ThinkTank Session 2 – Questions & Answers

We captured your questions from Session 2 and have pulled together these responses. On the day questions were captured by Vision theme, we have kept these questions in their related themes.

Theme 1 – Our Inclusive and Connected Community

1. How do we educate children on Council operations?

We do not have any ongoing programs for educating children about what council does, however we do attend presentations at schools as requested to talk about Council's work. We have the Rethink Waste education centre, designed to educate and engage children on reducing waste, it is currently closed for repairs. Our specific services like the Maternal and Child Health Nurses and The Early Childhood Services educate children around health, the environment and sustainability in line with the Council plan.

Council also makes an effort to involve children and get their perspectives on our projects, this can be done through our online platform Shaping Banyule however more often in person. This method of engagement offers an element of education around the different operations Council performs and projects Council delivers.

2. How do we educate young people?

Youth Summit

The Banyule Youth Summit is a biennial event hosted by Banyule City Council. The purpose of the Summit is to provide a platform for Banyule young people to discuss and identify issues important in their lives. The Youth Summit model comprises a two-year cycle as follows:

- Year 1 - the preparation and delivery of the Youth Summit and key recommendations
- Year 2 - implementation of the key recommendations and delivery of a "Report Card" to the community about Council work undertaken and achieved.

Typically, over 100 young people from across 20 local secondary schools participate to discuss issues identified by both them and their peers. A diverse range of young people attend the Summit including those with disabilities, those who identified as LBTIQA+, Somali-Australian, and culturally and linguistically diverse young people. Participation opportunities include pre-summit workshops and focus groups coordinated by Council's Youth Services team.

Young people who attended the Youth Summit were invited to join the Youth Summit Representatives. The Youth Summit Representatives have worked alongside Council to deliver key Summit outcomes and provided valuable insights and perspectives into the planning and delivery of the Youth Summit Report Card.

You can read more about our **Youth Summit.**

Other concentrated efforts

- Young people were invited to join a new neurodiverse discussion group meeting quarterly to develop social media content positively highlighting the achievement of neurodivergent individuals
- Youth Services hosted a *Student Representative Council Training day* for secondary students who sit on their school council. In partnership with SRC Victoria, the full day session provided students with

opportunities for learning, networking, and coming together to find solutions to common issues in their schools

- The Youth team have a number of different newsletters they send out to reach young people, these include newsletters to sector contacts and schools.

3. Is Banyule Banner enough to spread local information. How do we engage different age groups? How do we bridge the generation gap?

The Banyule Banner is just one way we share information with the community – although it is a key way to ensure that we reach every household, and it is valued as our community's most preferred communication method.

We have many ways to get the word out to the community:

- Our Banyule website
- Social media channels
- Digital newsletters
- Shaping Banyule website and newsletters – and public consultation
- News from our Neighbourhood (Ward-specific newsletter that goes to each household up to 4 times/year)
- Brochures and pamphlets, delivered by post box drop, as well as at our Customer Service centres and more
- Bus shelters and digital walls
- Through our Customer Service staff
- Letters to the community
- Banyule-run events
- Mayor speaking on radio
- Articles and advertising in newspapers and online.

The community recently told us, in our recent *Communications Survey 2024*, that the top eight preferred methods of receiving information are the Banyule Banner (58%), News From Our Neighbourhood (31%), and the website (29%), direct mail / letterbox drop of information (29%), telephoning Council (19%), and emailing Council (18%), information sent with the rates notice (16%), and speaking face-to-face with Council staff (16%).

The key way to reach many different age groups is to have a good diversity of channels as listed above and have multiple touchpoints. We also attend festivals and events to reach members of the community face to face and have specific newsletters for our older generation and younger generations.

4. Are there plans to increase and improve communication with the community?

We are always looking at the best ways to reach the community. To help us better understand which media channels work best, of example there are many different social media channels for our community, are we using the rights ones to reach the residents? Are there unexpected ways to reach people better (e.g. podcast advertisements).

