

Councillor Information Sessions Policy

CCS

11 December 2024



This policy was adopted by Council to set governing principles in place that align with the Strategic Community Plan 2040: Focus Area Performance: Outcome PF.1: Responsible planning and ownership of outcomes.

Objectives

To ensure that Councillor Information Sessions:

1. Provide relevant information to ensure Councillors are better informed when participating in Council decision making processes.
2. Provide a forum for two-way communication between Councillors and key staff on Council related matters.
3. Provide an inclusive opportunity for general community members and the press to receive the same information on Agenda Items being provided to Councillors on a range of relevant topics.

Application

This policy applies to all Councillors and officers attending Councillor Information sessions. This policy is not intended to apply to Councillor engagement with community groups or community members on matters where there is no proposed agenda item or matter currently before council.

Definition

Closed Briefing Session refers to the non-statutory meeting held by Council to ask questions, receive presentations and seek clarity on matters that are on the agenda for the next ordinary council meeting or are likely to be on the agenda for the following ordinary council meeting that are closed to the public under section 5.22 of the *Local Government Act 1995* (LG Act).

Information Sessions refers collectively to Open and Closed Briefing Sessions and Workshops.

Officer report refers to a report presented to Council by an officer of the Shire, which includes professional advice and a recommendation, from which a Council decision is sought at the Ordinary Council Meeting.

Open Briefing Session refers to the non-statutory meeting held by Council to ask questions, receive presentations and seek clarity on matters that are on the agenda for the next ordinary council meeting or are likely to be on the agenda for the following ordinary council meeting that are NOT closed to the public under section 5.22 of the LG Act.

Pre-Meeting Agenda Review refers to the non-statutory meeting held by Council to ask questions and seek clarity of officer reports on upcoming agenda items in the published agenda.

COUNCILLOR INFORMATION SESSIONS

Workshop refers to the non-statutory meeting held by Council to provide input and guidance on the development of matters that have a strategic impact and/or relate to the delivery of the Strategic Community Plan, excluding any matter that is on an upcoming Council meeting agenda.

Policy

The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC) (Operational Guideline Number 05) acknowledges that many local governments, especially those in rural areas, need to conduct pre-meeting forums as Councillors need an opportunity to discuss issues within the freedom of a forum rather than in a formal Council meeting.

1. Confidentiality

Pre- Meeting Agenda Review Session and Open Briefing Sessions are open to all councillors and generally to all members of the public and press.

Matters of a confidential nature included in a Council agenda will be discussed at Closed Briefing Sessions in accordance with the provisions of the LG Act (i.e. not open to the public).

Workshops are generally closed to the public to facilitate the open discussion of preliminary ideas and concepts by Councillors but may be open to the public where the CEO or Shire President believe it would be beneficial.

2. Councillor Information Session - Principles

The following guidelines apply to Councillor Information Sessions to ensure openness and accountability is safeguarded:

- a) Pre-Meeting Agenda Review Session are not to become “de facto” meetings and there must be no implication of debate, or collective or collaborative decisions being made or implied.
- b) Information Sessions are to be held prior to Council Meetings with additional sessions as required and called by Council or the Shire President or convened by the CEO in liaison with the Shire President.
- c) The Pre-Meeting Agenda Review Session should not be held on the day of an ordinary council meeting, where it would involve a matter on the agenda for that OCM, unless there are exceptional circumstances – such as urgent business or new information coming to hand since the previous briefing.
- d) Notice of Councillor Information Sessions will be given by via email invitation and will include a list of topics or a program. Councillors wishing to have an item included on the program are to advise the CEO and the Shire President via email at the earliest opportunity. The public will be informed of items which will be discussed in Agenda Briefing sessions by advertisement along with the items on the Council agenda on the Shire website.
- e) Where Councillor Information Sessions are open to the public the Shire President may permit a person to provide a presentation to Council or answer questions.

- f) Councillor Information Sessions are to be chaired by the Shire President. The CEO is responsible for the presentation of information and for providing direction to staff.
- g) Councillors and staff must disclose conflicts of interest in matters to be discussed in Information Sessions. Interests must be disclosed at the start of the session and in accordance with the provisions of the LG Act as they apply to Ordinary Council meetings. Persons disclosing a financial interest must not participate in that part of the session relating to their interest and leave the room unless the forum otherwise allows. Interests affecting impartiality should also be disclosed and dealt with in accordance with the *Local Government (Model Code of Conduct) Regulations 2021*.
- h) Site visits during Briefings Sessions that relate to applications before Council should be attended by all Councillors, the CEO, relevant officers and the applicant. For practical reasons members of the public will not be able to attend.
- i) Councillor Information Sessions will not be live streamed or recorded unless there are special circumstances.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is responsible for the administration of the Councillor Information Sessions in terms of officer attendance, convening sessions and notice of items to be discussed at the session.

Relevant legislation

Local Government (Model Code of Conduct) Regulations 2021

Local Government Act 1995

Related documents

Nil

Document and version control table			
Responsible Directorate	Office of the CCS		
Contact officer	Senior Governance and Risk Officer		
Adopted / approved by:	Council		
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Version	Date	Decision Ref.	Brief description

1.0	27/8/2009	N129858	Initial issue
2.0	23/1/2013	OM1301/6	Major review
2.1	24/5/2017	OM201718	Reviewed and amended to allow open briefings to occur
3.0	11.05.202 2	OM2022/74	Full Review <i>Title change, simplified wording, added definitions, removal of 'workshops', clarification of open/closed sessions</i>
3.1	22/05/202 4	OM2024/81	Reviewed and amended to include provisions for a monthly Council Meeting, including Q&A Sessions.
4.0	11/12/202 4	OM2024/	Reviewed and amended to exclude Q&A Sessions and include 'Pre Meeting Agenda Review' Sessions. Concept forums renamed 'workshops'.