



12.1 **SMALL BUSINESS FRIENDLY COUNCIL CHARTER**

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: **KYLIE BENNETTS, GENERAL MANAGER, CITY GROWTH AND ORGANISATIONAL CAPABILITY**

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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To discuss the Victorian Small Business Commission's request for the City of Port Phillip to sign the Commission's Small Business Friendly Council Charter.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Victorian Small Business Commission's (VSBC) Small Business Friendly Council Charter was launched in 2019.
- 2.2 The charter intends to demonstrate a commitment between Councils and the VSBC to work together to create a fair and competitive trading environment for Victorian small businesses.
- 2.3 Since the charter's inception in 2019, 53 Victorian Councils have signed.
- 2.4 Signing the charter serves to advise small business owners what they can expect from their local Council.
- 2.5 There are six commitments Councils are asked to make in signing the charter:
- 2.5.1 Work with small businesses disrupted by infrastructure projects
 - 2.5.2 Support the creation of business networks across Victoria
 - 2.5.3 Streamlined permit approvals processes for small businesses
 - 2.5.4 Prompt payment to small businesses
 - 2.5.5 Easy to read, easy to understand information for Victorian small businesses
 - 2.5.6 Open channels of communication between the VSBC and local councils
- 2.6 In June 2021, the VSBC wrote to the Mayor and CEO and requested that the City of Port Phillip sign the charter, and this is now being brought to Council for consideration.
- 2.7 Councils who sign the charter have 12 months upon signing to work towards fulfilling each commitment.

3. RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 3.1 Signs the VSBC's Small Business Friendly Council Charter.
- 3.2 Works towards fulfilling each commitment within the first 12 months of signing the charter and provide a progress report to Council and the Victorian Small Business Commission at the end of this period.
- 3.3 Notes officers will provide feedback as required to the Victorian Small Business Commission to enable them to review the value of the charter and if necessary, work with them to modify this as appropriate after 12 months. Any proposed material change to the Charter would be brought back to Council for consideration.



- 3.4 Promotes the initiative to the City of Port Phillip business community via our communications channels, business e-newsletter and the Prosperous Port Phillip Business Advisory Group.

4. KEY POINTS/ISSUES

- 4.1 There are six commitments Councils are asked to make in signing the charter and the expectation on Council would be as follows:
- 4.1.1 Work with small businesses disrupted by infrastructure projects by:
- Referring to the VSBC's Small Business Engagement Guidelines when planning new works and requesting that external project managers do the same.
 - Providing small businesses with the VSBC's guide for small businesses on Managing Disruption
- 4.1.2 Support the creation of business networks across Victoria by:
- Distributing the VSBC's guide to building Stronger Networks
 - Actively engaging with small business networks and identifying new opportunities for development
 - Include representatives of associations in conversations concerning small businesses
- 4.1.3 Streamlined permit approvals processes for small businesses by:
- Working towards improving permit approvals processes for new small businesses. This may mean:
an ongoing commitment to consolidating processes; or
continuing to implement new strategies to streamline permit approvals processes for small businesses
- 4.1.4 Prompt payment to small businesses where Council initiates processes to ensure invoices from small businesses are paid within 14 days
- 4.1.5 Easy to read, easy to understand information for Victorian small businesses where Council:
- links business with the resources available at business.vic.gov.au
 - provides the VSBC Retail Lease Checklist to prospective tenants (where relevant).
 - shares resources of relevance from the VSBC
 - Identifies opportunities for the development of new resources for businesses
- 4.1.6 Open channels of communication between the VSBC and local councils where Council will:
- notify the VSBC of issues affecting local small business communities



- refer commercial disputes to the VSBC dispute resolution team as appropriate
- provide details of the VSBC's dispute resolution services on its website

4.2 Council is on track to meet the commitments of the charter with inroads already made in several areas. This includes the streamlining of processes being enabled by the Customer Experience Program and the Small Business e-newsletter *Live Love Local*.

4.3 Council also has a Business Concierge on staff whose role is to directly assist small businesses and traders in navigating Council processes and procedures as well as the Prosperous Port Phillip Business Advisory Group who provide feedback to Officers and Councillors about the challenges faced by businesses post-COVID.

4.4 Officers will assess and document Council's progress on the charter commitments quarterly with a formal report brought to the chamber in twelve months' time.

5. CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDERS

5.1 The Charter has been shared with the Prosperous Port Phillip Business Advisory Group. The Group has not voiced concerns at Council becoming a signatory.

6. LEGAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no legal implications should Council sign the charter and not deliver, however, there are reputational risk concerns with committing to, and then not honouring such a commitment to local small businesses.

7. FINANCIAL IMPACT

7.1 Many commitments specified in the charter are already part of Council's current planning and processes. No additional funds are requested for the implementation of the charter.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

8.1 No environmental impact is identified.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT

9.1 Ensuring a prosperous small business community has significant benefit to the wider City of Port Phillip Community including the provision of quality goods and services and access to vibrant and bustling activity centres and neighbourhoods.

10. ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICY

10.1 The item aligns with Council's Vibrant Port Phillip strategic direction.

10.2 It also complements Council's declaration of an economic emergency, the *Live Love Local* economic, cultural and social recovery program and other commitments to support local businesses.

11. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

11.1 TIMELINE

11.1.1 Council would have 12 months to implement the commitments within the charter. Many of these are already taking place.



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11.2 COMMUNICATION

11.2.1 Officers would promote Council signing the charter to our local business community via all Council channels such as Divercity, social media, our small business e-newsletter and media releases are appropriate.

12. OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT INTEREST

12.1 No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any material or general interest in the matter.

ATTACHMENTS 1. **Small Business Friendly Charter 2020**  