Phase 1 – Findings / Observations

Based on:
- ✓ The interactive sessions held on the 6th May,
- ✓ Follow-up phone calls and in-person conversations,
- ✓ Community member emails, and
- ✓ Review of the recent BSC Community Satisfaction Survey

The following broad suggestions are made regarding WHAT Advisory Committees SHOULD EXIST (**structure**) and HOW they SHOULD WORK (**process**).

PROCESS – community members contributing to the discussion felt strongly that Advisory Committees should operate a certain way.

There was agreement that Advisory Committees 'mostly work well' noting the model 'has good bones, but some areas need work'. Building on these strengths, honouring the enduring hard work of many members and evolving ACs to overcome identified challenges and barriers was central to the focus.

Clear and open two-way communication – participants agreed communication channels needed to be open, transparent and responsive. Mechanisms for communication needed to be clear – protocols and guidelines for how to communicate with Council and equally how Council will commit to feeding back were frequently mentioned.

Participants appeared in agreement with the proposal to have a succinct 'reporting structure' to Council which ensured recommendations were clearly captured and 'fed in'. Equally important was the creation of a structure and commitment that Council always fed back in a timely manner re the outcome of any recommendation (i.e. immediately following the meeting at which it was presented).

A frustration related to communication surfaced around the time an AC might spend discussing an issue / topic and forming a recommendation only to find that, months or years on it is completely disregarded or requested again for consideration of the group by Council. If recommendations used clear key words and were stored in a live document for each AC these documents could be easily searched for key words at times of decision making by Council. For example, the Beautification ACs recommendations 'live document' could be searched for the key word 'tree' to find all recommendations made by the group related to trees.

"Reports back to committees after council meetings detailing decisions/feedback on committee recommendations to council."

"Communication! Co-operation! These two factors are how the youth council has achieved success in our events like pool parties and youth week!"

"There is a culture of poor communication between Council and the community.... Advisory Committees should be a conduit, not thwarted or ignored"

"When Council overrides a Committee recommendation we need to know why.... If there is a good reason we can accept that, otherwise we just feel our time has been wasted – I mean, why ask us if you are not going to listen!"

"People make stuff up if there is a lack of communication – the closure of the Interpretive Centre at the Discovery precinct is a classic example of this – this could have all been avoided with good, open communication"

Synergy between Advisory Committees (and between community groups) – participants also noted the importance of Advisory Committees working better together, being able to be drawn on to inform and support each other. The Proposal to form an Executive of AC Chairs would be a significant positive in enabling this. Equally a commitment from each AC to send a guest 'deputation' to another AC 'on request' might be valuable. For example, the Tourism AC might request a guest deputation from the Youth AC to gain greater understanding on the wants and needs or young travellers and visitors to the Shire.

The new AC structure needs to show a clear connect to all the existing community groups within the Shire. The Structure needs to make tangible the breadth of community groups an AC might seek information or support from in fulfilling their role as a representative and equitable community voice. Advisory Committees need to be responsive to those existing community groups they naturally align with and clear processes need to exist so community groups can 'feed' into Council either directly or through the relevant Advisory Committee.

"combined goal to achieve something awesome for our community. Co-operation from other community groups"

"It would be great to see greater co-operation between committees, being committees
working together would deliver a greater consensus on ideas, and a wider range of ideas!"

"As a parent of a child with a disability I don't feel there is any connection between members
of our community who have a disability and our local council and health & disability services."

"perhaps we could have an online forum for community ideas so people can have a space to
share ideas… it just needs to be easy for people to put up ideas to any relevant Committees"

Clear and simple recruitment processes – increased transparency regarding recruitment of AC members was requested. ACs sought a clearer understanding of both the advertised EOI process (occurring post Council elections) and also the process for recruiting and inducting new members mid-term. Challenges in recruiting members means both the at-term and within-term mechanisms must be clear, simple and achievable for would be members and ACs themselves. A strengthened induction process ensuring clear understanding of the role and expectations and coverage of the member with Council volunteer status is also critical.

"There needs to be an easy, simple, streamlined method to enable
Community members to join Volunteer Committee's"

Clear Mandate and Resourcing – ACs must understand both their broad mandate (applicable to all ACs including such factors as the weight of their recommendations etc) and their focus or context mandate (area of influence). Discussions acknowledging the importance of some AC resourcing – monetary and in-kind – needs solidifying. Within this the governance model must be clear, readily available and referenced as needed - notably at key transition points and times of contention.

"Committees that normally have teeth have been dropped out of the system.....
Without Councillors it is more important than ever to have Advisory Committees with teeth"

"If the Shire wants this to work then they needs to work at it too – and the crux is communication"

"Good governance means Committees are not left to flounder or are 'shut out' from their focus areas."

Strategic and Responsive – each AC should be guided by a rolling action plan they have developed (with support) and own. Action Plans should be developed by each AC at each new term (post Councillor elections) and have an annual or biennial review to refresh and ensure ongoing currency.

