

SUSTAINABILITY

STATUS:	City Policy - <i>A policy that is developed for administrative and operational imperatives and has an internal focus.</i> <i>Developed by the Policy Committee and/or the administration and adopted by Council.</i>
RESPONSIBLE DIRECTORATE:	Office of the CEO
OBJECTIVE:	To establish the City's position on its responsibility towards developing, achieving and maintaining a sustainable community.

STATEMENT OF INTENT:

The purpose of this policy is to set a direction that will, over time result in the achievement of outcomes consistent with the principles of sustainability. The Council is also mindful that in some instances there may be constraints through the need to act within legislation.

Policy Statement

In carrying out its functions as a local government the City of Joondalup will use its best endeavours to meet the needs of current and future generations through an integration of environmental protection, social advancement and economic prosperity.¹

In achieving this, the following guiding principles will be incorporated into the development of policies and strategies:

- 1 Management, planning and development decisions will be based on an integration of economic, environmental and social/cultural considerations.
- 2 Avoidance of the risk of serious or irreversible environmental damage will not be postponed because of a lack of full, scientific knowledge (the 'precautionary principle').
- 3 An understanding of the effects that local activities have on the community, the nation and the world.

¹ Local Government Act 1995 S 1.3 (2005)

- 4 Development of a strong, growing and diversified economy that enhances the capacity to protect the environment.
- 5 Policy measures will encourage voluntary, cost effective achievement of environmental goals and responses to environmental problems.
- 6 Acknowledgement will be made of the need for community consultation and participation in decision making to achieve a cooperative response to environmental, economic and community issues.²

To achieve this objective, the City will:

- 1 Adopt a best practice approach to policy development and implementation, based on the overarching principle of Sustainable Development (integrating the economic, social, cultural and environmental dimensions) and ensure that this overarching principle is recognised in all policies developed by the City.
- 2 Assess its own activities on the basis of minimising adverse environmental impacts while effectively delivering services to the community, particularly in decisions affecting development, planning, economic development programs and capital works.
- 3 Establish and enforce local laws in order to control activities that may have adverse environmental, social, cultural or economic impacts.
- 4 Act to raise awareness and understanding of the community and other stakeholders by seeking more effective arrangements and outcomes, engaging in effective public participation processes and supporting community involvement in sustainable activities.
- 5 Show leadership and community influence by demonstrating commitment and the benefits of improved sustainable practices.
- 6 Recognise and acknowledge the importance of effective community engagement in the policy development and decision-making process.

² 1992 Rio Conference Principles

Amendments:	CJ269-12/05, CJ238-12/06, CJ207-10/07
Related Documentation:	Local Government Act 1995 1992 Rio Conference Principles Sustainability Discussion Paper
Issued:	October 2007

SUSTAINABILITY DISCUSSION PAPER

BACKGROUND TO THE PAPER

The Council has endorsed a policy framework model that draws on a separation of Council policies – *strategic policies that set governing principles and guide the direction of the organisation to align with community values and aspirations*, and City policies, *policies that are developed for administrative and operational imperatives and have an internal focus*.

The Council has determined that the following Policies are Council Policies:

- (a) Policy 3-2 – Height and Scale of Buildings within Residential Areas;
- (b) Sustainability;
- (c) Financial Planning – Strategic Matters;
- (d) Economic Development;
- (e) Service Provision;
- (f) Community Development; (including leisure, cultural development etc.)
- (g) Public Participation.

This Discussion Paper has drawn on a range of documents, policies and positions developed in reference to the public sector both in Australia and internationally. It identifies the elements, principles and intended outcomes of sustainability, discusses the relationship between the four platforms of sustainability (the quadruple bottom line); and poses a possible model for policy development for the City of Joondalup.

PURPOSE

This Discussion Document aims to:

1. Consider the principles of sustainability and the issues those principles raise for the City as a whole;
2. Consider the policy items identified by the Policy Committee in the context of sustainability; and
3. Propose a framework for developing Council policies in order to meet the community's aspirations; align Council policies with community values and expectations; and reflect the strategic approach to governance the City has developed as expressed within the strategic planning framework.

SUSTAINABILITY IN A LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONTEXT

For the past ten years or so, local government in Australia has become more actively involved in identifying and developing mechanisms to achieve more sustainable outcomes. Commencing with the establishment of Agenda 21, following the 1992 Rio summit, now known as Local Agenda 21, this focus was almost entirely in the area of land use planning. More recently the sustainability agenda has been recognised as having positive and important implications across all facets of local governance.

