

## **FPOL1804-10 ADOPTION OF PROPOSED PRECINCTS POLICY**

**Meeting Date:** 11 April 2017  
**Responsible Officer:** Manager Governance  
**Decision Making Authority:** Council  
**Agenda Attachments:** Nil

### **SUMMARY**

**This report is for Council to receive the submissions made during the recent public consultation period and to consider adopting the proposed Precincts Policy. The proposed policy seeks to better reflect Council direction and to clarify working requirements for Precinct Groups, as outlined in this report.**

### **BACKGROUND**

The proposed Precincts Policy is intended to clarify Council's recognition and expectations of precinct groups operating in the City of Fremantle. This policy aims to clearly outline the limits in which the City may provide recognition and financial and other support to specific geographically located precinct groups in order to encourage and enable unrestricted membership for all community members from all areas of the City.

At the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 24 January 2018, Council approved the distribution of a draft Precincts Policy, for public consultation and requested that the draft Precincts Policy and a summary of submissions received, be presented to Council for further consideration, following the consultation period.

A public consultation period took place from 29 January until 13 March 2018, and nine submissions were received.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

No significant financial implications have been identified as a result of this report.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

No significant legal implications have been identified as a result of this report.

### **CONSULTATION**

A public consultation period in regard to the proposed Precincts Policy, took place from 29 January until 13 March 2018. The Policy was advertised on the City's website through the "My say Freo" portal for community engagement and all Precinct Groups were contacted individually.

Nine submissions were received during this period as summarised in the tables below:

	Summary of submission	Officer response
1.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inconsistency between map annotation and listed precinct names.</li> <li>Otherwise, the policy looks fine.</li> </ol>	Inconsistency has been corrected

	Summary of submission	Officer response
2.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The policy appears to be eminently sensible while not being too onerous in its demands on the Precincts.</li> <li>It is not anticipated to excite any adverse comment within the North Fremantle Precinct.</li> <li>“Freospace” may have been superseded as a means of communication but is probably useful as a point of reference.</li> </ol>	No response required.

	Summary of submission	Officer response
3.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Administration</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clause should be added to require meeting minutes to be made available online (Freospace) for transparency and within 2 weeks of the meeting.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Elections</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Precincts must not use City funds to support any individual candidate or group of candidates nor must they use the Precinct platforms (social media pages etc) to preference one candidate or a group of candidates over another.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Complaints process</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the policy lacks any statement outlining a complaints process. If a community member is dissatisfied with how a Precinct is being conducted what are the steps to lodge a complaint?</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Measuring success</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>what metrics does the City intend to put in place or has in place to measure the success or otherwise of the Precinct system? Perhaps a clause could be inserted in this policy to cover off this issue?</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Administration</b> <p>The proposed policy amended to require that any publications made by precincts should be posted online within 2 weeks of publication and or meeting.</p> </li> <li><b>Elections</b> <p>The proposed policy addresses this.</p> </li> <li><b>Complaints process</b> <p>Additional details to make complaint/compliments included in proposed policy</p> </li> <li><b>Measuring success</b> <p>There is an existing clause to encourage inactive precincts to reactivate however precinct groups do not have any required outcomes. Precincts will continue to be monitored on their activity level to assess the overall continuing success of the system.</p> </li> </ol>

	Summary of submission	Officer response
4.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Policy statement: Line 2 - define "community member".</li> <li>2. Paragraph 2 - remove "are advisory in nature" because they are about sharing information.</li> <li>3. "The meetings are an avenue for informing the local government of community opinion and maintaining two-way communication between community members and the City of Fremantle" is not entirely true. Elected members are there to listen and answer questions and not to influence or promote.</li> <li>4. Activation and Deactivation: 6 months without public meetings is sufficient time for deactivation.</li> <li>5. Administration - there should be better guidelines. Many volunteer organisations are well regulated and run along practical and fair guidelines.</li> <li>6. Each precinct group can decide:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to appoint their convener." The convener should be up for nomination each year. There are people who would like to volunteer and be more active but do not get the chance.</li> <li>• "The length of term and how many terms a convener can be appointed for." This is not democratic or fair. It should be decided annually. Communities are diverse and it is preferable to give as many members as possible a go.</li> <li>• "Who will be the precinct contact person and action correspondence received." This is the standard secretary position of any volunteer organisation and needs to have stricter guidelines to ensure confidentiality.</li> <li>• "If and how meetings will be recorded, for example, meeting notes or minutes." There should be a standard procedure for all precincts - especially if precinct is to "provide input" to local government.</li> <li>• "How best to share information with</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Community member defined.</li> <li>2. Removed</li> <li>3. Disagree the precincts are about information and two way communication.</li> <li>4. We are trying to be flexible and avoid precincts being automatically deactivated because of something like simple ill health or other unfortunate event.</li> <li>5. The City does not intend to control or organise precinct groups, this policy is simply designed to indicate the required conditions to receive funding.</li> <li>6. <b>Convener (appointment and term)</b> - The City does not intend to control or organise precinct groups, this policy is simply designed to indicate the required conditions to receive funding.</li> </ol> <p>Traditionally it has been difficult to find willing members of the community to put their hands up to act as convenors for precinct groups, the city is reluctant to attempt to enforce any conditions that may make it even more difficult to attract or maintain willing participants.</p> <p><b>Contact person</b> – the City simply needs to be able to contact someone from the precinct who can provide information and confirm compliance with the policy in order to enable the provision of funding and the confirmation of activation when necessary.</p> <p><b>Meetings</b> - The City does not intend to control or organise precinct groups, this policy is simply designed to indicate the required conditions to receive funding. In addition, any person or group is able to provide input to the local</p>

