



Minutes Banyule Multicultural Committee

25 August 2021

Present**Members**

Linda Liwewe, Louisa Ong, Susan Zhou, Baljit Singh, Ginger (Lan) Jiang, Mandira Panday, Ansum Sadik (Victoria Police), Suzanne Crenlin (Olympic Adult Education)

Councillors

Cr Fiona Mitsinikos (Chair) and Cr. Alida McKern

Support Staff

Kath Brackett, Theonie Tacticos, Lisa King

Guests

None

Apologies

Cr Mark Di Pasquale
Alaa Elzokm

I. Welcome and Introductions

Cr Mitsinikos opened the meeting at 6.05pm. The acknowledgement of the traditional custodians of the land, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people and Diversity Statement were read. All committee members were welcomed.

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners:

Banyule City Council is proud to acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as traditional custodians of the land and we pay respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Elders, past, present and emerging, who have resided in the area and have been an integral part of the region's history.

Diversity Statement:

Banyule is a diverse community, made up of people from different cultures, beliefs, abilities, bodies, ages, sexualities, genders and identities. Council is committed to inclusion, access and equity for everyone. These principles foster cohesiveness, empower people and improve the wellbeing of the Banyule community.

This was the first meeting of the new Committee. Cr Mitsinikos and Cr McKern introduced themselves, their interest in the Multicultural Committee and the Ward they represent.

Committee Members then had an opportunity to introduced themselves, explain their background, links to multicultural community and why they have joined the committee.

Banyule City Council staff in attendance introduced themselves and explained their role and involvement with the Multicultural Committee.

Multicultural Committee Terms of Reference

The Multicultural Committee Terms of Reference were highlighted with specific reference given to the aims of the Committee, and an overview of good governance in local government.

The aim of the Multicultural Committee is to provide Council with advice and information on the evolving context of multiculturalism, and on inclusion, access, equity and human rights issues, barriers

and challenges facing, the opportunities available to, and the aspirations of, multicultural communities in Banyule.

Good governance is the processes for making and implementing decisions. It's not about making 'correct' decisions, but about the best possible process for making those decisions.

The structure of meetings was outlined, the meetings will continue virtually due to COVID-19 restrictions. The move to hybrid style meetings is an option in the future as well as an opportunity to meet face-to-face.

Working groups may be established during the term of this committee to further investigate specific issues that arise. These would run as smaller groups on an as need basis.

Committee member asked if there will be Committee work plan developed to ensure the Committee's time is well utilized and there is a clear direction going forward. It was thought that providing scope or structure to the work, as guided by the plan, will ensure a more effective and strategic approach. It was explained that this will occur along with the development of the new Multicultural Plan and that the Committee's knowledge and expertise will also be utilized to provide feedback and input on pieces of work in development across Council, where appropriate. The insight Multicultural Committee members can provide will help ensure a multicultural lens is applied over Council's work.

Committee member asked what Council was doing around issues in Afghanistan, and also the COVID-19 vaccination program. The role and scope of the Committee was outlined, and a discussion held about opportunity for advocacy to the State and Federal Government. In the past, the Committee has recommended letters of advocacy to be sent to government on important issues facing the community. Communication to local community was also discussed, it was explained that this can be done through Council's Communications Team. The Committee can be an asset in improving communication messages and channels to find more effective methods to communicate. Council values the information and input each committee member can share about what is happening in their own community.

Members of the Committee noted vaccination information provided by the Government has been done well, it has been translated into community languages and distributed to the Multicultural Community. It was also noted that specific work has been done with the Somali community by providing information through door knocking and by the development a short film and shown on a Somali television programs.

Decision was made by the group to add a standing agenda item where members can raise pressing issues. Each person will get a limited time to raise and discuss an issue they have identified.

2. General Discussion

Multicultural Plan

The process for developing the new Multicultural Plan was presented. It is a 4-year strategic plan that will guide Council's work over this period. The plan is a municipal wide plan, meaning it will encompass work from other areas of Council, as well as work with community partner organisations. The Multicultural Committee will be integral to the development of the plan.