The Local Government Act 1995 requires that:

In carrying out its functions a local government is to use its best endeavours to meet the needs of current and future generations through an integration of environmental protection, social advancement and economic prosperity.¹

In effect, the 2004 amendments to the Local Government Act 1995 **require** that local government address sustainability in its policy and strategy development.

Sustainability recognises the need to consider, in an integrated way, the wider economic, social and environmental implications of decisions and actions for the community; and the importance of taking a long-term rather than short-term view when taking those decisions and actions. Also known as the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) the three components of the sustainability agenda are well recognised as corner stones to building effective communities.

The sustainability agenda has more recently been expanded to consider a fourth arm of sustainable communities. Various known as cultural or ethical responsibility, this fourth component, making the Quadruple Bottom Line (QBL), reflects a community's values and behavioural expectations, especially of its leaders. In a local government context, the ethical issues are an important additive to the mix

Sustainability may therefore be described as meeting the challenge of striving simultaneously towards:

- **Social responsibility** - making decisions that lead to greater physical, cultural and financial access and equity in service delivery and activities.
- **Environmental responsibility** - not using more resources than required to deliver activities and services.
- **Economic responsibility** - promoting and maintaining a city's economic development and growth in a sustainable manner.
- **Ethical responsibility** – good governance, values and behaviours.

There are numerous definitions of sustainability. In the development context it may best be described as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In the larger context of local governance, it may be using, conserving and enhancing the community's resources so that ecological processes, on which life depends, are maintained, and the total quality of life, now and in the future, can be increased.

In September 2003 the Western Australian State Government released the Western Australian State Sustainability Strategy, which defines sustainability as:

Meeting the needs of current and future generations through integration of environmental protection, social advancement and economic prosperity.

¹ Local Government Act 1995 S1.3 State Law Publisher 2005

This is very similar to the World Commission on Environment and Development's definition, which defines sustainable development as

*Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*²

At the 2002 World Summit of local governments held in Johannesburg which focused on the issues of sustainable development, a declaration embracing sustainability was adopted. This had four key principles, as follows:-

- 1 *The overarching principle of Sustainable Development (integrating the economic, social, cultural and environmental dimensions).*
- 2 *Effective Democratic Decentralisation (with a substantial set of key competences, and commensurate financial resources for local governments).*
- 3 *Good Governance (effective leadership, transparency, accountability, probity, proper management and effective services, equitable access to services, a commitment to partnership working, and institutional capacity building).*
- 4 *Co-operation and Solidarity (partnerships for exchange of good practice, support and mutual learning)*³.

This statement recognises the role of the four planks of sustainability, including cultural or ethical sustainability, the importance of effective and participative democracy and community engagement in decision making, the key role of good governance, and of cooperation through partnerships.

The City is looking to introduce the quadruple bottom line as a basis for its decision making and reporting, and is currently reviewing the Global Reporting Initiative as a methodology.

The themes of transparency, accountability and efficiency which are crucial to quadruple bottom line reporting also constitute good governance. Improved information and reporting will allow for more informed and transparent decision making, particularly in areas of potential conflict between economic, social and environmental values.

DESIRED OUTCOMES OF SUSTAINABILITY

There are many and varied definitions of sustainability outcomes available. The South East Queensland Regional Organisation has, for example, determined that the following are the key outcomes of adopting a sustainable approach to governance:⁴

1. Integrated and long-term decision-making:

Incorporating long- and short-term environmental, economic and social considerations into decision making, within an ethical decision-making framework, which recognises matters of cultural and cross-cultural importance.

² United Nations' Brundtland Commission, 1987).

³ Local Government Declaration to the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

⁴ South East Queensland Regional Plan 2005 www.oum.qld.gov.au

- 2. Intergenerational equity:**
Ensuring the health, diversity and productivity of the environment is maintained or enhanced for the benefit of future generations.
- 3. Intra-generational equity:**
Ensuring a fair sharing of resources and opportunity amongst present generations.
- 4. Precautionary principle:**
Ensuring that, where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty is not used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation.
- 5. Conserving biological diversity and ecological integrity:**
Protecting the variety of all life forms, their genetic diversity and the ecosystem of which they form a part, recognising the various services they provide to humans as well as their intrinsic values.
- 6. Internalising environmental costs:**
Ensuring the true costs and life cycle costs of activities are reflected in the price of a product or service.

