Strengthening Community Capacity Policy

September 2020

This policy was adopted by Council to set governing principles in place that align the strategic direction of the organisation with Key Result Area 2: Welcoming, inclusive and healthy communities.

Objective

This policy set outs guiding principles that are adaptive and may be drawn on in specific contexts to guide the Shire's Councillors and staff in the planning, implementation and evaluation of community development actions and outcomes.

Policy

There is no neat, linear approach to community development. The process required to support a welcoming, connected and resilient community needs to occur in partnership and utilise the knowledge, skills and wisdom of the community.

The key objective of this policy is to strengthen the capacity of the Augusta Margaret River community, specifically in the role of volunteers and community groups. The purpose of this work is to facilitate <u>sustainable community action</u>, where volunteers can be supported and empowered to achieve their aspirations and address identified community needs.

The principles of this policy seek to support healthy people and places through:

- Valuing the strengths of others;
- Partnering with community members and groups to achieve shared vision and goals; and
- Acknowledging integration of community capital including physical, natural environment, economic, social and human assets.

The principles apply to three broad levels of activity:

- Individual: community members including families, extended families and small groups;
- Organisations: Community based organisations including both informal and incorporated groups, community-controlled organisations, non-government organisations; and
- Broad system: local government and other state bodies operating at a local level.

Guiding principles

1. **The value of diversity**
   Each community member has knowledge, skills, care and connections, which are valued. The Shire will seek out the diverse community perspectives and experiences to ensure the understanding of communies' needs and strengths inform community planning, decision-making and advocacy.

2. **Community expertise lies in the community**
   Community members are experts in their lives and communities. The Shire acknowledges and values their knowledge and contribution to community development and has a focus on responding to identified community needs. The Shire is committed to being flexible and responsive in the planning, implementation and evaluation of programs to ensure innovation in achieving community outcomes.

3. **Partnership is key**
   Strong, productive, relationships, nurtured over time, and a shared way of working are central to achieving sustainable change in communities. The Shire will consistently invest in developing social capital by prioritising relationship building among a diverse range of community leaders, volunteer groups, community organisations and other business partners. The Shire will promote collaboration and partnership within local community groups and other government services to create greater community capacity for overall social impact.

4. **Active empowerment**
   Community members are empowered by the Shire to lead actions towards achieving community aspirations. The Shire will continue to empower and enable community members and volunteer groups to create the positive changes they want to see in their community. This includes the Shire taking steps to enable community groups the ability to make decisions on key issues, to identify and build on community strengths and assets, to select and implement actions and to monitor and create improvements for future planning.

5. **Acknowledging the power of place**
   Individuals and communities are inextricably linked to place. In working with communities, the Shire considers the unique and interacting elements of culture, nature, lifestyle, industries and history of our varying towns and villages.

6. **Responsive action and communication**
   The Shire will be flexible to meet the varying needs of our communities and will enable action customised across place as well as time. Action will be evidence based, integrating the best available research with practitioner expertise and needs, and the values and preferences of communities. This includes culturally appropriate responses which recognise Aboriginal and other people's cultural boundaries, and styles. The Shire will be transparent and equitable in its planning and allocation of resources to support communities' access to facilities, programs and services

7. **Unique role in community recovery**
   A community's capacity depends on whether community knowledge and capacity can be shared and utilised. In times of crisis, the community's capacity is limited and can be threatened. The Shire will be responsive and guided by communities needs during periods of crisis and recovery. The Shire will adopt a local recovery plan in times of crisis, that is based on community capacity building approaches, and which ensures vulnerable groups in a community are supported following incidents and during recovery phases.

Application

This policy is implemented through the Community Planning and Development Team and their various action plans; including the Strengthening Community Capacity Plan 2020-25 which outlines an evidenced based approach for implementation.

The Strengthening Community Capacity Plan 2020-24 identifies three key goal areas to support the creation of a welcoming, connected and resilient community which is able to respond to crisis and local recovery efforts.

1. Welcoming Communities: Welcoming Communities recognise that communities are healthier, happier and more productive when newcomers and community members are welcomed and participate fully in society and in the local economy.

2. Connected Communities: Connected communities are beneficial for individuals, families as well as the whole community. Community members know their communities best and have a significant opportunity to effect change.

3. Resilient Communities: Resilient communities are able to respond to incidents, have the ability to cope effectively with and learn from adversity, and withstand crises or disruptions.

The Shire's response is focused on the support for community groups, in particular:

- Community activation;
- Volunteering;
- Funding and finance;
- Research and evaluation, and
- Advocacy.

Document and version control table		
Strategic outcome	Key Result Area 2: Welcoming, inclusive and healthy communities	
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