The plan will be structured around the new Inclusive Banyule Framework which is replacing the previous Inclusion Access and Equity Framework. The Inclusive Banyule Framework uses the four pillars of social justice: access, equity, participation and human rights.

Multicultural cohorts who will be engaged as part of the consultation for the Multicultural Plan were identified and feedback from the committee gathered.

- Newly arrived communities
- Established communities
- International students
- Refugees and asylum seekers
- Skilled migrants
- Interfaith communities

Questions from the Committee regarding the mode of consultation was discussed. A series of questions have been developed and meetings scheduled to have one on one discussion with relevant stakeholders. This engagement process is also an opportunity for the Contact Offer to build relationships with key stakeholders to build partnerships going forward.

A survey is also in development which aims to gather community feedback and input across the multicultural, LGBTIQ+ and disability plans. This survey will be distributed as broadly as possible.

The Committee discussed strategies to engage with skilled migrants could be challenging as limited formal organisations exist, any ideas or suggestions on how this could be strengthened were welcomed. Opportunities to engage through Maternal and Child Health, childcare, kindergartens, schools and staff at Austin Hospital were identified.

Concerns around food relief and food security in some communities was raised by a committee member and it was noted that more investigation into what other organisations are doing and communities at risk is needed. Heidelberg Good Karma Network was identified to be helping community members access food during this lockdown.

Engagement Banyule's Multicultural Plan

Questions were proposed to the Committee to facilitate a discussion for the purpose of collecting data for the new Multicultural Plan.

What has Banyule done well in the past to support multicultural communities?

- Outdoor exercise equipment in parks - this was felt to be the best investment for the community to get people moving and accessing opportunities for physical activity.
- Banyule's Inclusive Employment Program was identified as an excellent program and a very important employment opportunity for the multicultural community and youth.
- Making funding available for festivals and celebrations has been great to bring community members together. The \$300 grant are a good start but too small to create an event for a larger group of people.
- A committee member would like to see more support for the establishment of businesses by the multicultural community. The community could benefit by making the process to start a new business easier and more accessible.

When you think about access for multicultural communities, what makes access easier or harder?

- It was acknowledged that there is a lot of written information available online, much of this information is available in community languages which is helpful and aids accessibility. It was noted that this information also needs to be distributed to the community where they are, or places they gather to better reach the intended audience.

- It was noted that Chinese people tend not to use Facebook, instead many connect and communicate through WeChat. It was felt that this was a more targeted communication channel to disseminate messages to Chinese or Mandarin speaking people. Council was encouraged to set up a WeChat account to share information.
- Most households have access to technology which allows them to get online, but there are still access challenges as many people have limited data to participate in online.
- Signage in public areas and Council assets often only in English. This was noted as an access challenge for some older community member who are unable to read English and they have struggled to understand signage around parks, public toilets.
A suggestion was made to use symbols where possible to communicate and to investigate the possibility of QR scanning to translate signage on Council assets.

Inclusive Banyule Advisory Committee

Banyule City Council is establishing a new overarching committee called Inclusive Banyule Advisory Committee. This Committee will help drive Council's commitment to inclusion and high-level advocacy. Members of this committee will represent the views of the Multicultural Committee and provide an update during meetings.

The population committees will have representatives from the Multicultural, LGBTIQ+, Disability, Reconciliation Action Plan and Age Friendly committees and key organisation. The committee will meet quarterly on a Friday afternoon from 1-3pm.

Committee members who would be interested in being part of the Inclusive Banyule Advisory Committee are encouraged to express interest by contacting Lisa King.

There was interest expressed by Committee members but there was concern about members' ability to attend the meeting if held during the day.

3. Other Business

Communicaiton and updates

Council is investigating the establishment of a group on Microsoft Teams to allow ongoing communication outside of meetings. This platform will be private where only members of this Committee can have access. It would have a chat function to allow for conversations, upload of resources. More information to come.

4. Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 20 October 6-7.30pm.