To embrace the concept of sustainability a community requires guiding principles. In considering these principles, the following points need to be kept in mind:

A sustainable community:

- utilises nature's ability to provide for human needs, without undermining its ability to function over time;
- ensures the well-being of its members, offering and encouraging tolerance, creativity, participation and safety;
- empowers people with shared responsibility, equal opportunity, and access to expertise and knowledge;
- consists of businesses, industries, and institutions, which collaborate as well as compete, are environmentally sound, financially viable, and socially responsible, investing in the local community in a variety of ways.

WORLD STANDARDS - PRINCIPLES OF SUSTAINABILITY

A voluntary World Standard on effective environmental management (sustainability) has been developed (ISO 14001) by the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO), based in Geneva, Switzerland. At its core, it sets the requirements for the establishment of an environmental management system.

ISO 14001 defines a voluntary environmental management system. Used in conjunction with appropriate goals, and with management commitment, the standards help improve environmental performance and reduce negative impacts. They provide an objective basis for verifying claims about a local government's environmental performance in its day-to-day operations.

Consumers, governments and companies up and down the supply and production chain are all seeking ways to reduce their environmental impact and increase their

sustainability. For local governments, the key goals are to be environmentally efficient, and serve as a model for resource saving and replication.

It is important to note that the ISO 14000 series do not themselves specify environmental performance goals. These must be set by the local government itself, taking into account the effects it has on the environment, and the views of its stakeholders.

Many different organisations have developed or adopted slightly differing sets of principles for sustainable development. In reviewing the range, the following appear to be the most relevant to local government, relating directly to the Local Agenda 21 framework established following the 1992 Rio Conference. Those principles are:

1. Management, planning and development decisions should be based on an integration of economic, environmental and social/cultural considerations
2. Avoidance of the risk of serious or irreversible environmental damage should not be postponed because of a lack of full, scientific knowledge (the 'precautionary principle')
3. Development of a strong, growing and diversified economy should enhance the capacity to protect the environment
4. Policy measures should encourage voluntary, cost effective achievement of environmental goals and responses to environmental problems
5. Acknowledgment should be made of the need for community consultation and participation in decision making to achieve a cooperative response to environmental, economic and community issues.

Bringing effect to these principles relies on an integrated whole of organisation approach to achieving sustainability, management commitment and the deployment of effective training and understanding throughout an organisation.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE CITY

In considering the adoption of a sustainability approach to policy development, there are a number of issues that the City will need to deal with if it intends ensuring that the sustainability framework and practice is a basic platform of the City's approach to governance.

Inter-Directorate/Business Unit Cooperation/Organisational Structure (the Silo Effect)

The nature of sustainable development means that it requires greater inter-departmental working, and a shift from the single-issue departmental and policy silos that has traditionally existed in local government. Developing an institutional culture that encourages directorates and business units to share knowledge and work together on cross-cutting policy issues is one of the key challenges in adopting and developing a sustainable approach to governance.

Measuring Sustainability

Establishing a framework for measuring sustainability in the decision making process and the outcomes of decisions should be considered as part of the annual business planning program.

Adopting a Council Policy on Sustainability

To ensure that the sustainability agenda is adequately addressed by the Council, it is important to ensure that sustainability principles form a key component of the City's activities, and that a universal understanding of sustainability is embraced throughout the organisation.