We conducted a communications survey with the community in 2024 to help us review our methods and ensure we build the community's current needs and preferences into our communications.

5. Equity and access across the municipality, is there consideration around how to connect community to existing services? Barrbunin Beek as example.

There are a number of ways how Council considers connecting community to existing services

- Council is delivering a new Service Navigation program aimed at connecting community to existing service. This program will start to be delivered over the coming months

- When planning for our activity centres and employment precincts, we consider which areas are already well serviced vs which areas need more services. We take into account a number of things like access to public transport and the demographics of the area
- We have a recently adopted **Housing Strategy** that directs housing growth to areas with good access to public transport and shops/services. We heavily consider how to connect the community with services at a geographical level
- We have a **Community Infrastructure Plan** which researched and identifies where new services are needed and prioritised having access to services that are easy to get to.

We also know that some areas of Banyule don't have the best public transport or cylcing/walking connections, so we advocate to other parts of government for improvement in this area as well as delivering improvements to walking and cycling paths ourselves. You can read more about our **Advocacy Priorities**.

Theme 2 – Our Sustainable Environment

6. Can Council/ does Council mandate FOGO for body corporate companies?

The State Government has mandated for all residential premises provided a waste service to have a four stream waste management by 2027, Rubbish, Glass, FOGO, and Recyclables. The same applies to properties not served by Council.

In addition, it has been illegal for a few years to dispose of E-waste to landfill so Owners Corporations who manage their own waste services need to plan and facilitate this.

As part of the planning approval process all properties are required to have a suitable waste management system in place. For properties being serviced by Council this is done automatically. For properties that are not serviced by Council there is a requirement to prepare a Waste Management Plan (WMP). The WMP is a legally binding document that Owners Corporations are required to follow. The Planning Team (not waste) are responsible for regulatory compliance.

7. Does Council recycle soft plastics, or does it go to the landfill? What is being does to address this issue?

This is not currently a service Council provides. Any soft plastic placed in Council rubbish bins or recyclable bins goes to landfill.

Both major supermarkets and the federal government are working together to rebuild the soft plastics recycling scheme that was run in supermarkets.

Theme 3 – Our Well-Built City

8. North East Link – information sharing to the ThinkTank

We've included a link to the **North East link project** on the ThinkTank members page. This project page has up-to-date information including background and historical information.

What can Council do to manage environment and housing?

Think about developer contribution plans. How will developers contribute back into the community?

Council has a development contributions system where developers contribute to open space upgrades/land purchasing and infrastructure upgrades. We are starting a new project to update the development contributions in the next year. It is a long process to update these and it will likely take at least two years.

With respect to Managing higher density living

Banyule has just adopted a new **Housing Strategy**. One of the key outcomes is to focus on good design and better outcomes in medium and higher density housing. A 'design and landscaping guide' for these kinds of development is being prepared which focuses on how to get the best design outcomes in our new residential developments. Including (but not limited to) environmentally friendly design, interface with the street and community connection, building materials, and internal amenity like sunlight, air flow and insulation.

Theme 4 – Our Valued Community Assets and Facilities

9. Is there help for children who cannot afford activities? Especially around sporting clubs?

We encourage our clubs to provides incentives/programs that help with cost of membership fee's. We also subsidise our sporting clubs to assist them with other supports.

To support Banyule community members to participate more often in sport and recreation activities, we are developing Active Banyule, a new Sports and Recreation Plan**.** Visit our **Shaping Banyule page** for more updates on what is included in this Plan and how you can provide your feedback.

10. Very difficult theme to uphold due to the fact that Council / Council officers sign NDA's / Confidentiality agreements with State Government or organisations (e.g LXRP) What is being done in this space? Do you advocate / take a stance and not sign?

Council at its meeting of 24 May 2021 resolved an official position on confidentiality agreements that may be entered into between individual Council officers and external agencies.

The following wording is to be inserted or attached to all future or amended confidentiality agreements between council officers and external agencies.

