



SCOPE

This assessment tool is to be used when preparing any new Council Policy or amending/updating an existing policy. It also applies to any new or updated CEO Directive.

WHY DO WE NEED AN ASSESSMENT TOOL?

The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 and the Gender Equity Act 2020 both require Council to consider the impacts on rights and responsibilities when making decisions, preparing or updating a new local law, when making changes to council services and when preparing/updating new policies and procedures. Council is also required to consider climate change mitigation and planning in its decisions under section 9 of the Local Government Act 2020. This same act also outlines strategic principles that must be considered when developing or updating policies and directives.

This tool is to guide you through how to complete such an assessment to ensure that Council is meeting its legislative obligations, as well as ensuring there is no unconscious bias or inadvertent adverse implications for peoples' rights when preparing policies and CEO Directives.

HOW DO I USE THIS TOOL?

You must use this tool whenever updating or preparing a new Council Policy or CEO Directive. This assessment will form part of the documentation provide to ELT and Council to inform their consideration of the proposed policy or directive.

All sections of the tool need to be completed – if there are no apparent implications, then please write something along the lines of '*It is considered there are no implications at the time of preparing this document.*' For the Local Government Act 2020 principles, you may include the text '*Not applicable*' if it is irrelevant to the policy or directive.

OFFICIAL

CONSIDERATION OF PRINCIPLES OUTLINED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2020

| Principle | Comment |
|--|---|
| Governance and Strategic Principles (section 9) | |
| Council decisions are to be made and actions taken in accordance with the relevant law | This policy is intended to support and align with other Acts, Legislation and Regulations, and relevant Council Policies and Procedures. An outline of related policies and legislation can we found in the policy. |
| Priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations | This policy aims to inform and guide the way Strathbogie Shire Council and its employees and contractors use social media, and to allow a broader reach of information and direct comment which is quickly available. |
| The economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks, is to be promoted | Social Media is a positive way of reaching the community. It can be used to share information about Climate Change and can also replace the need for printed information. |
| The municipal community is to be engaged in strategic planning and strategic decision making | Social Media is a key communications tool to inform our community about opportunities to be engaged in strategic planning and strategic decision making. |
| Innovation and continuous improvement is to be pursued | This policy provides a significant improvement to Council's use of Social Media. It outlines authorised use and how Council will manage inappropriate or incorrect comments. |
| Collaboration with other Councils and Governments and statutory bodies is to be sought | Research on other government bodies Social Media Policy was conducted. |
| The ongoing financial viability of the Council is to be ensured | Social Media provides countless financial benefits to Council's communications. It is free with a strong reach. |
| Regional, state and national plans and policies are to be taken into account in strategic planning and decision making | Social Media is a key communications tool to inform our community about regional, state and national plans and policies that are important to them. |
| The transparency of Council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured | Social Media is a key communications tool to inform our community. |
| Community Engagement Principles (section 56) | |
| A community engagement process must have a clearly defined objective and scope | Social Media is a key communications tool to inform our community. When it comes to engagement, we use the tool to inform people of the opportunity and link to further information on how to have a say. |

