



Agriculture Sector Advisory Committee Charter

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1. Purpose

The East Gippsland Agriculture Sector Advisory Committee (the Committee) will provide advice, guidance and recommendations to East Gippsland Shire Council (Council) on matters that affect the **agriculture sector** in East Gippsland and its communities.

2. Scope

This Charter will guide the operation of the Committee and apply to all its members.

3. Context

A strong, competitive and sustainable economy is essential for the future of rural and regional areas. In the case of East Gippsland, Council recognises the importance of a strong and resilient agriculture sector to the generation of the confidence, investment and job opportunities that are key to providing quality of life for current and future generations.

Food manufacturing and production are fundamental drivers of East Gippsland's economy. The Victorian Government has identified the food and fibre sector as one of the growth areas vital to the future economic prosperity of Victoria.

The Committee will provide a valuable forum through which Council can gain timely and informed insight into the issues that are impacting on individual agriculture 'streams', and/or the agriculture sector more broadly.

4. The Committee

4.1 Formation, Powers and Limitations

The Committee will be an Advisory Committee established by Council.

The Committee is not a Delegated Committee within the meaning of section 63 of the *Local Government Act 2020*. Accordingly, neither the Committee nor its members are authorised to make decisions, act or speak publicly on behalf of Council.

The Committee shall:

- provide advice to Council on agriculture sector issues and priorities;
- provide an effective communication channel between Council and members of the agriculture sector;
- make enquiries and canvas public views relating to issues of importance to the agriculture sector; and
- advocate for decisions of Council in respect of matters that fall within the Committee's Charter.

Because Council maintains an Economic Development Advisory Committee, the Committee's Charter does not include working with Council, the Economic Development Advisory Committee or any other group on initiatives to encourage or facilitate new agribusiness in East Gippsland. However, the Committee may refer matters to Council or another Council Advisory Committee for consideration (see also).

4.2 Committee Objectives

The Committee's primary role is to advise Council on matters that are important to the prosperity and sustainability of agriculture in East Gippsland and the wellbeing of those engaged in it.

It will do this through the provision of advice and recommendations on matters relevant to its Charter and Duties (detailed at clause 3) to facilitate decision-making by Council and its officers in discharging their responsibilities.

4.3 Charter and Duties

The Committee will:

1. Discuss and provide input on significant initiatives or programs Council is considering implementing to support the agriculture sector in East Gippsland and/or improve its resilience in the longer term.
2. Assist Council to formulate appropriate responses to significant existing or emerging issues that are impacting or are likely to affect the sector (e.g. fire, flood, drought, pest plagues).
3. Discuss and provide feedback on strategic documents of Council that impact on the sector, e.g:
 - planning scheme amendments;
 - policies;
 - draft Council Plan, draft Budget (including draft Capital Works program) and draft Rating Strategy;
 - any other matter likely to impact significantly on the use of land in East Gippsland for agricultural purposes.
4. Act as an Advisory Committee and provide recommendations to Council and other stakeholders on matters that fall within the Committee's Charter or are otherwise consistent with the intent and purpose of the Committee.
5. Act as a communication channel for the agriculture sector and its communities in East Gippsland.
6. Refer matters for consideration by Council or another Council Advisory Committee if they are relevant to the agriculture sector but fall outside the East Gippsland Agriculture Sector Advisory Committee's Charter.

4.4 Membership

The Committee will comprise of a maximum of 16 members, as follows:

- Two East Gippsland Shire **Councillors**, one of whom will be the Mayor¹.
- One representative of each of the following organisations:
 - Agriculture Victoria;
 - East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority;
 - Food & Fibre Gippsland; and

¹ *If the Mayor chooses to relinquish their ex officio membership to the Committee, a second Councillor will be elected through the same mechanism and for the same term as the other Councillor representative.*

- Gippsland Agriculture Group
- Ten representatives of companies, businesses, families and single practitioners who are actively engaged in the agriculture sector in East Gippsland. Ideally, these members will be broadly representative of the sector, to engender the widest possible range of views. To achieve this, diversity in membership will be actively sought across such aspects as:
 - companies / businesses / family or individual practitioners;
 - nature of operation (e.g. retail, manufacturing, service provision, fishing/aquaculture, cropping, animal agriculture, apiary, viticulture, dairy, etc.);
 - location of operation;
 - size of operation (e.g. large, medium, small); and
 - gender, age, etc.