> *"It is recognised that confidentiality agreements between Council officers and external agencies can result in reduced transparency can result in reduced transparency by limiting the sharing of information between Council officers, Council and to our community. Accordingly, as an overarching principle, confidential agreements between external agencies and individual Council officers are to be avoided and only executed where considered absolutely necessary by the Banyule City Council Chief Executive Officer. The Chief Executive Officer is to approve all confidentiality agreements.*
>
> *The agency recognises that "Council" constitutes Councillors duly elected by the community and who form Council positions on matters via resolution at official meetings of the Council that are open to the public.*
>
> *When operating under a confidentiality agreement, the primary role of a Council Officer is to provide technical and operational input to the project to achieve the best possible outcome for the community, and Council for the successful design, planning, assessment, procurement, and delivery of the project.*
>
> *Where input of a technical nature has been provided by Council officers, it should not be purported to be deemed as consultation with the Council or to represent the views or position of the Council unless there is an explicit decision of the Council supporting those views and written advice is obtained confirming this is the case. Where the agency has discussed matters with Council officers, it should not be purported or to be deemed as the authority having consulted with the Council."*

Theme 5 – Our Thriving Economy

11. Can Council do more placemaking to support business? Help with loneliness and strengthen community?

Yes, Banyule can support placemaking in our retail centres. Placemaking is a vital aspect of enhancing community well-being and supporting local businesses. The Council can take several proactive steps to foster a more vibrant community:

- **Public Spaces and Gathering Areas**: Banyule is committed to create and enhance public spaces, such as parks and plazas, where residents can gather, interact, and engage in community activities. We do this via upgrades to our open space and playgrounds-, this works particularly well when they are located close together
- **Support for Local Events**: By organizing and promoting local events—such as markets, festivals, and workshops—we can create opportunities for businesses to thrive while bringing the community together. Banyule supports eleven retail Traders Association to deliver events like Christmas or Halloween. Whilst also running its own festivals and events that engage the community or occur in shopping areas
- **Collaboration with Local Businesses**: We can grow partnerships with local businesses. And we do this via the Traders Associations. The Associations deliver marketing and branding initiatives that encourage local shopping and promote unique offerings, helping to strengthen the local economy
- **Accessible Infrastructure**: Ensuring that our streets and pathways are pedestrian-friendly and accessible can make it easier for residents to connect with one another and local businesses.

By prioritising these types of activities, through the **Economic Development Strategy** (or other linking strategies from other departments) Council can significantly enhance placemaking efforts, ultimately fostering a stronger, more connected community.

Theme 6 – Our Trusted and Responsive Leadership

12. Why have Council chosen the deaf symbol to represent the disability community in its infographic during presentations?

Unfortunately, there isn't a universal symbol/icon for disability. The deaf symbol has been selected in this instance as it is widely recognized and understood. It helps to quickly convey that the data or information is related to disabilities, even if it doesn't specifically pertain to hearing impairment. We have used other symbols in the past and will continue to be inclusive throughout this process and all projects.

13. What are we doing to address the inequity where people who want to run for Council, however don't have the funds to run? Especially around minorities with lived experience?

Council undertook concerted efforts to increase representation of all demographics across the municipality through various candidate engagement information sessions.

A webpage was created on Council's website that focuses on the 2024 Elections, **Banyule City Council Elections 2024** and **Stand for Council | Banyule Council** the paged include but are not limited to:

An interactive ward map **Banyule wards | Banyule Council** for constituents and candidates to navigate, including downloadable and printable ward and municipal wide maps.

- Key election dates
- Information on standing for Council
- Resources for candidates and
- Links to various candidate information sessions.

A range of various Candidate information sessions listed were planned and were communicated via Council's various communication channels.

- Council's e newsletter
- Council's social media and Council's webpage
- the Banyule Banner for May 2024, and the July edition of the Banyule Banner for which distribution commenced on 9 July 2024.