OFFICIAL

| | |
|---|--|
| Participants in community engagement must have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation | Social Media is the timeliest option to inform – it is instant. |
| Participants in community engagement must be representative of the persons and groups affected by the matter that is the subject of the community engagement | Social media is used to inform the community about engagement opportunities |
| Participants in community engagement are entitled to reasonable support to enable meaningful and informed engagement; | Social media is used to inform the community about engagement opportunities |
| Principle | Comment |
| Participants in community engagement are informed of the ways in which the community engagement process will influence Council decision making | Social media is used to inform the community about engagement opportunities |
| Public Transparency Principles (section 58) | |
| Council decision making processes must be transparent except when the Council is dealing with information that is confidential by virtue of this Act or any other Act | Social media is a key communication tool from Council |
| Council information must be publicly available unless— (i) the information is confidential by virtue of this Act or any other Act; or (ii) public availability of the information would be contrary to the public interest | Social media is a way of informing the community and linking back to information |
| Council information must be understandable and accessible to members of the municipal community | Social media is a component of all C&E Planning. Other methods are also used to ensure we reach all members of the community. |
| Public awareness of the availability of Council information must be facilitated | This policy outlines how Council will use social media to provide information, but also how we will manage inappropriate or incorrect information. |
| Strategic Planning Principles (section 89) | |
| A Council must undertake the preparation of its Council Plan and other strategic plans in accordance with the strategic planning principles | Social media is used to inform the community about the preparation of Council Plan and strategic plans. |
| An integrated approach to planning, monitoring and performance reporting is to be adopted | The C&E Team currently register social media posts and media activity. |
| Strategic planning must address the Community Vision | Social media is a way of informing the community and linking back to information |
| Strategic planning must take into account the resources needed for effective implementation | Not applicable |

OFFICIAL

| | |
|--|---|
| Strategic planning must identify and address the risks to effective implementation | Not applicable |
| Strategic planning must provide for ongoing monitoring of progress and regular reviews to identify and address changing circumstances. | The EM C&E provides regular performance updates to Councillors and ELT through the Councillor eBulletin |

OFFICIAL

| Principle | Comment |
|---|---|
| Financial Management Principles (section 101) | |
| revenue, expenses, assets, liabilities, investments and financial transactions must be managed in accordance with a Council's financial policies and strategic plans | Social media is a free communications tool. When paid advertising is used, this is managed in accordance. |
| <p>Financial risks must be monitored and managed prudently having regard to economic circumstances</p> <p>For the purposes of the financial management principles, financial risk includes any risk relating to the following—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the financial viability of the Council (b) the management of current and future liabilities of the Council (c) the beneficial enterprises of the Council | There are no financial risks identified using free social media platforms |
| Financial policies and strategic plans, including the Revenue and Rating Plan, must seek to provide stability and predictability in the financial impact on the municipal community | Not applicable |
| Accounts and records that explain the financial operations and financial position of the Council must be kept | Not applicable |
| Service Performance Principles (section 106) | |
| Services should be provided in an equitable manner and be responsive to the diverse needs of the municipal community | This policy outlines how Council uses social media to inform the community. It also outlines how we respond. |
| Services should be accessible to the members of the municipal community for whom the services are intended | Social media is one tool in Council's communication's toolbox. Other tools are used to ensure reach and participation across the community. |
| Quality and costs standards for services set by the Council should provide good value to the municipal community | Social media is a free communication tools with significant reach. |
| A Council should seek to continuously improve service delivery to the municipal community in response to performance monitoring | This policy is an example of continuous improvement |
| Service delivery must include a fair and effective process for considering and responding to complaints about service provision | This policy outlines how we respond to questionable, misleading, defamatory, vexatious, inappropriate or likely to negatively influence customer, community and stakeholder perceptions of Strathbogie Shire. |

OFFICIAL

OFFICIAL

CONSIDERATION OF CHARTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND

RESPONSIBILITIES ACT 2006 IMPACTS

Council can limit human rights when those limitations can be justified. This means that Council can continue to make decisions on behalf of the community about how best to balance rights, ensure community safety, and use limited funding for competing public interest challenges.