From time-to-time additional representatives and stakeholders can be co-opted to the Committee for limited periods, to provide advice or assistance on specific issues. Co-opted representatives and stakeholders will not be entitled to vote.

The size and composition of membership may be varied at any time by Council resolution.

Council may resolve to remove a Member of the Committee if they fail to attend three (3) consecutive meetings without leave of the Committee, or on the recommendation of the Committee.

A Member may resign by giving at least 1 month's notice to the Committee Coordinator.

If at any time the Committee has less than the required number of Members, the Committee may continue to operate (but it must still comply with the quorum requirements set out in section 4.4). In this instance, Council will as soon as reasonably possible appoint a new Member or Members who meet the required criteria so that the Committee has the required number of Members, with the required criteria.

The **responsible General Manager** will attend Committee meetings but will not be a member of the Advisory Committee. The General Manager will ensure that appropriate secretariat services are provided to support the work of the Committee.

Term of Membership

Appointments to the Committee will be made for the following terms, using the appointment method nominated:

Membership type	Appointment method	Length of tenure
Two Councillors, comprising: • the Mayor; and • one other Councillor	<i>Ex officio</i> unless Mayor chooses to relinquish that right ² Formal resolution of Council	Duration of their term as Mayor 12 months, reviewed annually following Council's Statutory Council Meeting.

² *If the Mayor chooses to relinquish their ex officio membership to the Committee, a second Councillor will be elected through the same mechanism and for the same term as the 'one other Councillor'.*

One representative of each of the following organisations: • Agriculture Victoria • East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority • Food & Fibre Gippsland • Gippsland Agriculture Group	Direct appointment by the organisation that will be represented	Four years
Ten representatives, each of whom will represent a company, business, family or individual practitioner that is actively engaged in the agriculture sector in East Gippsland.	Formal resolution of Council following a public expression of interest process and consideration of a recommendation from a Panel comprising the Chair and responsible General Manager. In evaluating candidates, the Panel will make every effort to ensure broad representation from a diverse range of agriculture sector practitioners and businesses.	Two years with the option to extend for a further two years.

Committee members (other than Councillors) may serve a maximum of two consecutive terms. Following a break of one term's duration, a former member may re-apply for membership. If appointed, the two-term provision would then recommence.

4.5 Chairperson

The Chair of the Committee will be the Mayor. If the Mayor chooses not to take up membership of the Committee, the Chair will be another Councillor appointed by resolution of Council.

In the absence of the Chair, another Councillor or their delegate will chair the meeting.

(Also see 'Roles and Responsibilities' section of this Charter)

4.6 Meetings

- The Committee will meet at least four (4) times per year, once in each quarter.
- Additional meetings may be convened at the written request of any member of the Committee or as considered necessary by the Chair or responsible General Manager.
- A quorum will exist if at least eight Committee members are present.
- Decisions of the Committee will generally be made by consensus. If consensus is not possible, matters will be resolved by a show of hands and a simple majority of votes cast by members in attendance. The Chair will have the casting vote if the votes are equal.