"In the past the Tourism Committee had a Rolling Action Plan in place which worked really well. This plan
provided a clear picture of projects ideas, outcomes, gave a timeline of steps involved with each project,
costing etc. It formed a practical working guide between the Council Coordinator for a particular
committee and the committee itself. Minute taking was also simplified."

Every so often a "Think Tank" meeting of ideas contributed perfectly to the ongoing Action Plan.
"I have also been on many volunteer groups but one of the best is the Motorcross Club. A small group
all working with the same vision, cohesive, support each other but biggest plus is strong governance"

Hinged to a staff member – ACs clearly valued being connected to a Council staff member who was consistent and knowledgeable in their mandated space. When staff members changed there was frustration regarding 'gaps' in groups being allocated a new 'support person' and the lack of handover between staff.

"Advisory Groups need to be hinged to someone within Council that they can go to knowing that
that person has the authority that the Committee needs in Tourism and Community"

*"There is a high staff turnover within Council and often no handover between staff
(because of recruitment gaps or lack of time) – as a result our work and ideas get 'lost'"*

Connected and integral to relevant Council plans – ACs expressed a desire to more fully inform the Council planning process, particularly within their focus areas. Specific comments were made in relation to the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan which, without adequate community input does not achieve to its fullest potential.

Promotion & recognition – Advisory Committees will thrive with greater promotion and community recognition. All groups need that. Promotion will have the added advantage of encouraging broader, stronger recruitment.

Full and diverse representation – to truly represent our communities Advisory Committees must be representative of our communities.

Simplifying 'red tape' -

"Unless there is a meaningful commitment to change people will not engage"

Code of Conduct – for Advisory Committee members and staff representatives. Clear parameters are set regarding behaviour.

Building a culture of success and teamwork – Committees need to learn how to work together and succeed, some do this organically and others need more formal support. Staged 'Health Checks' with committees re operation and outcomes. Dedicated training in identified areas.

STRUCTURE - Early themes regarding the Structure of Advisory Committees suggest

We are mindful that not hearing about a certain area of focus does NOT mean it is not key to our Advisory Committee structure moving forwards as we have not heard from the whole community. So, in the absence of hearing the full breadth of community voice, we (Council) will continue to advocate in those areas we know to be critical to a Shire that is creating opportunities for individual, group, community, business and environmental health, wellbeing, growth and development.

Highly valued focus areas – including tourism, beautification, employment and economic development, the importance of supporting our children and young people, the importance of community growth and connection (and the human and physical infrastructure to support connection), equity in service delivery (benefits to all in terms of access, safety etc includes factors such as roads and footpaths, access to all community facilities)

*"it would be great to see with the advisory committee restructure that a committee could be
created in the form of say social and community welfare that could link all our services together."*

AC Structure must connect to community needs, values and passion (broadly understood and represented)

"Efforts should be central to the things we care about, our identity – arts, culture, football, motoX"

*".... it would be great if residents with disabilities could have a platform where their needs and concerns
could be voiced.... I feel as a positive moving forward a platform for people living with a disability in our community
via the new advisory committee structure would be a great benefit to Council and our community."*

"The mental health of our communities is just so important...."

Group Structures need to be fluid enough to be responsive to evolving needs – some ideas / topics go across a range of ACs. For example, an idea for public art could be considered within Beautification, Arts & Culture, Tourism, Youth. ACs need a clear vision and purpose but flexibility to respond.

Structure needs to reflect natural synergies, be logical –

"the Tourism Committee should interact with the Caravan Park Committee,
it should be interacting with the Beautification Committee…."

"Beautification is more than rocks and roses, it should be working with Tourism…."

For you to want to be part of the new AC structure please share a word or comment about what it 'needs to be' or 'how it needs to work'

- ✓ The value in helping and trying to improve our community
- ✓ Enthusiastic
- ✓ Effective
- ✓ Community proud
- ✓ Successful
- ✓ Pro – active
- ✓ Honest and transparent
- ✓ Open minded
- ✓ Representative
- ✓ Know we are being listened too
- ✓ Community working together for the benefit all its people!
- ✓ Respectful and equitable.
- ✓ Shared responsibility not relying on one person to do the work.
- ✓ Take on board the positive
- ✓ It's about moving forward not looking backwards
- ✓ Must be caring and productive
- ✓ Open communication

SUCCESSFUL
OPEN-COMMUNICATION
REPRESENTATIVE
ENTHUSIASTIC
EQUITABLE
CARING PROUD POSITIVE
COMMUNITY-FOCUSSED
HEARD OPEN-MINDED
PROACTIVE
TRANSPARENT
EFFECTIVE TEAMWORK
RESPECTFUL
FUTURE-FOCUSSED HONEST
PRODUCTIVE

WordItOut