<p>precinct members, for example, by email, social media, or through Freospace (see definitions). Precinct must be clear that this is all "published material".</p> <p>7. 10 Elections:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fantastic to have in print that "the City does not support LOCAL, state or federal electioneering"</li> <li>2. "The City acknowledges the role of the precincts in encouraging community interest in council elections, such as organising events to allow community members to meet candidates and hear what they have to say. However, Precincts must not use City funds to support any individual candidate or group of candidates in an election." <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is not just the use of funds that is the problem, promotion by word of mouth is also a problem.</li> <li>- the city should provide all election material.</li> <li>- precincts should not be able to ask who is nominating</li> <li>- a formal procedure for all precincts to follow would be helpful.</li> </ul> </li> </ol> <p>8. "The City will facilitate an annual informal meeting between precinct convenors and elected members. The purpose of this meeting is to provide an opportunity for convenors to meet with elected members and ask any questions they may have in regard to the management of meeting processes."</p> <p>Disagree - It should be open to any precinct members or the elected members can attend precinct meetings. Precinct convenors DO NOT represent the community.</p>	<p>government regardless of precinct membership.</p> <p><b>Sharing Information</b> – clause added to policy</p> <p>7. The City is not legally permitted to be involved in promoting candidates and already makes all general information about elections available to all members of the Fremantle community at the same time.</p> <p>The City does not intend to control or organise precinct groups, this policy is simply designed to indicate the required conditions to receive funding and if electioneering is proven then funding will be withdrawn.</p> <p>8. This meeting is intended as a way for elected members to recognise those members of the community who volunteer their time to convene and organise precinct meetings and to offer their own experiences in relation to meeting procedures.</p>
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	Summary of submission	Officer response
5.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fremantle Society, has been removed from the list of precincts and thus loses funding. Given the Society's role, and its opposition to certain policies of Council, this smacks of censorship. I recommend it be reinstated.</li> <li>2. Precinct boundaries would be better aligned with ward boundaries and ward councillors encouraged to attend regularly to achieve better dialogue community/Council.</li> <li>3. Council puts out a lot of top-down information at present. I know councillors are very busy but this is a matter of priorities. If re not aligned, define "any interested community member" to overcome the current problem e.g I live in Beaconsfield (South ward) and would be happy to attend South Fremantle precinct meetings. Even if I am "interested", am I a "community member"? Web Posts are okay but interested "community members" should be able to sign up to receive email notices of meetings.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fremantle society and Fremantle Inner City Residents Association (FICRA) exclusion – These groups have been omitted from the list as it was understood that they do not comply with the intent of the city and therefore will be unable to meet the terms of the policy.</li> <li>2. Elected members are able to and often do, attend precinct groups anywhere within the city of Fremantle <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fremantle society exclusion</li> <li>• define any interested community member</li> <li>• information sharing platforms</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. A definition has been added to the proposed policy – the intention of council is for precincts to be open to ALL, regardless of where a person lives and based solely on their interest in a particular subject.</li> </ol>

	Summary of submission	Officer response
6.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Anyone who agrees with the objectives of The Fremantle Society can apply for membership, as is the case with other precincts, so it is the open membership, required for funding.</li> <li>2. The Fremantle Society uses members' fees and donations for running costs and to pay 'experts' to give their opinion to them (same as the City.) The inevitable sometimes happens that the expert opinions differ. This provides councillors with an alternative view on which to base their opinion. The more information they have the better. Indeed this is surely the basis of democracy. It is totally unreasonable to have a criterion which</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The intention of council is that membership of precincts does not have to be applied for nor a fee charged or any conditions imposed in order for a precinct to be considered for city funding.  Additional Precincts can be included at any time at the discretion of council.</li> <li>2. Council would like precinct membership to be open to all community members regardless of their capacity to pay a membership fee.</li> <li>3. It is not the intention of council to</li> </ol>