| Are there any human rights implications arising from this policy or directive in relation to the 20 substantive rights? Note: some rights have been excluded that do not apply to local government (e.g., deprivation of liberty) | Analysis |
|---|--|
| Recognition and equality before the law (section 8) | This policy states officers (where they can be identified as a Council employee) must not post material that is offensive, obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, bullying, discriminatory, hateful, racist, sexist, infringes copyright, constitutes a contempt of court, breaches a Court suppression order, or is otherwise unlawful. |
| Right to life (section 9) | As above |
| Protection from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (section 10) | As above |
| Freedom from forced work (section 11) | As above |
| Freedom of movement (section 12) | As above |
| Privacy and reputation (section 13) | This policy is designed to protect Council's reputation by providing information and factual information to the community |
| Freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief (section 14) | <p>This policy states officers (where they can be identified as a Council employee) must not post material that is offensive, obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, bullying, discriminatory, hateful, racist, sexist, infringes copyright, constitutes a contempt of court, breaches a Court suppression order, or is otherwise unlawful.</p> <p>It recognises that officers use social media in their personal life and is not intended to discourage or limit personal expression or online activities</p> |
| Freedom of expression (section 15) | As above |
| Peaceful assembly and freedom of association (section 16) | As above |
| Protection of families and children (section 17) | As above |
| Right to take part in public life (section 18) | As above |
| Cultural rights (section 19) | As above |

OFFICIAL

| | |
|--|-----------------|
| Property rights (section 20) | As above |
| Liberty and security of person (section 21) | As above |
| Fair hearing (section 24) | As above |
| Rights in criminal proceedings (section 25) | As above |
| Overall, does the policy, local law or decision raise human rights issues? | As above |
| Are there any human rights implications arising from this policy or directive in relation to the 20 substantive rights? Note: some rights have been excluded that do not apply to local government (e.g., deprivation of liberty) | Analysis |
| Overall, does the policy, local law or directive restrict or interfere with the scope of the human right/s identified? If yes, are the limitations or restrictions reasonably and demonstrably justified under Section 7 of the Human Rights Charter? | No |
| Are there any less restrictive means reasonably available to achieve the purpose that the limitation seeks to achieve? | Not applicable |

OFFICIAL

GENDER EQUITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Gender impact assessments (GIAs) are designed to help organisations think critically about how policies, programs and services will meet the different needs of women, men and gender diverse people. The purpose GIAs is to create better and fairer outcomes, and make sure all people have equal access to opportunities and resources.

Your gender can affect your needs and experiences. This means that policies, programs and services can affect people of different genders in different ways. If we don't think about how their work affects different people, they might unintentionally reinforce inequalities.

A gender impact assessment must:

- assess the effects that the policy, program or service may have on people of different genders
- explain how the policy, program or service will be changed to better support Victorians of all genders and promote gender equality
- where practical, apply an intersectional approach to consider how gender inequality can be compounded by disadvantage or discrimination that a person may experience on the basis of other factors such as age, disability or ethnicity.

| Step 1 – Defining the issues and challenge your assumptions | |
|--|---|
| What is the issue the policy or directive is aiming to address (think about why it is needed)? | The policy outlines the use of Council's social media platforms. These platforms provide an opportunity to inform the community of different projects, plans, strategies and activities in Strathbogie Shire. This means it can be used to attract attention to activities that target different genders. |
| Are the people who are targeted and impacted by the policy or directive included in the decision-making? | No |
| Do you think that people of different genders access this policy or directive at the same rate? | The policy itself is aimed at an internal audience. Our statistics show social media is reaching more women than men. |
| Do the different social roles and responsibilities that people take on affect the way people access and use this policy or directive? | Not the policy itself. Social media access is available 24/7. |
| Do you think that everyone who accesses this policy or directive has the same needs from it? | The policy itself yes. Social media no. This is why our content is varied – not just the type, but time of day it is posted. |
| Do the different social roles and responsibilities that people take on affect the way people access and use this policy or directive? | Not the policy itself. Social media access is available 24/7. |
| What additional needs might there be for people with disabilities, or from different cultural identities, ages, gender identities, sexual orientations or religions? | Videos are always captioned, and content is varied to reach different audiences |

