



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Rating Policy Review Community Reference Group

Introduction

In 2016 Council resolved to review its rating system. Council engaged John Comrie, JAC Comrie Pty Ltd to undertake a review of its rating system. Before establishing his consulting firm, John headed the South Australian Government's Office of Local Government and prior to that the Local Government Association of SA and a large local government in metropolitan Adelaide. Over the last eight years John has produced several key publications which can be found at [John Comrie reports, Conference Papers and Presentations](#)

John's report was received by Council in May 2018. A copy of *Litchfield Council -Review of its Basis of Rating*, including recommendations, is available at [Council Meeting Agenda 16 May 2018](#) .

Council has now resolved to establish a Community Reference Group to advise Council on its Rating Policy.

The Community Reference Group will produce a report with advice regarding what changes Council should consider in developing its new rating policy. The report will be presented to Council.

Council will take into consideration the Community Reference Group report in its deliberations together with other information to develop a draft Discussion Paper for public consultation.

The community will have the opportunity to make submissions on Council's intended rating direction prior to Council adopting its new Rating Policy, which is expected to occur in December 2019.

1 Purpose

The objectives of the Rating Policy Review Community Reference Group are to act as an advisory Group to Council for the development of a new Rating Policy, and in particular to:

- 1.1 Identify and recommend principles for formulating a rating policy;
- 1.2 Advise on the residential rate and consideration of differential rates;
- 1.3 Advise on the equitable collection of rates; and
- 1.4 Produce a Report with recommendations for Council before public comment.

2 Membership

Membership will comprise:

- 2.1 an independent non-voting Chair with knowledge of local government rating;
- 2.2 up to five representatives of key groups of ratepayers with voting rights; and
- 2.3 up to six community members with voting rights.

3 Selection of Committee Members

- 3.1 Council will endorse the membership for the Rating Policy Review Community Reference Group.
- 3.2 A public Expression of Interest process will be undertaken to attract key group representatives and community member representatives of the Litchfield Municipality.
- 3.3 Council reserves the right to select Group Members based on demographics to ensure a diverse range of representation.

4 Term of Appointment

- 4.1 The Rating Policy Review Community Reference Group will be in place to advise Council from February until June 2019.
- 4.2 It is anticipated that during this period Group Members will be expected to attend approximately eight meetings.

5 Roles and Responsibilities of members

5.1 Group members have a responsibility to:

- attend meetings. If a Group Member fails to attend two consecutive meetings without a valid reason, the position is considered vacant.
- read agendas and reports; and
- contribute to the development of a Report with recommendations to Council.

6 Vacancies

6.1 A Group vacancy arises if a member resigns in writing or fails to follow the responsibilities outlined. If the term remaining is greater than three months Council will endorse a new committee member.

6.2 In the circumstances where a vacancy is required to be filled, Council will fill the vacancy from the original expression of interest process undertaken to establish the Group.

7 Other Meeting attendees

7.1 External consultant responsible for drafting the report with recommendations for Council in line with the groups' decisions.

7.2 External Experts may be invited to attend meetings, as appropriate.

7.3 Litchfield Council Chief Executive Officer, Director Community and Corporate Services, Community Engagement Advisor and Finance Manager or other staff, as appropriate.

8 Meeting Schedule

8.1 Meetings will be held in accordance with the Project Plan.

9 Quorum

9.1 A meeting quorum of at least seven members (excluding the Chair) is required.

10 Chairing of Meetings

10.1 All meetings will be chaired by the non-voting independent Chair.

11 Secretariat Support

11.1 The secretary for meetings will be the Litchfield Council Finance Manager.

12 Agenda Papers

12.1 Agenda and other documentation necessary for conducting a meeting will be made available to Committee members at least five days before each meeting.

12.2 Meeting Agenda Papers will be developed by Secretariat.

12.3 Calls for agenda items for the next meeting will be part of each meeting agenda.

13 Meeting Protocol

13.1 The Rating Policy Review Community Reference Group shall adhere to normal meeting protocols.

13.2 All Reference Group Members must act with courtesy towards each other, respect the confidentiality of information obtained, be prepared for meetings and give advice in the interest of the community.

14 Voting

14.1 The Rating Policy Review Community Reference Group will vote to make decisions.

15 Council's Responsibilities

15.1 Council will provide the Rating Policy Review Community Reference Group with the necessary expert advice to enable it to reach its recommendations. This may include:

- Council's current Rating Strategy;
- References to relevant parts of the NT Local Government Act;
- Ministerial guidelines and reports;
- Financial modelling generated by Council staff; and
- Rating model and information from other councils, as requested and if available.
- Information to assist the group to understand the principles of a Rating system and associated data relevant to the Litchfield community.
- Staff to participate, as requested to inform the meeting, support meeting processes and other meeting requirements.

15.2 Council will use information that has been obtained from the Group and the wider community as part of its decision-making process.

16 Conflict of Interest

16.1 Any committee members with a conflict of interest or perceived conflict of interest must declare the interest prior to discussion of the item. This will be a standing item on the agenda.

17 Items out of scope

17.1 The Rating Policy Review Community Reference Group will not be asked to consider:

- The amount of rate income collected by Council;
- Council's Fees and charges;
- Council's other policies and strategies, except to the extent they relate to rating policy;
- The cost effectiveness of providing Council services;
- The range of services and facilities provided by Council; or
- Council's capital works program.

18 Amendment

18.1 This Terms of Reference can only be amended, varied or modified in writing by Council.