

SCS – 006 Community Houses

TRIM Reference: D21/1225 Due for Review: May 2024
Responsible Officer: Manager Community Strengthening

Purpose

This policy outlines Surf Coast Shire Council's (Council) commitment to supporting Community Houses located within the Surf Coast Shire.

This policy defines Council's position and provides a transparent, consistent and equitable approach to the assistance Council gives to Community Houses. It provides the framework through which Community Houses will be supported by Council.

Policy Principles

This policy is guided by the following core principles:

1. Community development principles:
 - Community members are experts in their lives and communities.
 - Each community member has knowledge, skills, care and connections which should be valued.
 - Community members are empowered to take the lead at every stage.
 - Strong productive relationships, nurtured over time, and a shared way of working are central to achieving lasting change.
 - The sense that individuals and communities have of themselves is inextricably linked to place.
2. Inclusion – Council and the network of Community Houses within the Surf Coast Shire believe all people have a right to access and participate in community life. All community members are valued for their unique abilities and both Council and Community Houses aim to create an inclusive community where everyone can participate and contribute.
3. Partnership – Council values the strengths and abilities of community members and organisations. A thriving community which enables people to participate in community life will be better achieved through working together in meaningful and strategic partnerships with Community Houses than Council working alone. Council's partnership with Community Houses will be guided by the 6 Principles of Partnership (*Global Humanitarian Platform Principles of Partnership*):
 - Equality – mutual respect between partners.
 - Transparency – open dialogue on equal footing.
 - Results-Oriented Approach – reality based and action-oriented.
 - Responsibility – commitment to activities for which the partners has the means, competency and skill.
 - Complementarity – diversity is an asset and partners should build on their advantages to complement each other's contributions.

Scope

This policy applies to Community Houses in the Surf Coast Shire that are funded through the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Neighbourhood House Coordination program and adhere to the Neighbourhood Houses Coordination Program Funding Guidelines.

The following Community Houses operating within the Surf Coast Shire meet this definition:

- Anglesea Community House Inc.
- Deans Marsh Community Cottage Inc.
- Lorne Community House Inc.
- Torquay Community House Inc.
- Winchelsea Community House Inc.

This policy does not apply to other Council owned and managed community facilities, centres or Community Houses not funded through the DFFH Neighbourhood House Coordination program.

Policy

Council is committed to supporting Community Houses to provide services which benefit residents and visitors in the Surf Coast Shire. Council does this through:

Funding

Annual community development contribution

Community Houses within the Surf Coast Shire are primarily funded by the State Government Neighbourhood House Coordination Program. However, Council recognise the challenges faced by Community Houses that operate with limited resources to meet complex community needs. Community Houses are well positioned to achieve place based community development outcomes which are integral in building resilient communities. To enable Community Houses to achieve better community development outcomes and leverage the opportunity for place-based community development, Council will provide an annual financial contribution set via Council's budget process.

Council will provide Community Houses with guidelines (Community House Development Contribution Guidelines) which will clarify the purpose for which funding is provided and detail what the funds can and cannot be used for. This will include accountability requirements such as the provision of strategic plans, annual reports and an acquittal. The key data and information provided by Community Houses through the reporting process will demonstrate the level of community benefit Community Houses offer and will be used to set the contribution amount through the budget process.

Barwon Network contribution

Set via Council's budget process, an annual contribution will be provided to assist the network in achieving their mission which is: *Enabling the delivery of quality community development through high level representation, advice, guidance and support.*

Additional Grants

Community Houses are invited to apply for other grants offered by Council that support community groups. When appropriate, Council will also encourage and support (e.g. provision of letters of support) Community Houses in applying for funding from State and Federal Government or philanthropic groups.

Facility Provision

Council also supports Community Houses by committing to provide a facility in line with Council's *Property Use Agreements (SCS Policy - 034)*.

All Community Houses covered by this policy that choose to operate from a Council facility must do so under the terms and conditions of a formal agreement (i.e. a lease, licence or similar agreement) prepared by or on behalf of Council. The lease agreement will include adherence to legal responsibilities

such as the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act and other policies such as Council's Use of Community Building policies.

As a condition of this agreement the Community House must:

- 1) Comply with the Child Safe Standards, including any act done, or practice engaged in by its employees and agents; and
- 2) Immediately notify Council where it becomes aware of a breach of sub clause 1) by a Contractor, Committee Member or its volunteers.
- 3) Allow annual Occupational health and Safety audits conducted by a Council Officer.

Partnership

Council will work in partnership with Community Houses to strengthen their ability to support the community, providing:

- **Guidance** and support for best practice community development from a dedicated Council contact officer.
- **Maintenance** - A system for lodging requests regarding maintenance or any other issues related to the building.
- **Attendance** at Barwon Network of Neighbourhood Houses meetings.
- **Support** for program development and identifying funding opportunities.
- **Information** - Council will share demographic and social information with Community Houses to assist with best practice planning.
- **Advocacy**- Council will advocate on behalf of Community Houses and their Committees to other entities to enhance support already provided and identify opportunities to increase their capacity to meet the needs of the community.
- **Promotion** - Opportunities to utilise Council communication channels for the purpose of promoting the services and programs of Community Houses and increasing their profile within the community.
- **Referral** - The provision of relevant and up to date information to residents about the services across Community Houses to support individuals to connect with their local Community House.

Definitions

Council: the Surf Coast Shire Council.

Councillors: Individuals holding the office of a member of Surf Coast Shire Council.

Council Officer: the Chief Executive Officer and staff of Council appointed by the Chief Executive Officer.

Community Houses/Neighbourhood Houses: These terms are used interchangeably in this document. Community Houses are not for profit organisations where each house is a legal entity as an Incorporated Association, or auspiced by a legal entity, and has a formal membership base. They are governed by a voluntary committee of management (CoM) and are funded through the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Neighbourhood House Coordination Program.

Community: Towns, places, or shared interest groups located within the Surf Coast Shire.

Related Procedure

Surf Coast Shire Council Community House Development Contribution Guidelines D20/159562

References

This policy is underpinned by the following Surf Coast Shire Council policy documents and external documents:

- Surf Coast Shire Council plan (2017-2021).
- Surf Coast Shire Council Property Use Agreements (SCS Policy - 034).
- Surf Coast Shire Council Community Development Policy (SCS Policy – 049).
- Neighbourhood House Coordination Program Guidelines 2016-2019 and sector information, Department of Health and Human Services.
- Neighbourhood Houses Barwon Strategic Plan 2019 – 2022.
- The Neighbourhood House community development practice model and community development framework.
- Neighbourhood House Good Practice Guide, Association of Neighbourhood Houses & Learning Centres, 2012.
- Victorian Child Safe Standards.
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005.
- Global Humanitarian Platform Principles of Partnership 2007.

Document History

Version	Document History	Approved by – Date
2	<i>Amended</i>	Council – 25/05/21