

Draft Lease and Licensing Policy

Background

Councill endorsed a Draft Lease and Licensing Policy for community feedback at the Council Meeting on Tuesday June 18, 2024.

The Draft Lease and Licensing Policy (the **Policy**) will ensure that a consistent, equitable and transparent approach is taken to leasing and licensing of Council properties that provide community benefit and in a manner that complies with all legal requirements.

The scope of the policy is to support Council in its decision making in accordance with obligations under the Local Government Act 2020 and provides clarity on Council's approach to leasing and licencing to any party. The policy supports the sustainability of Council's properties through appropriate and equitable contribution towards maintenance and oversight of the facilities in line with each category of lease or licence and the associated agreement.

The Policy relates primarily to the following property types as follows (inter alia):

- Community Halls and infrastructure
- Buildings / sheds
- Land
- Kindergartens / early years services
- Property for commercial purposes

The Engagement Approach

Input to the Draft Lease and Licensing Policy opened for a 28-day exhibition period from June 19 to 5pm on July 17, 2024.

Submissions could be made online at www.share.strathbogie.vic.gov.au, by mail or via email.

Council officers also conducted drop-in sessions to meet with community groups / occupants by appointment in Euroa on July 3, and in Nagambie on July 10, 2024.

The community was informed through a range of channels to encourage key stakeholders, community groups and individuals to find out more and provide their feedback on the draft policy. Channels included email correspondence to directly affected stakeholders, drop-in sessions, telephone conversations, website content, social media posts, Council eNews, and information in our weekly newspaper advert explaining how the community could have its say. The local media also included articles on the draft policy.

Depth: Consult

Public participation goal: To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.

Promise to the public: We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.

Participation and reach

Calls	Emails	Drop-In Sessions	Drop-In Attendance	Submissions Received
54	102	20	30	20

- 21 submissions were received to the Draft Lease and Licensing Policy (1 was a duplicate)
- 255 views were recorded to the Lease and Licensing project page on Share Strathbogie
- 71 downloads of the Draft Lease and Licensing Policy were recorded

What our community told us

Financial Burden: Increased rental fees and levies may threaten the viability of community and volunteer groups, which rely on limited funding and volunteer efforts.

Insurance Requirements: High insurance demands, such as \$20 million public liability coverage, are seen as unaffordable for some small organizations. Doubts about the ability to continue operating if council support for insurance costs ceases.

Maintenance Responsibilities: Unclear roles and expectations for maintenance, with groups independently funding necessary improvements and dealing with ongoing issues without adequate council support.

Policy Clarity and Consultation: Lack of detailed communication and engagement with affected groups, with requests for clearer explanations of roles, responsibilities, and financial commitments.

Community Impact: Potential negative effects on local groups and services, risking closure of facilities and loss of community activities, which could drive residents to seek services outside the shire.

Equity and Fairness: Concerns about the policy's alignment with principles of fairness, questioning whether charging rent to volunteer groups is equitable given their essential community services.

What the Community Told us?

What the community told us
Great concern for any future financial burden because of the introduction of this Policy and the rental classification matrix
Concern regarding the introduction of a condition around occupiers or users with a liquor license being required to provide 2% of gross sales for capital improvement to the building
Concern regarding any changes to insurance required because of the introduction of the Policy
Recognition of how important it was for Council to continue to provide financial assistance for the purchase of appropriate insurance.
Clarity regarding roles and responsibilities is much needed
Clarity regarding maintenance requirements and process
Concern and confusion regarding who is in what category and who the Policy applies to

Recommendations

Refer to the Council report in the August Ordinary Council Meeting for associated recommendations for changes to the draft policy or considerations for transitional measures.

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