	<p>excludes organisations that charge a membership fee, as organisations often provide tea for their committees, might have legal fees eg for adopting a new constitution etc which have to be met.</p> <p>3. by adopting this criterion, the City would be seen, to my mind, as deliberately excluding such organisations, thus stifling other opinions which might be contrary to the City's. This is NOT acceptable in a democracy, or in local government and I appeal to councillors to consider their wider duty to the citizens in valuing the increased information being given, for their decision making. Many Fremantle residents are members of the Society.</p>	<p>prohibit the formation of any community group or bar a group from providing advice or information to council. Council welcomes any community member or group to provide information that they consider important for council to know.</p>
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	Summary of submission	Officer response
7.	The Arts Centre precinct supported the policy at their most recent meeting.	No response required

	Summary of submission	Officer response
8.	<p>1. The Gibson Park Precinct (GPP) supported the policy at their most recent meeting.</p> <p>2. Our group appreciates being able to meet in an open forum and engage in two-way communication between ourselves and the City of Fremantle on issues important to us.</p> <p>3. The draft policy is easy to follow and understand, and appears to cover all the important questions regarding Precinct Groups.</p> <p>4. We appreciate that the role of the City's Community Engagement Team in the operation of precincts groups is better defined than in the draft policy than in the Precinct Guidelines of 2012.</p>	No response required

	Summary of submission	Officer response
9.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Fremantle Society is unhappy that it and Fremantle Inner City Residents Association (FICRA) are being excluded from the precinct system, especially given they have been among the most active precincts in recent years. We believe it was the Fremantle Society that brought the precinct system to Fremantle in the first place from North Sydney.</li> <li>2. In recent years the precinct system has not had the council staff support it should have to make the precinct system work effectively, and too often some precincts seem to operate to support incumbent councillors rather than to get the community informed and engaged.</li> <li>3. The Fremantle Society, as an active group seeking a better Fremantle, needs advance notice of upcoming events and developments and that is one of the reasons for having precincts.</li> <li>4. It seems that the precinct review is partly politically motivated and partly motivated to reduce rather than increase council costs and efforts to inform the community, something the council has been strongly criticised for in all recent community surveys.</li> <li>5. The Fremantle Society covers the whole of Fremantle and is different to other precinct groups, but its track record of being engaged in local issues, and submitting extensive and frequent submissions based on professional expertise should earn it the right to stay in the precinct system.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is not the intention of council to prohibit the formation of any community group or bar a group from providing advice or information to council. Council welcomes any community member or group to provide information that they consider important for council to know.</li> <li>2. Precinct groups are community led and organised groups that the City provides funding and initial support during activation for (pending compliance with requirements). Precinct groups are expected to be independent community groups and this Policy is intended to outline the conditions under which funding will be provided.</li> <li>3. The City takes community engagement seriously and uses a variety of avenues in order to promote upcoming events and developments which are all freely accessible to all members of the community.</li> <li>4. Having a clear and concise policy and an updated set of guidelines was the motivator for review.</li> <li>5. It is not the intention of Council to prohibit any community group or bar a group from providing advice or information. This policy is intended to guide the distribution of available funding only.</li> </ol>

## **OFFICER COMMENT**

In addition to improved clarity, it is anticipated that clearer guidelines and the introduction of assistance made available for those wishing to reactivate an inactive precinct will promote and encourage the development of those precincts that are not currently active.

## **VOTING AND OTHER SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS**

Simple Majority Required

## **OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION**

**That Council:**

- 1. Receives the summary of submissions made, in regard to the advertised proposed Precincts Policy, during the public consultation period from 29 January until 13 March 2018, and**
- 2. Adopts the proposed Precincts Policy as included below:**