The Municipal Association Victoria (MAV) Stand for Council session was held for the Northern Metro Region on Thursday 18 July 2024 at Hume City Council at the Broadmeadows Town Hall, 10 Dimboola Rd, Broadmeadows Vic 3047, which commenced at 6.30pm.

The MAV hosted a women-focussed Candidate Information Session in partnership with Kingston City Council that occurred on Wednesday 26 June 2024 in Cheltenham, which Banyule City Council also promoted for candidates within Banyule.

The session was offered face to face or online and included various former and current female councillors who shared their experiences of being a councillor to promote female representation and work towards the State Government's target of reaching 50% of female representation of councillors by 2025.

The Victorian Local Government Association (VLGA) facilitated free information sessions, which were promoted to the community on:

- Friday 17 May 2024 online
- Friday 24 May 2024 online.

Council is looking to work with the VLGA to support the efforts to increase female participation in the election process and the State Governments target to reach 50% of female councillors by 2025, and Council's requirements under the *Gender Equality Act 2020*.

The VLGA are also showcasing the Local Women Leading Change Handbook on Friday 19 July from 2.30pm-4.30pm at the Richmond Town Hall to celebrate the genuine, empowered participation of women in local democracy. First developed four (4) years ago to support women Councillors throughout their term, Banyule is proud to promote this event on behalf of VLGA, registration is free and can be made **at Local Women Leading Change.**

The module: Life as a Woman Councillor is scheduled was facilitated on Wednesday 7 August 2024 as a hybrid approach from 7-9pm at Level 4 Community Meeting Rooms, Flintoff Street, Greensborough.

In collaboration with Curiosity Co, Merri-bek Council hosted 2 (half day) sessions at the Glenroy Community Hub on Saturday 20th and 27th July from 11am-2.30pm, to encourage and support women candidates in culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. This was being offered as a Northern Council Alliance initiative and as was open to Banyule residents to attend.

The VEC also facilitate and present information sessions to prospective candidates on the nomination process. These will be held on Thursday 5 September 2024

14. **Every election cycle there is a family in Ivanhoe that tries to jack Council elections. This needs to be made public knowledge to protect integrity of local democracy.**

    Any concerns around the integrity of the Election need to be directed to the Victorian Electoral Commission or the Local Government Inspectorate. This is not the role for Council with respect to the election.

15. **Seeing lots of plan statements presented without planned out solutions being presented in terms of steps. What is in the pipeline of these themes being achieved? What is the timeframe for objectives? Who is responsible and accountable? How do we follow it?**

    We will provide further information in an online presentation – details will be confirmed.

Other

16. **Can we have someone from the Youth Development Team attend the next session? We talk a lot about young people but not many workers from Council are able to talk specifics.**

    We have had two youth officers attend the first two sessions to support our young participants. However we can definitely invite a youth team representative and provide more information about what services and supports Council provides for our young people.

17. **What did we learn from COVID 19 and what would you do differently in preparation for the next one?**

    During the lockdown period we had to think differently about how we provide our services, what services would had to continue and what other items were emerging. Below is a high level summary to give you an example of what shifted.

    - Importance of delivering flexible services across multiple platforms
    - Need to maintain a high level of communication- multiple rapid response communication channels, utilising the resources of key partners, to disseminate the right information to the right people at the right time
    - Disproportionate impact on lower socio-economic communities, especially families with school age children without access to technology
    - The strength of communities supporting each other and finding creative ways to connect, share experiences and create local spirit.
    - The public value associated with green and blue public spaces in our community
    - The importance of fostering liveable communities, where people can access the key services they need within their 20 minute precinct
    - Importance of vaccine education
    - Need to safeguard communities against social isolation and loneliness

    For more information about how the first coronavirus lockdown impacted the health and wellbeing of Victorian's there is a **Vichealth Impact study** that focuses on this.

18. **Financial Sustainability is concerning, is the cap on rate sustainable?**

    The rate cap poses significant challenges for Council's as the costs of providing council services continues to grow along with increasing community expectations.

    We will provide further information the long-term implications of rate capping will be provided in an online presentation – details will be confirmed.