# **Democracy and Governance – Topic Paper Summary**

## Summary

Good governance and a strong democracy are vital for a healthy society. A city has good governance and democracy when its leaders and institutions are responsible, transparent and accountable.

By imagining the future of democracy and governance in Moreland, we are asking you to consider the decision-making processes Council uses, and how it values community opinions in these decisions.

Part of good governance is managing Council’s assets and finances responsibly. Council has to make sure its finances are able to cover the deliver of essential council services and also maintain its existing infrastructure.

## Key Issues

* **Council’s governance responsibilities:** ensuring good process and quality outcomes.
* **Stewardship:** managing assets, resources and finances responsibly.
* **Customer experience:** providing effective, accessible and responsive services.
* **Genuine community engagement:** valuing community participation and partnership.

## What Are Some Opportunities?

Opportunities in this space might include:

* A new Local Government Act, that provides stronger principles and requirements, including the provision of detailed strategic and financial plans, to be developed in collaboration with the community.
* Building community trust and confidence in Council’s role and leadership, even when the community might not always be happy with the decision.
* Use deliberative engagement processes to help the community understand the complexities and realities in relation to Council’s budget, financial and asset management.
* Openly discuss any tensions and trade-offs when there are differing views on how to manage, prioritise and allocate resources.
* Build a strong civic society, where citizens advocate for their own needs and interests, and have a deeper understanding of the functions of council.
* Improving customer service and the community experience of Council
* Implement the new Community Engagement Policy.

## What Are Some Challenges?

Challenges in this space might include:

* Council decisions are made (and services delivered) in a complicated legal environment, with many layers of legislation to work within.
* The Covid-19 pandemic has put strain on Council’s resources. Council needs to respond to the community’s immediate needs and channel resources towards recovery.
* Rate capping reduces the amount of budget available to invest in future projects.
* The speed and extend of climate change is a significant risk to financial sustainability and the ability to facilitate community wellbeing and resilience, deliver services, and sustain physical assets.
* Some Moreland residents are disempowered due to unemployment, poverty, homelessness, addiction, mental and physical health challenges, which can create barriers to participation.