OFFICIAL

| Step 2 – Understanding the policy context | |
|---|---|
| What information is available to understand who is likely to be affected by the policy or directive? | Internal audience |
| Do you already have this information? | Yes |
| How will you find the further information you need? Think about internal data, research, consultation. | Research on other relevant policies |
| What did the research and evidence tell you? List key points and references/evidence | Our policy needed to be strengthened. |
| Have you consulted with affected stakeholders on this aspect? State if it was formal or informal consultation. What were the key issues/outcomes/views? | ELT, informal. |
| What information is available to understand the lived experiences of the diverse groups who will be affected? | Limited impact. |
| Do you already have this information? | Yes |
| How will you find the further information you need? Think about internal data, research, consultation. | None |
| What did the research and evidence tell you? List key points and references/evidence | N/A |
| Have you consulted with affected stakeholders on this aspect? State if it was formal or informal consultation. What were the key issues/outcomes/views? | N/A |
| How is this policy or directive likely to have different impacts for different people? | It outlines use of Council's social media platforms, and personal social media when the person is identified as a Council officer |
| Do you already have this information? | No |
| How will you find the further information you need? Think about internal data, research, consultation. | Communication with staff to ensure they understand the policy and how to ensure they are meeting the requirements |
| What did the research and evidence tell you? List key points and references/evidence | n.a |

OFFICIAL

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Have you consulted with affected stakeholders on this aspect? State if it was formal or informal consultation. What were the key issues/outcomes/views?</p> | <p>n/a</p> |
| <p>Step 3 – Options analysis</p> | |
| <p>What are the policy options? For each option describe the proposed policy solution. Provide a brief description of the proposed strategies, activities or service design elements and how they will meet the needs and create benefit for the target audience.</p> | <p>This policy aims to inform and guide the way Strathbogie Shire Council and its employees and contractors use social media, and to allow a broader reach of information and direct comment which is quickly available.</p> <p>This policy provides a framework for social media use but does not replace assessment of individual situations and the appropriate way to respond or to not respond.</p> |
| <p>What are the potential policy options and what gendered impact might they have?</p> | <p>The policy outlines how we respond to any questionable, misleading, defamatory, vexatious and inappropriate content.</p> |
| <p>What are the gendered costs and risks?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is likely to be negatively impacted by this? How are the most vulnerable groups likely to be impacted? • Will this reduce a certain group's access to economic resources or opportunities? If so, are they already disadvantaged? • Does it reinforce harmful gender stereotypes, for example, further promoting men in a male dominated industry? | <p>The policy no. Social media is a tool that can be used to provide opportunity, access and campaign against gender stereotypes.</p> |
| <p>What are the gendered benefits?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will some people benefit more because they have greater access, or does this policy, program or service do everything it can to ensure resources are distributed and used equally? • Will it contribute to transforming gender norms in a positive way? E.g., will it contribute to a more balanced distribution of unpaid care labour and family responsibilities between women and men? • Will it make women and children safer in public or private spaces? | <p>As above</p> |
| <p>Will some people benefit more because they have greater access, or does this policy, program or service do everything it can to make sure resources are distributed and used equally?</p> | <p>Social media is a tool in Council's communication toolbox. It is used in conjunction with other tools to ensure a broad distribution of information.</p> |
| <p>Will it contribute to transforming gender norms in a positive way?</p> | <p>Social media is a tool that can be used to provide opportunity, access and contribute to transforming gender norms in a positive way.</p> |

OFFICIAL

| | |
|--|--|
| Does your policy, program or service potentially have negative unintended consequences for certain groups of people? | There are inherent risks for any organisation using social media or attracting comments from external sources via social media. This policy outlines how these negative commentary will be managed. |
| Overall, do the benefits outweigh the costs or vice versa? | Yes |
| Step 4 Recommendations | |
| Provide the rationale for the proposed recommendation and include any mitigation strategies that could be used to avoid any harmful unintended outcome. | This policy is clear on how Council’s social media content is generated and requires staff across the organisation to have content approved before it is published. |
| Include here the rationale for your recommendation as well as any mitigation strategies needed. In line with the Gender Equality Act, explain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how your recommendation meets the needs of persons of different genders • how it addresses gender inequality • how it promotes gender equality. | As previously outlined social media provides an opportunity for Council to promote its work in promoting and addressing gender equality (and inequality). |

HANDY HINTS

The above questions have been derived from the Gender impact assessment toolkit produced by the Commission for Gender Equality in the public sector. To access the gender equity impact assessment toolkit for more information, please use this link [Gender impact assessment toolkit | Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector \(genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/gender-impact-assessment-toolkit).

