

Draft Terms of Reference: Environment Advisory Committee

Role of the Committee

The Environment Advisory Committee is established to provide strategic advice and feedback to Ku-ring-gai Council on the preservation, management, enhancement, and recreational use of Ku-ring-gai's natural environment. The Committee's focus is to guide Council on ensuring ecological sustainability, promoting biodiversity, and fostering community engagement in the care of environmental areas.

The Committee will:

- Advise on the planning and management of environmental programs, excluding those related to bushfire and flood risk management.
- Support the design and planning of recreational facilities within natural areas, ensuring these align with sustainability and community needs.
- Contribute to the development and review of Council's biodiversity, urban greening, and environmental plans and policies, ensuring alignment with best practice.
- Guide the creation, engagement around, and implementation of, environmental education and sustainable recreation initiatives.
- Provide input on environmental monitoring and reporting to assess Council's efforts in protecting and enhancing the environment.

Membership

The Committee will consist of:

- Two Councillor representatives (voting members), appointed by Council as Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson.
- Up to eight community representatives (voting members), selected based on their expertise in environmental management, biodiversity conservation, urban forestry, sustainable recreation, or related fields.
- One representative from NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (voting member).
- The following Ku-ring-gai Council staff will be available to attend the Committee meetings (non-voting), and will provide professional advice and administrative support:
 - Manager Environment and Sustainability
 - Environmental Programs Leader
 - Other staff as required for their expertise or specific knowledge areas.

Community representatives are to be appointed by resolution of Council following an Expression of Interest process with recommendations based on candidate merit and ensuring diverse representation across the relevant disciplines.

Term of membership

The term of office for committee members will be for the term of Council, plus up to 6 months to allow time for the incoming Council to make new appointments. At the expiration of the term, members will be eligible for re-appointment, subject to referral to Council for its consideration and resolution.

Council may nominate additional applicants to the Committee as reserves to fill vacancies. Members will be appointed in the order recommended by the assessment panel.

Membership of the Committee can be withdrawn by resolution of Council.

If a member misses three (3) consecutive meetings without apology, their membership will be withdrawn and the position will be deemed vacant.

Chairperson

The Chairperson of the Committee is the Mayor, or a Councillor as nominated by Council.

The Chairperson is to be elected by Council for the same period as the term of office of the Mayor. If the Chairperson is not present at the time designated for the meeting, the Deputy Chairperson shall take the responsibilities of the Chairperson.

The Chairperson is to have precedence at the meeting and shall determine the order of proceedings, generally as set out in the agenda.

The Chairperson has the discretion to exclude a member of the Committee if a member displays inappropriate conduct. If this occurs, the matter is to be reported to the next available Council meeting.

Deputy Chairperson

The Deputy Chairperson of the Committee will be a Councillor as nominated by Council.

Committee Facilitator

A Committee Facilitator (Convenor) shall be appointed by the General Manager. The Facilitator shall be a staff member of Council who will be responsible for coordinating the preparation of agendas, invitations and minutes of the Committee.

The Facilitator shall also be responsible for coordinating any presentations from guest speakers and for considering requests from members of the public to address the Committee in consultation with the Chairperson and other staff.

Delegation

No delegation. The committee is an advisory body only and has no decision-making authority. It cannot commit Council to a course of action or direct Council staff.

Voting

Decisions will be made by a simple majority vote, with the Chair having the casting vote in the event of a tie.

Quorum

A quorum will be established by the presence of at least half the appointed members of the Committee, including at least one Councillor.

Meetings

The Committee will meet quarterly, or as determined by the Chairperson. The Chairperson has the authority to call meetings in accordance with the agreed meeting schedule. A proposed change to this meeting schedule, either ongoing or one-off, should give consideration to operational requirements, and be agreed upon by the majority of Committee members.

Agendas will be distributed at least five (5) business days before each meeting. Minutes of each meeting will be recorded and circulated to members for review and endorsement by the Chairperson..

Each meeting will start and finish at the scheduled time. The Chairperson may consider a motion to extend a meeting for up to 30 minutes. Matters listed on the agenda that are not dealt with by the conclusion of the meeting will be carried forward to the next meeting of the committee.

If an issue arises that requires the Committee's input before the next scheduled meeting (e.g., due to time constraints), the matter may be referred informally to committee members for their guidance or advice.

Attendance by audio-visual link

Members of the committee may attend meetings by audio-visual link, in accordance with the Council Advisory and Reference Committee Guideline.

Reporting Structure

Once approved by the Chairperson, the minutes will be put to an Ordinary Meeting of Council for adoption. The recommendations of the committee, so far as adopted by the Council at an Ordinary Meeting of Council, are resolutions of the Council.

The Committee will provide formal recommendations to Ku-ring-gai Council. Recommendations and progress reports will be submitted through the Director of Strategy and Environment for inclusion in relevant Council meetings and decision-making processes.

Code of Conduct

All Committee members are expected to adhere to the Ku-ring-gai Council Code of Conduct. Members must declare any pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests at the start of meetings where applicable. Conflicts of interest will be managed in accordance with Council policies.

All declarations of conflicts of interest and how the conflict of interest was managed by the person who made the declaration must be recorded in the minutes of the meeting at which the declaration was made.

Each Committee member shall be provided with Council's Code of Conduct and other related policies that may be applicable to the operation of the Committee.

Confidentiality

Committee members may be privy to sensitive or confidential information, and they are expected to maintain confidentiality in line with Council's guidelines. Breaches of confidentiality may result in removal from the Committee.