

Council Forum Policy

Policy – CP063

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Manager Governance & Performance	Executive Leadership Team	Council	January 2022	2022/0013
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1. The purpose of this policy is

To provide guidance on the manner in which Council Forums will be conducted, including the structure of the Forum, and powers for the Mayor.

This policy will support Council in the efficient running of Council Forums and enhancing the quality of information provided to Councillors.

2. Policy Statement

The primary purpose of Council Forums is to:

- discuss issues of concern, importance or strategic direction for Council;
- provide detailed background on issues that will inform Councillors, and assist with decision-making at the Council meeting; and
- allow for the exchange of information and views, while refraining from debate or caucus on those matters that will be determined at a future Council meeting

3. Principles

- 3.1 Council Forums are considered “Council Auspiced Meetings” as defined by the Councils Governance Rules, and as such Councillors are bound by the relevant provisions of the *Local Government Act 2020* in relation to Conflicts of Interest. Councillors must disclose any conflict of interest in a matter before the Council Forum and leave the Forum during discussions on that matter.
- 3.2 Council Forums will be held on the second Thursday of each month, commencing generally at 12 noon, and at such other times as Council or Council's Chief Executive Officer might determine.
- 3.3 Council Forums are not held in a place that is open to members of the public and are not subject to Council's Governance Rules. This means that Council Forums offer a less formal environment in which Councillors can:

- 3.3.1 be provided with more detailed information about matters for determination without the time constraints that apply to an ordinary Council meeting;
- 3.3.2 ask more general questions of Council staff and others in relation to matters coming up for Council decision; and
- 3.3.3 discuss matters with other Councillors and Council staff in a more informal way, without the constraints of Council's Governance Rules.

4. Prohibition on Determination of Matters at Council Forums

- 4.1 A matter presented at a Council Forum is for discussion only, and cannot be finally determined in that forum. Any matter requiring a Council decision (ie those that are not to be dealt with by a member of Council staff with the appropriate delegated authority) will be presented to a meeting of the Council.
- 4.2 In addition to item 4.1, where a matter before a Council Forum is within the power of, and therefore capable of being considered and determined by a member of Council staff, the Councillors present at the Council Forum may refer a matter to Council for consideration if:
 - 4.2.1 a Councillor proposes that the matter be referred to Council for decision, rather than determined by a delegate; and
 - 4.2.2 a majority of the Councillors present indicate their agreement with that proposal. The Mayor (or if the Mayor is absent, the Deputy Mayor) will then declare whether the majority of Councillors have indicated its agreement with the proposal.

5. Attendance at Council Forums

- 5.1 Councillors commit to attending Council Forum in person, in the event a Councillor is not able to attend in person, they will be offered the ability to join virtually which allows the Councillor to participate.
- 5.2 Persons external to Council may be invited to attend a Council Forum as an official attendee, from time to time. Their attendance will be noted on the Agenda for the relevant Council Forum.

6. Criteria to be applied to Forum items

- 6.1 The purpose of Council Forums is to provide pertinent and relevant information that allows Councillors to make well informed decisions at Council Meetings
- 6.2 To ensure items listed on the Forum Agenda meet this purpose, the following criteria will be applied to Forum items as the framework to set the priority of items to be discussed at Forum:
 - 6.2.1 The item informs Councillors in relation to an item requiring a Council decision;
 - 6.2.2 The item provides guidance, or supports the strategic direction or decision making of Council;
 - 6.2.3 The item informs Councillors about a specific community issue or concern
 - 6.2.4 The item may be of general interest to Council.
- 6.3 Along with the criteria in item 6.2, consideration will also be given to the amount of items; complexity of items and length of time to ensure that all items listed can be processed as intended by the purpose of forums as laid out in 6.1.

7. Setting of Forum Agenda

- 7.1 Following consultation with the Executive Leadership Team, the Chief Executive is responsible for determining the matters to be considered at a Council Forum.
- 7.2 Councillors may, through the Mayor request for items to be listed for discussion at Council Forum. Following discussion with the Chief Executive Officer, the Mayor will advise the Councillor the outcome of their request and reasons if the item will not be listed for Council Forum.

8. Role of the Mayor at Council Forums

- 8.1 While Council Forums are not subject to Council's Governance Rules, it is important that they are conducted in an orderly and timely fashion.
- 8.2 The Mayor (or, if the Mayor is absent from the Council Forum, the Deputy Mayor or nominated Chairperson) will:
 - 8.2.1 ensure the timeframes specified in the Council Forum Agenda are adhered to;
 - 8.2.2 call on Councillors, who indicate that they have a question, to ask it;
 - 8.2.3 direct that questions or comments that are irrelevant to the matter being considered are to be disregarded;
 - 8.2.4 direct that the Council Forum move to the next item on the agenda;
 - 8.2.5 extend the time allocated to for presentations if they consider it is necessary to do so.

9 Who is responsible for implementing this policy?

General Manager Corporate

10 Definitions

Nil

11 Legislation and other references

4.1 Legislation

For further information related to this policy see:

- *Local Government Act 2020*
- *Local Government Amendment (Improved Governance) Act 2015*
- Governance Rules

4.2 Documents

This Policy is implemented in conjunction with the following documents:

- Nil

4.3 Risk Assessment Reference

Risk Category	✓	Risk Category	✓
Asset Management	✓	Financial Sustainability	✓
Committees	✓	Human Resource Management	✓
Compliance – Legal & Regulatory	✓	Leadership & Organisational Culture	✓
Contract Management	✓	Occupational Health & Safety	✓
Contract Tendering & Procurement	✓	Organisational Risk Management	✓
Corporate Governance	✓	Project Management	✓
Environmental Sustainability	✓	Public Image and Reputation	✓