

## Communications

### Policy Objective

To guide the communication undertaken by Elected Members, Committee Members and Employees.

### Policy Scope

This Policy applies to all current Elected Members, Committee Members and Employees.

### Policy Statement

Communications between Elected Members, Town staff and the community is essential, but needs to be undertaken in a manner that provides consistent, accurate, reliable information that meets legislative responsibilities. This Policy seeks to ensure that all communication meets those standards.

#### 1. Media Liaison

- 1.1 The Mayor and/or the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will discuss matters of interest with media representatives unless disclosure of certain information contravenes the Town of Bassendean's (the "Town") obligations of confidentiality or privacy, duty of care, or could infringe other laws or regulations that govern its operation.
- 1.2 Media statements are to maximise the opportunity to present a positive image of the Town.
- 1.3 The CEO is responsible for co-ordinating media liaison and issuing press releases to respond to media enquiries on behalf of the Town.

#### 2. Speaking on behalf of the Town

- 2.1 The Mayor is the official spokesperson on the Town's affairs. If the Mayor is unavailable, the Mayor may authorise the CEO or the Deputy Mayor to act on his or her behalf.
- 2.2 Elected Members and Employees are entitled to enter into public debate in their private capacity and make comment on the Town's affairs, provided they clearly state their comments reflect their personal views and do not give the impression they are speaking for or on behalf of Council.

- 2.3 Elected Members and Employees must support Council decisions and refrain from using the media to make negative personal comments on an Elected Member or Employee that could be interpreted as such and which are reasonably likely to undermine public confidence and/or have a detrimental impact on the individual or the local government.
  - 2.4 An Elected Member must ensure that their use of social media and other forms of communication complies with the Town's Code of Conduct for Councillors, Committee Members and Candidates, and that any information that they publish is factually correct.
  - 2.5 An Elected Member must not disparage the character of another Council Member, Committee Member or Employee.
  - 2.6 Elected Members and Employees have a duty of legal fidelity to act in the best interests of the Council and the Town by not making public statements that are critical of a Council decision or can cause detriment to the integrity of the Town.
- 3. Elected Member's Correspondence**
- 3.1 Town of Bassendean letterhead is to be used for all correspondence generated from the Mayor.
  - 3.2 All correspondence (outward or inward) in the custody of an Elected Member must be captured in the corporate recordkeeping system in accordance with *State Records Act 2000*, *Town of Bassendean Recordkeeping Plan* and *Freedom of Information Act 1992*.
- 4. Elected Member's Access to Information**
- 4.1 Access to corporate information by Elected Members is managed in accordance with Section 5.92 of the *Local Government Act 1995*.
  - 4.2 Elected Members are able to access certain documents above and beyond what is available to the general public. This includes the right to inspect any document that deals with Council business. However, this is not without limitation. An Elected Member is required to demonstrate to the CEO the relevance of the information to the performance of the Elected Member's role. The information, where granted, is not to be used for an Elected Member's own interest, be used to cause detriment to the Town or be unconnected with a Council activity (section 5.93).
  - 4.3 Should approval be granted, the CEO will determine the manner in which the access is permitted.

## **5. Communication between Elected Members and Town employees when acting in their formal capacity**

- 5.1 Where an Elected Member is acting in their formal capacity as a Councillor of the Town of Bassendean, all Director Corporate Services, Director Community Planning, Executive Manager Infrastructure, and Executive Manager Sustainability and Environment.
- 5.2 Communication by Elected Members, when acting in their formal capacity as a Councillor, with Town employees other than those specified in subclause 5.1 above, requires authorisation from the CEO.
- 5.3 In the event an enquiry entails the use of Town resources to the extent it may have an adverse effect on the day to day operations of the organisation, the enquiry is to be referred to the CEO for determination.

## **6. Improper use of information**

- 6.1 Elected Members and Employees must not make improper use of information that is acquired as a result of the performance of their role under the Act or any other written law. Elected Members and Employees who have access to confidential information are to put in place measures to ensure that confidentiality is retained.
- 6.2 Comments which become public and which breach this policy, and/or the Code of Conduct for Councillors, Committee Members, and Candidates, may constitute a minor breach of the *Local Government Act 1995 [refer s.5.105]* and may be referred for investigation.

## **7. Record Keeping**

- 7.1 Official communications undertaken on behalf of the Town, including on the Town of Bassendean's Social Media accounts and third party social media accounts must be created and retained as local government records in accordance with the *State Records Act 2000*. These records are also subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1992*.
- 7.2 Elected Member communications that relate to their role as an Elected Member are subject to the requirements of the *State Records Act 2000*. Elected Members are responsible for transferring these records to the Town's administration. Elected Member records are also subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1992*.

## 8. Website

The Town of Bassendean will maintain an official website, as the community’s on-line resource to access the Town’s official communications.

## 9. Social Media

Social media accounts or unsecured website forums must not be used to transact during meetings in relation to the official business of the Town. *[State Records Act 2000/Local Government Record Keeping Plan, s’s 5.23(2) and 5.93 of the Local Government Act 1995]*

## 10. Public Consultation

Elected Members are permitted to promote the participation in a Town-led public consultation process. In doing so, information is to be objective, and not infer a bias or lack of impartiality.

## 11. Breach

A breach of this policy will be dealt with in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1995* and the Town of Bassendean Code of Conduct for Councillors, Committee Members and Candidates, and the Town of Bassendean’s Code of Conduct for Employees.

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