### **Precincts Policy**

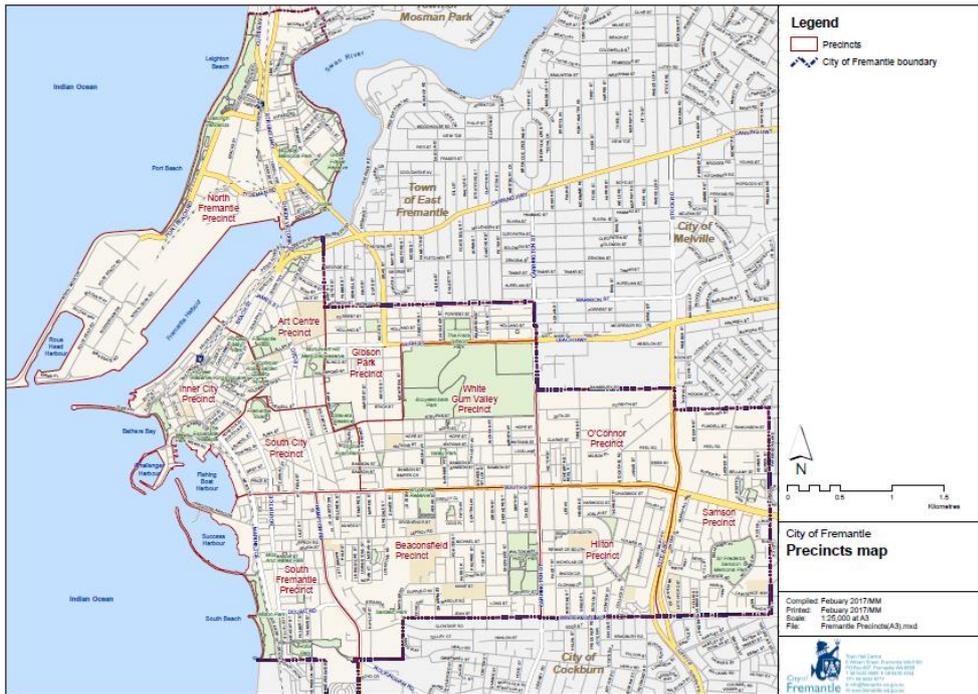
#### **Policy scope**

**As an open and consultative local government, the City of Fremantle supports precinct groups, to encourage any community member to participate and take an active role in providing input into the operations of the local government.**

**Precinct groups are run by community members, offer opportunities for information sharing a, and their meetings are open forums where any community member can attend and engage on a range of community issues. The meetings are an avenue for informing the local government of community opinion and maintaining two-way communication between community members and the City of Fremantle.**

#### **1. Policy statement**

**The City of Fremantle will make assistance available to any of the 11 precinct groups, where they operate in compliance with this policy, which cover the entire geographical area of Fremantle as laid out in the map below:**



## 2. Geographical area Precinct Groups

Precinct groups recognised by the City of Fremantle are listed below.

Two or more Precinct groups may combine to form larger groups, with the agreement of all relevant groups, either temporarily (perhaps to address a specific issue) or permanently (perhaps to better meet community needs).

- Arts Centre Precinct
- Inner City Precinct
- Hilton Precinct
- O'Connor Precinct
- South City Precinct
- White Gum Valley Precinct
- Beaconsfield Precinct
- Gibson Park Precinct
- North Fremantle Precinct
- Samson Precinct
- South Fremantle Precinct

## 3. Activation and Deactivation

1. A precinct will become automatically deactivated when there are no publicly open meetings held in a 12 month period.
2. A deactivated precinct can be activated by application in writing to the City of Fremantle. Funding will be provided as though the precinct were active, for a 6 month period, to allow for an inaugural meeting to be held and the establishment of a convener for the group. If no convener is established within the 6 month period the Precinct will revert to its deactivated state.
3. Administration access to Freospace (see definitions) can also be made available for a 6 month period to support the re-activation of a precinct group.

#### **4. Membership**

**Precincts must provide open, cost and commitment free membership where any interested community member is welcome to participate.**

#### **5. Administration**

- 1. Each Precinct is to update the contact details for their precinct contact details and name of their convener with the community engagement team once a year.**
- 2. All published material, including meeting notes and minutes, produced by a precinct, are to be made publically available within 14 working days of distribution or from when a meeting is held.**
- 3. Each precinct group can decide:**
  - How to appoint their convener.**
  - The length of term and how many terms a convener can be appointed for**
  - Who will be the precinct contact person and action correspondence received.**
  - What the meeting schedule will be.**
  - If and how meetings will be recorded, for example, meeting notes or minutes.**
  - How best to share information with precinct members, for example, by email, social media, or through 'Freospace' (see definitions).**

#### **6. Venues and attendance**

- 1. Precinct meetings are to be held in a public venue, such as a community centre, school, café or local club and attendance must be open to all.**
- 2. Some venues may charge a hire fee which is a legitimate precinct expense.**
- 3. Precincts can request to use City owned venues at low or no cost.**
- 4. Attendance records must be kept for all precinct meetings. These are required by the City for insurance purposes to confirm who was present in the event of an injury or incident. Attendance records must be sent to the community engagement team following each meeting.**