- Members of the Committee must comply with conflict of interest obligations set out in section 131 of the Act and Council's Governance Rules (as if the Members were Councillors). In particular:
 - a. all Committee Members must disclose any material or general conflicts of interest that they may have in relation to a matter discussed or to be discussed at a Committee meeting, at a time specified in the agenda or at any time that the matter in which they have a conflict of interest is discussed;
 - b. Committee Members may not participate in discussions, decision making, or any action in relation to any matter in which they have a conflict of interest, and must leave the room as those discussions, decision making processes or actions take place;
 - c. after disclosing a conflict of interest, the Committee member must complete the *Notice of Disclosure of Conflict of Interest Form* and submit it to the Committee Coordinator who will forward to the Governance Helpdesk for recording; and
 - d. If, according to the Committee Coordinator or another Member, a Member has a conflict of interest in respect of a matter and does not disclose it, or fails to leave a Committee meeting, the remaining Members present at the meeting may vote to require that Member to leave the Committee meeting for the duration of the consideration of that matter.
- Councillors who are not members of the Committee may attend its meetings as observers and through the Chair, may ask questions in relation to matters listed on the agenda.
- Agenda items can be submitted to the responsible General Manager for inclusion in the agenda. The final composition of the agenda and associated documents will be determined by the responsible General Manager in consultation with the Chair.
- Minutes of Committee meetings will be kept and when the draft minutes have been approved by the Chair, circulated to Committee members and East Gippsland Shire Councillors as Unconfirmed Minutes. The Unconfirmed Minutes will be confirmed at the next meeting of the Committee.
- A report on the activities of the Committee will be presented to the next Ordinary Meeting of Council following each quarterly meeting of the Committee.

4.7 Confidentiality

Members of the Committee will be bound by the confidentiality requirements of the Act. Agenda items deemed to be confidential within the meaning of the Act will clearly identified with a Confidentiality Notice. In this regard, members are expected to maintain confidentiality in relation to matters under consideration from time to time that have been declared as confidential.

4.8 Responsibilities

Committee members will:

1. Actively participate in and contribute to the work of Committee.
2. Proactively make the Committee aware of changes or proposed changes to relevant strategic directions of key stakeholders (e.g. actual or impending legislative, regulatory or other changes that may impact adversely on the agriculture sector).

3. Bring matters to the attention of the Committee as necessary to ensure Council retains a good understanding of what is happening 'on the ground'. Examples could include:
 - Longer-term environmental factors such as climate adaption and water security, and their impact on farming individuals, communities and industries.
 - Inability to benefit from technological advances for any reason.
 - Any other matters impacting on the health and wellbeing of businesses, practitioners and communities engaged in agriculture.
4. Participate in community engagement as advocates for the agriculture sector and its communities.

(Also see the 'Roles and Responsibilities' section of this Charter)

4.9 Conduct

Committee Members will:

- Conduct itself in accordance with Council's organisational values: Respect, Collaboration, Integrity and Accountability;
- Strive to attend all meetings, sending apologies to the Chair for necessary absences;
- Prepare for the meeting by reading the agenda, papers and any emails before the meeting;
- Talk to the Chair before the meeting if you need to clarify anything;
- Arrive on time. Stay to the end;
- Participate fully in the meeting;
- Listen to what others have to say and keep an open mind;
- Contribute positively to the discussions;
- Try to be concise and avoid long drawn-out explanations;
- Help others concentrate on the meeting. Discourage side conversations;
- Have the best interests of the organisation/beneficiaries in mind at all times;
- Draw attention to any potential conflicts of interest that may arise in the meeting;
- Fulfil any responsibilities assigned to you at the meeting and be prepared to report back on your progress at the next meeting;
- Treat all Committee Members and Council officers with respect and courtesy at all times;
- Not interrupt or speak over another person speaking;
- Direct all questions through the Chair;
- Direct any requests for Council officers to provide information or perform an action through the Chair to the CEO;
- Not criticise, chastise or insult an officer or the Council during the meeting; and
- Provide constructive feedback which will not offend, imply incompetence of an officer or humiliate an officer attending the meeting.

4.10 Availability of General Advice

The Committee, through the Chief Executive Officer, may obtain information and advice on any Council matter that falls within the Committee's jurisdiction.

4.11 Indemnity

Members of the Committee will be covered by Council's insurance when engaged on or attending to their duties in accordance with this Charter.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Following is a list of positions with designated responsibilities under this Charter:

Party / Parties	Roles and Responsibilities
Chair	Conduct meetings efficiently to ensure all matters listed for consideration are afforded appropriate time and attention. Exercise a casting vote where: (a) consensus cannot be reached; and (b) a formal vote is required to resolve the matter; and (c) voting numbers are equal. Approve the Unconfirmed Minutes of each meeting for circulation to Committee members, Councillors and others. Consider applications from Committee members for leave of absence. Together with the responsible General Manager, participate in the selection process for relevant Committee members. Together with the responsible General Manager, ensure compliance with this Charter by Committee members and address any matters of concern arising in respect of a Committee member's conduct.
Committee members	Make every effort to attend scheduled meetings of the Committee. Ensure that matters are considered fairly and consistently and facilitate open and respectful sharing of opinions. Form conclusions and recommendations based on the best available information. Keep confidential any matter or documents that have been declared to be confidential. Declare all conflicts of interest prior to discussion of the matter for which the conflict of interest has arisen. Further, having declared such a conflict, leave the room and remain outside the room and any gallery or other area in view or hearing of the room until the matter has been concluded. Members must not misuse their position on the Committee to gain or attempt to gain, directly or indirectly, an advantage for themselves or for any other person; or cause, or attempt to cause, detriment to Council or any person.

Party / Parties	Roles and Responsibilities
Responsible General Manager	Responsible for the implementation, review and updating of this Charter. While not a member of the Committee, attend all meetings of the Committee (or arrange for another General Manager to do so) and provide guidance and advice. Also: • ensure that an appropriate agenda is formulated for scheduled meetings and circulated to members in a timely fashion; • facilitate meetings by arranging for appropriate Council officers or others to attend to provide pertinent information, as necessary; • provide secretariat services in respect of matters before the Committee; • after each quarterly meeting, ensure that a report describing the activities of the Committee and explaining any recommendations or key findings is tabled at an ordinary meeting of Council and the Economic Development Advisory Committee; • ensure that accurate minutes of Committee meetings are taken, circulated to Committee members, Councillors and others in a timely fashion and once confirmed, stored securely in Council's electronic document record management system; • coordinate the selection process for relevant Committee positions and together with the Committee's Chair, comprise the interview panel for these positions; and • together with the Committee's Chair, address any matters of concern arising in respect of a Committee member's conduct.
Officers in Attendance	Together with the responsible General Manager, the Manager Economic Development or their delegate, and Council's Agribusiness Development Officer will attend all meetings of the Committee. The Chief Executive Officer or other members of Council's staff may attend the Committee's meetings from time to time to provide information or respond to queries.

6. References and Supporting Documents

6.1 Applicable Legislation

Local Government Act 2020

6.2 Applicable Policy and Procedure

Governance Rules

Conflict of Interest Procedure

6.3 Supporting Documents

- Council Plan

7. Definitions

Term	Meaning
Advisory Committee	A committee established by the Council, other than a delegated committee, that provides advice to Council.
Agriculture sector	Organisations, businesses, enterprises, trusts and individuals involved in the cultivation of crops, timber, animals, fish, and other life forms for commercial purposes, and the processing of these commodities into finished products for food and fibre.
Committee member	A member of East Gippsland Shire Council's East Gippsland Agriculture Sector Advisory Committee.
Chief Executive Officer	Person appointed by Council to the position of Chief Executive Officer.
Conflict of Interest	As defined by Part 6, Division 2 of the Local Government Act 2020. Disclosing Conflicts of Interest demonstrates that in performing the role to which they were appointed, Committee members are not attempting to serve their own interests or the interests of someone close to them.
Councillor	Person who has been elected to the office of "Councillor" of East Gippsland Shire Council.
Council officer	A current member of East Gippsland Shire Council staff with the authority to engage in activities on behalf of Council.
Officers in Attendance	Council officers attending Committee meetings to provide information or respond to queries. No officers hold membership of the Committee.
Mayor	Councillor elected by other Councillors to fill the role of Mayor.
Responsible General Manager	General Manager delegated by the Chief Executive Officer to support the work of the Committee.

8. Review and Revision History

Version Number	Date Approved	Approved By	Review Summary
1	05/05/2020	Council	Original Version
2	03/08/2021	Council	Change the member terms from four year to two-year terms with the option of a further two-year term. To increase the number of industry representatives from 10 to 11.
3	20/05/2025	Council	Change Gippsland Agriculture Group to hold an organisation seat. Adjust the number of industry representatives from eleven to ten to account for this. Administrative changes to align with current legislation and Council Policies