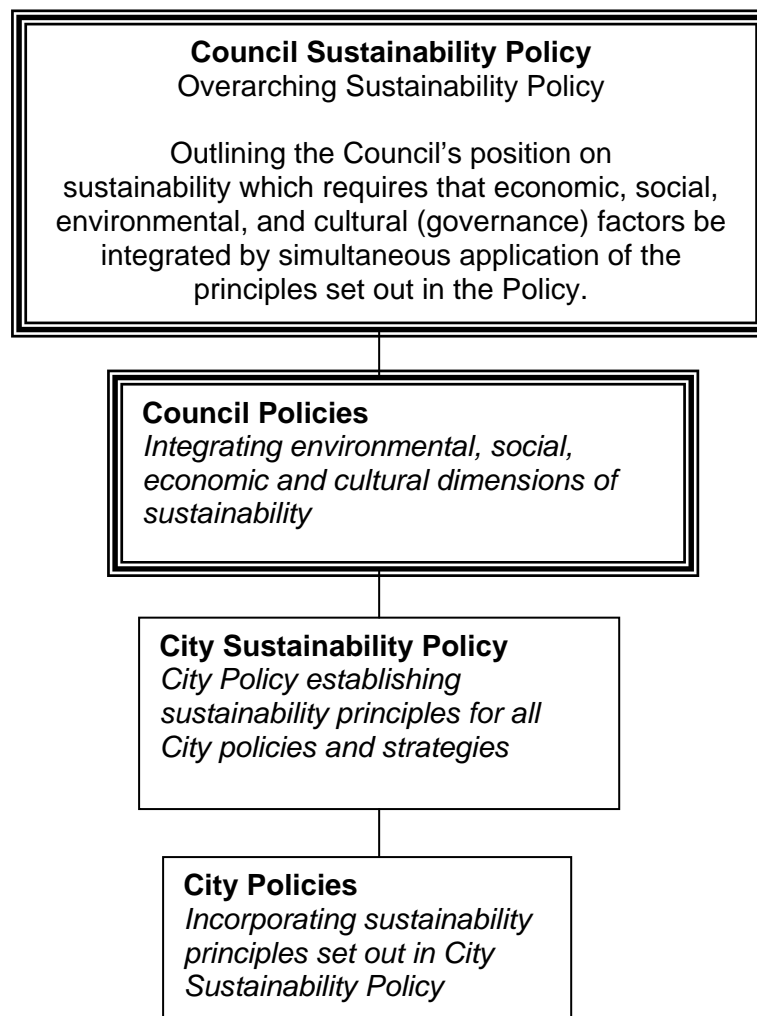
Community Dialogue

In addressing sustainability, seeking community views on sustainability; including the development of a flexible multi-criteria approach to weighting and assessing the impacts of council activities on sustainability.

POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Sustainability Policy Framework depicted below is proposed in order to integrate economic, social, environmental, and cultural (governance) factors into the policies and strategies of the Council.

Diagram 1: Sustainability Policy Framework



Definitions:

Council Policy: Strategic policies that set governing principles and guide the direction of the organisation to align with community values and aspirations

City Policy: Policies that are developed for administrative and operational imperatives and have an internal focus.

CONCLUSION

The sustainability discussion is one of the most important that a local government may have in terms of the long-term liveability of the local community. While there are many definitions of sustainability, the most apt for the West Australian context is that adopted by the Western Australian State Government:

Meeting the needs of current and future generations through an integration of environmental protection, social advancement and economic prosperity.

The Local Government Act amendments of 2004-05 require that local government consider sustainability as a core component of its decision making function. The Section 1.3 statement in the Act, *In carrying out its functions a local government is to use its best endeavours to meet the needs of current and future generations through an integration of environmental protection, social advancement and economic prosperity*, embeds the State's position on sustainability in the statutory framework of local government.

Beginning with the Local Agenda 21 initiatives, following the Rio summit of 1992, local government internationally has taken a lead role in developing strategies to address sustainability. These culminated in a further summit in 2002 in Johannesburg, which adopted a set of core principles on sustainability:

1. *The overarching principle of Sustainable Development (integrating the economic, social, cultural and environmental dimensions);*
2. *Effective Democratic Decentralisation (with a substantial set of key competencies, and commensurate financial resources);*
3. *Good Governance (effective leadership, transparency, accountability, probity, proper management and effective services, equitable access to services, a commitment to partnership working, and institutional capacity building.); and*
4. *Co-operation and Solidarity (partnerships for exchange of good practice, support and mutual learning).*

The demonstrable support of the sustainability principles needs to be firmly in place throughout the decision-making and management structures of local government. This is best illustrated through the adoption of core policies that commit the local government to the sustainability principles.

The Council policy framework is intended to clearly state the intended sustainability objectives and outcomes of the Council through the Council Policy on Sustainability, together with significant policy statements addressing (in an integrated manner) the four key areas of economic, social, environmental and cultural ethical sustainability. This framework for the development of Council Policies will provide the Council and community with clear directions for meeting the sustainability agenda.

Recognising the importance of stakeholder involvement and community engagement in policy development will assist in ensuring that policies developed are phrased in a manner which is both clear in intent and which effectively drive the development of the City's policies and strategies in a sustainable manner.