#### **7. Financial support**

- 1. The City may support precincts to a maximum value of \$850 per financial year, in accordance with relevant City policy, in the following way:**
  - Venue hire.**
  - Printing costs and distribution, for meeting flyers to promote a special precinct meeting or community activity.**
  - Meeting refreshments (the City will not pay for alcohol).**

2. To be considered eligible for financial support, precinct groups must operate in compliance with the terms of this policy.
  3. Any funding for activities other than normal precinct meetings requested must be made, in writing, through the community engagement team.
  4. Precinct budget information can be made available to precincts on request.
8. Reimbursements
1. Cash reimbursement is available to cover expenses up to \$50 when:
    - payments are made by cash or EFTPOS and a tax invoice has been provided
    - a receipt and contact details of the person making the claim has been provided within 14 days of the expenditure.
  2. Application for reimbursement over \$50 must be made, in writing, accompanied by a copy of the invoice through the community engagement team.
9. Promotional Support
1. Precincts are required to give reasonable prior public notice of any meetings to be held.
  2. The City will promote the precincts and their meetings, through the use of its web site, social media channels and noticeboards, where possible. The City will not publish any communication from a precinct if the content is considered inappropriate by the Chief Executive Officer.
  3. The City may assist with printing flyers and notices for distribution to promote special meetings or one-off events.
  4. Requests for precinct advertisements and notices to be published on the City's social media channels or assistance with flyers can be made through the community engagement team.
  5. Each precinct will be provided with their own site on Freospace, where they can present news and opinion on the blog, update the events calendar, upload meeting minutes and agendas and seek community views via online surveys and quick-polls.
  6. A Precinct's Freospace site is to be maintained by volunteers from that precinct, who will be offered training by the City to use and moderate their site.
10. Elections
1. The *Local Government Act 1995* does not allow the use of council resources to assist any individual candidate in their election activities. The City is also responsible for being objective, non-political and

unbiased therefore the City does not support local, state or federal electioneering and City funds must not be used for electioneering in local government elections.

2. The City acknowledges the role of the precincts in encouraging community interest in council elections, such as organising events to allow community members to meet candidates and hear what they have to say. However, Precincts must not use City funds to support any individual candidate or group of candidates in an election.
3. Precincts who wish to promote council elections must:
  - include all candidates in any publications distributed containing information about the election.
  - invite all candidates to participate in events or functions organised by the precinct, in relation to the election, in order to ensure each candidate is given an equal opportunity to participate.
4. The City encourages precincts to hold joint precinct events spanning multiple electoral wards.
5. Financial support may be withdrawn from precincts that do not comply with the requirements of this policy.

## 11. Customer Requests

The City has a customer service centre to manage all enquiries received by the City in the ordinary course of business. Precincts and their members can also direct their enquiries to this centre in the normal way.

## 12. Community Engagement Team

The City of Fremantle will keep active precincts informed of community engagement processes undertaken by the City and matters that relate to the administration of the precincts.

## 13. Precinct Meetings

1. The City will facilitate networking meetings between the City and precincts where requested. The purpose of these face-to-face meetings is to provide an opportunity for sharing of information and networking. All precinct members are welcome to attend.
2. The City will facilitate an annual informal meeting between precinct convenors and elected members. The purpose of this meeting is to provide an opportunity for convenors to meet with elected members and ask any questions they may have in regard to the management of meeting processes.

#### 14. Community engagement team

For further information, complaints, compliments and questions, please contact:

The Community Engagement Team can be contacted:

T (08) 9432 9999

E [communityengagement@fremantle.wa.gov.au](mailto:communityengagement@fremantle.wa.gov.au)

#### 15. Definitions and abbreviations

***Community member*** - any person interested in a community issue relevant to the City of Fremantle, residential status is irrelevant.

***Convener*** - the person acting as chairperson for Precinct Meetings.

**Note:** The Convener does not have to be the official contact person for the Precinct. Another member can be nominated to act as contact person and to action correspondence on behalf of the Precinct.

***Freospace;***

1. Freospace is an online collaborative environment for precincts, designed to assist groups share information, discuss community issues and make it convenient for people to get involved in their local precinct.
2. The City of Fremantle has conditions of use to cover all aspects of community interaction and moderation on the Freospace site. All users of the site, including moderators and administrators, are asked to comply with these conditions of use to ensure the site is inclusive and appropriate.