

COUNCIL BRIEFINGS POLICY



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COUNCIL POLICY

NUMBER: 1.2.20

COUNCIL BRIEFINGS POLICY



1. Statement of Intent

- 1.1. Council holds information sessions called briefing sessions (or briefings) under its general powers as a body politic. Briefings are informal gatherings and can provide useful background information to councillors on issues. Council will also hold interactive training sessions called workshops for councillors when required.

2. Scheduling

- 2.1. Council, through the General Manager, will schedule regular briefings throughout the year involving interested councillors, Council officers and invited participants, as required. Briefings are designed to assist councillors in obtaining further information, knowledge and expertise regarding Council matters as well as clarifying issues relating to its functions, policies, codes or broader local government and management issues.
- 2.2. Briefings may be scheduled at the discretion of the General Manager, or as a result of a written Councillor Request via the General Manager for a briefing on a particular matter, or by resolution of Council.
- 2.3. Briefings should not be used for detailed or advanced discussions where agreement is reached and/or a (de-facto) decision is made. Any policy decision or debate from the options, should be left to the open forum of a formal Council or Committee Meeting. Briefings are merely a means which enable councillors to bring an informed mind to the appropriate decision-making forum. Briefings support developing councillor knowledge and expertise and assist in their role as public officials.
- 2.4. Where briefings are held in relation to development applications or business enterprises, Council needs to remember its obligations and responsibilities under the Code of Conduct, and community perceptions in terms of unfair advantage and transparency of process.
- 2.5. Briefings should be about presenting information and encouraging feedback – but strictly avoiding debate between councillors over a particular matter, with a view to decision making.
- 2.6. The Mayor (or Deputy Mayor or their nominated representative) will be the Chairperson of the briefings.

3. Public Access and Participation at Scheduled Briefings

- 3.1. Briefings are open to the public. Briefings may be closed to the public at the discretion of the General Manager only on occasions where Council is considering information which, by its nature, is confidential and ought not to be publicly disclosed, and consistent with the provisions for closing meetings to the public under the *Local Government Act 1993*.
- 3.2. Briefings which are planned to be open to the public will be advertised on Council's website.
- 3.3. Questions to and from members of the public present at briefings may be directed through and be at the discretion of the Chairperson.

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4. Public Forum Session

- 4.1. Council will allocate up to 15 minutes for a 'Public Forum' session known as public access at the beginning of scheduled open councillor briefings. This session is to enable members of the public to raise Council related issues.
- 4.2. For a member of the public to address Council during public access, they must acknowledge all relevant adopted Council codes, policies and procedures at all times, and submit an application in the approved form to address Council in public access.
- 4.3. Speakers have until four (4) hours before the start of the briefing to book into public access session.
- 4.4. Speakers will be limited to four (4) minutes each. With responses to questions limited to one minute.
- 4.5. Councillors may ask questions of a speaker following an address.
- 4.6. Council will not determine any matter raised in public access, however Council may request or formally resolve by Notice of Motion at an ordinary council meeting to call for a further briefing or report to Council from the General Manager on a matter presented at public access.
- 4.7. The following matters will not be considered by Council in public access:
 - a. proposed or current development and rezoning applications and related matters;
 - b. a third (3rd) or subsequent application by a single member of the public to address Council on the same issue in the same calendar year. The General Manager, at its discretion, may elect to exempt representatives or members of community groups from this restriction in consultation with councillors;
 - c. any formal procurement process, contract negotiation or dispute resolution being undertaken. (Formal procurement process' includes (but is not limited to) processes such as Expressions of Interest (EOI), Request for Quotation (RFQ), Request for Tender (RFT);
 - d. matters relating to the proper exercise of Council's regulatory functions;
 - e. any matter the General Manager (or their delegate) considers inappropriate for discussion in public access;
- 4.8. Should the General Manager (or their delegate) consider a matter inappropriate for public access the:
 - a. General Manager (or their delegate) will inform the applicant and Council that the matter is considered inappropriate for public access and the reason why.
 - b. applicant will be informed as soon as possible.
 - c. applicant will be advised, in writing, as to the most appropriate method to raise the matter with Council.

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5. Delegates Reports

- 5.1. Council will allocate up to 15 minutes for a verbal delegates report session at the beginning of scheduled briefings. The session is to enable councillors to report on and discuss issues that are raised in their capacity as Council delegates.
- 5.2. Council will not determine any matter raised in the Delegates Reports session, however Council may request or formally resolve by Notice of Motion to call for a further briefing or report to Council from the General Manager on a matter presented at Delegates Reports.
- 5.3. A weekly list of meetings/forums councillors are attending is to be made available to all councillors.

6. Managing Conflicts of Interest

- 6.1. Councillors' (including the mayor) must disclose and manage any conflicts of interest they may have in relation to any item of business that is the subject of a briefing, in the same way they are required to do at a Council or Committee meeting.
- 6.2. Council is to maintain a written record of all conflict of interest declarations made at briefing sessions and how the conflict of interest was managed by the councillor who made the declaration.
- 6.3. As no minutes are kept at briefings, conflicts of interest are to be made verbally at the meeting, and in writing either prior to or during the meeting using the online form.
- 6.4. Any disclosure of interest received prior to a briefing commencing will be made public by inclusion on the briefing agenda, and/or by the Chairperson as part of the Disclosures of Interest agenda item.

7. Workshops

- 7.1. Workshops may be scheduled at the discretion of the General Manager, or as a result of a written Councillor Request via the General Manager for a workshop on a particular matter, or by resolution of Council.
- 7.2. The Mayor (or the Deputy Mayor or their nominated representative) will be the Chairperson of the workshops.
- 7.3. Workshops are closed to the public to provide an environment conducive to learning and frank and fearless discussion.
- 7.4. Workshops will be used to train and inform councillors.

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Document History and Version Control

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Trim Ref	Version	Summary of Changes / Consultation	Date
	1.0	Policy Created	December 2017
	1.1	Council reviewed	April 2018
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