For Open Source gender data and research, please use the following resource – the final page is where you will find links to data and resources. [DPC 2011 CGEPS GIA-Templates & Resources FA-Web 0.pdf](#)

For Step 3 the following will assist in identifying whether an impact is a cost or a benefit for gender equity:

Negative or neutral gender impact

- Perpetuates gender inequality by reinforcing unbalanced norms, roles and relations.
- Privileges men over women and gender diverse people (or vice versa).
- Ignores differences in opportunities and resource allocation for people of different genders.
- Does not take into account issues of intersectionality.

Positive gender impact

OFFICIAL

- Considers gender norms, roles and relations for people of different genders and how they affect access to and control over resources.
- Promotes the elimination of existing gender gaps, or at least a significant reduction of them.
- Addresses the causes of gender-based health inequities, including the prevention of violence against women, girls and gender diverse people.
- Includes ways to transform harmful gender norms, roles and relations.

CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION/MITIGATION AND SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

The Local Government Act 2020 requires council to consider climate change mitigation and adaptation measures in all its key decision making, which includes policy development.

Council is also in the process of finalising a Climate Change Action Plan after declaring a Climate Emergency in 2021.

The Victorian Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2017-2020 sets out Council's responsibilities under the Act [Victorias-Climate-Change-Adaptation-Plan-2017-2020.pdf \(climatechange.vic.gov.au\)](#). The following factors should inform your analysis statement:

- Provide leadership and good governance, represent the needs and values of local communities, and foster community cohesion
- Manage climate change risks to council community services and assets, with support from the State Government
- Identify the needs and priorities of the municipality and communicate these to State Government where needed
- Develop and deliver locally appropriate adaptation responses
- Build the resilience of local assets and services
- Plan for emergency management at the municipal level, provide relief and recovery services, and support emergency response operations
- Help the State Government understand localised impacts and responses
- Work with the community to help people understand and get involved in climate change adaptation
- Help connect the State Government with the community.

OFFICIAL

Sustainable Strathbogie 2030 Strategy (to be updated to the

Climate Change Action Plan once adopted)

| Chapter 6 Climate Resilient Shire | Comment |
|---|--|
| Increasing heat | Social media provides Council the opportunity to educate the community about the Climate Change Action Plan, its actions and its progress. |
| Changing rainfall patterns, drought conditions, and extreme meteorological conditions | As above |
| Increased bushfire conditions and declining volunteer numbers | As above |
| Increased social impacts | As above |
| Chapter 7 A low carbon shire | Comment |
| Net Zero by 2025 | As above |
| Energy Efficiency | As above |
| Energy Storage | As above |
| Renewable Energy | As above |
| Community Renewable Energy | As above |
| Chapter 8 A water sensitive shire | Comment |
| Conserving valuable potable water | As above |
| Stormwater management | As above |
| Adaptive and recycled water resources | As above |
| Keeping our shire green, cool and resilient | As above |
| Chapter 9 A zero waste shire | Comment |
| Environmental impacts of landfill | As above |
| Limited landfill capacity | As above |
| Increased illegal dumping | As above |

OFFICIAL

| | |
|--|----------|
| Economic benefits from resource recovery | As above |
| Chapter 10 An ecologically rich shire | Comment |
| Deforestation | As above |
| Rural green infrastructure | As above |
| Increasing our urban canopy | As above |
| Rural roadsides | As above |
| Rivers & Wetlands | As above |
| Benefitting from our native forests | As above |
| Chapter 11 An active and connected shire | Comment |
| Security of fuel supply | As above |
| Transition to new fuel economy | As above |
| Enabling access to the outdoors | As above |