness to available information	Awareness Campaign
2	Regular community activities	Community Activities (Creative/Arts)
2	Multicultural activities to link community	Community Activities (Creative/Arts)
11	Activities that can break isolation such as garden clubs, craft clubs, coffee catch ups, music, home visits	Community Activities (Creative/Arts)
9	Mental health first aid training	Education/Training
15	More and better green space that encourage better access building confidence to get outside, user friendly with shaded spaces, more seating and more maintenance of spaces such as cleaning up of Darebin Creek	Infrastructure

1	More pedestrian areas	Infrastructure
8	Intergenerational links (youth - elders)	Intergenerational opportunities
9	Exercise - using open space, parks for free activities that are fun and connect youth	Physical wellbeing
8	Community safety - police patrol	Safety
1	Promotion of spaces, activities, neighbourhood houses and services	Service promotion
2	AOD resourcing with links to information	Service promotion
5	Promoting more hub facilities where you can find peer support, volunteer opportunity and capacity building	Service promotion
1	Link to community leaders	Social Connection
1	Help with access to services to give more confidence accessing them (not transport only)	Support Services
4	More and more frequent walking groups, new resident packs tailored to each area	Support services
8	Respite for carers and parents	Support Services
6	Help with shopping - social activities (elderly/lonely)	Support Services

How can we prevent homelessness in your community?

WCAC (18 recommendations)		
Dots	**Recommendation**	**Theme**
2	Better access to education to enable employability	education/employment programs
4	Sense of safety for children in homes	Child safety
4	Prevention of family violence is key to preventing homelessness	Family violence
6	Family violence is the cause and there is an element of cost living	Family violence
5	Cost of living since Covid is a cause. More regulation of rental spikes from landlords	Financial barriers
3	Fulltime employers not able to afford a home	Financial barriers
2	People living in caravans	Housing options
3	Council venues not being used should be repurposed for people experiencing homelessness	Infrastructure
2	Facility for homeless people in Whittlesea	Infrastructure
1	Police should move people on	Police involvement
5	Focus on prevention	Social Research
5	Council should know and inform community	Social Research
	Understanding causes - cultural lens	Social Research
4	More awareness around navigation of homelessness services	Support Services

5	Agency Directory: pre, during and post crisis	Support Services
1	Substance abuse	Support Services
5	Mental health supports	Support Services
	Family mediation support services	Support Services

Civic Centre – Fountain View Room (15 recommendations)

3	Increase education amongst community that homelessness is an issue	Awareness Campaign
	Increase in number of programs for all people to tackle unemployment	education/employment programmes
	Increase knowledge in budgeting and financial skills	education/employment programmes
1	Increase in number of programs for young people to help with employment pathways	education/employment programmes
1	Strengthen importance of family unit & empower community	Empower community
2	Educate and target men in existing spaces to help tackle family violence.	Family Violence
	Increase education to men and boys on family violence, particularly targeting schools.	Family Violence
2	Increase the use of temporary building as housing options i.e., heritage buildings	Infrastructure
	Increase in more social housing	Infrastructure
2	More affordable housing options	Infrastructure
1	Advocate to D.O.H for more social housing options	Infrastructure
2	Conduct research into the actual causes of homelessness (focus on data)	Social Research
1	Find out the true number of people living rough in City of Whittlesea	Social Research
3	Increase in support programs available in language that address the factors of homelessness	Support Services
3	Increase knowledge of where support can be accessed i.e. food banks and soup kitchens	Support Services

Lalor Library (33 recommendations)

1	More advocacy for emergency / crisis housing	Advocacy
1	More advertising for where/ when / how to get help- at phone boxes, council website, bus stops, pamphlets	Awareness Campaign
1	More protection for elderly - elder abuse	Elder abuse

1	Domestic violence is a major issue	Family Violence
1	Better consideration surrounding rooming house regulations and more programs to ensure rooming houses are at standards and more affordable. If rooming houses were at better standards, and less costly, it could prevent a lot more homelessness in the community.	Housing options
4	Affordable housing for everyone, students, new arrivals, people fleeing family violence, low-income earners	Housing options
	More support for multi-generational housing	Housing options
	Supported accommodation such as Queen St Lodge	Housing options
	Decrease in social housing, more co-operative housing (state/corp managed) will help those studying without any stress	Housing options
2	Diversity of housing - affordable and social	Housing options
5	Cap on Air B'n'B in Council areas as it reduces long term tenancy opportunities	Housing options
2	Are there enough emergency beds in the City of Whittlesea	Infrastructure
2	Transitional housing- people who have been released from prison or rehab	Infrastructure
3	Need an emergency bed access point in City of Whittlesea, crisis accommodation	Infrastructure
1	Portable dwellings at the back of properties	Infrastructure
	Providing land and services- Council to free up land for affordable housing	Infrastructure
2	Address unused dwellings	Infrastructure
	Council land should only be sold for social and affordable housing	Infrastructure
	Supply/demand	Planning
	Fast track planning on affordable/ social housing	Planning
1	Need to recognise the multi-faceted factors that lead to homelessness	Social Research
1	Orange van providing services	Support Services
3	Subsidising the orange van service	Support Services
4	Support for over 50's female/women who find themselves homeless, super, savings, financial literacy, budgeting, understanding basic financial implications	Support Services
	Substance abusers more support	Support Services
2	Access to financial advice, pro bono work	Support Services

	Donation drives in prominent areas	Support Services
1	Access to services, blankets, food banks, clothing	Support Services
1	Assertive outreach in Cow, rough sleepers targeted services to help with housing	Support Services
1	Wrap around services/ supports	Support Services
3	Recognising that some people living rough want to, but still need services to keep them safe, eat, shower, clothing, protection from rain- e.g., drop-in centres at unused shops	Support Services
3	Multicultural communities, some women are unaware of how to manage finances	Targeted education
2	Working with schools, young women financial literacy	Targeted education