

Council Briefing Session Policy

Objectives

The policy seeks to establish guidelines for the conduct of Council's Briefing Sessions.

Scope

This policy applies to the Council's Council Briefing Sessions and the Councillors, staff and the general public that attend those Briefing Sessions.

Policy Statement

The role of a Council is to set policy, strategy, goals and targets for the local government. The Administration, through the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), has the task of implementing the decisions of the Council.

A Briefing Session is a non-decision-making forum that involves Councillors, officers of the Town (whose attendance is determined by the CEO) and if required, external advisors. They are open to the public and established to –

- a. Provide Councillors with the opportunity to obtain and exchange information with Town officers on items contained in the forthcoming Ordinary Council Agenda; and
- b. Provide a transparent, accountable, and public forum for Councillors to better inform themselves on items on the Council Agenda.

They provide the Council with the opportunity to ask questions and seek points of clarification. This ensures Council is fully informed to consider and make impartial and transparent decisions on items presented to it at an Ordinary Council meeting.

1. General Procedures

- 1.1 Council Briefing Sessions are held one week prior to the Ordinary Council meeting usually on the third Tuesday of the month.
- 1.2 Briefing sessions are generally open to members of the public who will have the opportunity to address the meeting or make deputations on matters related to the agenda. Members of the public are required to be decorous and abide by the directions of the Presiding Member in relation to conduct at the Briefing Session. A failure to observe decorum or a direction of the Presiding Member will result in the member of the public being required to leave the premises.

- 1.3 Sessions will be closed to members of the public when matters are to be discussed that:
 - a) are recommended to be dealt with as confidential items under s.5.23 (2) of the *Local Government Act 1995*, or
 - b) the Presiding Member considers, on the advice of the CEO, should be dealt with as a confidential item.
- 1.4 The dates and times of the Briefing Session Schedule will be set at the same time the Schedule for the Council Meeting dates are adopted by Council. Local public notice of briefing sessions will be provided in the same way and at the same time notice is given for Ordinary Meetings of Council.
- 1.5 The agenda for the Briefing Session will be published on the Wednesday prior to the Briefing Session. The matters listed on the agenda will be the matters for discussion at the briefing session.
- 1.6 Briefing Agendas are to include all items proposed to be considered by Council at the subsequent Ordinary Council meeting, with exceptions of the Monthly Financial Statements if incomplete by the publication date of the Briefing Agenda, and items of an Urgent Nature in accordance with clause 5.5 of the Town's Meeting Procedures Local Law 2020.
- 1.7 The Mayor will be the Presiding Member at the Briefing Session. If the Mayor is unable or unwilling to assume the role of Presiding Member, the Deputy Mayor may preside at the Briefing Session. If the Deputy Mayor is unable or unwilling then the Councillors present may by simple majority select a Presiding Member from amongst themselves to preside at the Briefing Session.
- 1.8 The Presiding Member decides all procedural matters and conduct at a Briefing Session.
- 1.9 There are no quorum requirements at a Briefing Session.
- 1.10 Debate, and/or vigorous discussion by a Councillor/s that could be interpreted as debate, is not permitted on any matters raised during the Briefing Session.
- 1.11 Officers at the Town are to be available to make a presentation or respond to questions on matters on the agenda at the Briefing Session.
- 1.12 All Councillors will be given a fair and equal opportunity to participate in the Briefing Session.
- 1.13 All questions are to be asked through the chair and free-flowing discussion between Councillors is not permitted.

- 1.14 Councillors may raise issues that have not been considered in the formulation of the report or its recommendation and advise the Administration through the CEO at a briefing session of these.
- 1.15 All Councillors, officers and if applicable, other presenters, shall disclose their interests on any item on the agenda at the commencement of the Briefing Session. When disclosing an interest the following will apply –
- a) An interest is to be disclosed in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1995* and the Town's Code of Conduct.
 - b) Subject to clause (iii), Councillors who disclose a financial or proximity interest must not participate on discussions or questions on the item to which their interest applies and shall leave the room.
 - c) Notwithstanding, the Council may agree, by simple majority, to allow a Councillor who has declared an interest to remain in the room on an item, if the Councillors present agree –
 - i. The interest is trivial or insignificant as to be unlikely to influence the disclosing Councillor's conduct on the matter; or
 - ii. Is an interest common to a significant number of electors or ratepayers.
 - d) Officers with a financial interest in an item may choose to leave the room when the item is considered or if directed to do so by the CEO.
- 1.16 A record shall be kept of all disclosures of interest made at a Briefing Session.
- 1.17 No formal decisions of Council are made at a Briefing Session. The only decisions made at a Briefing Session are procedural and include to elect a Presiding Member where the Mayor or Deputy Mayor are unavailable, and to allow a Councillor to remain in the room after they have declared an interest in accordance with clause 1.15(c) above.

2. Public Question Time

- 2.1 Briefing Sessions are open to the public unless Council is considering an item of a confidential nature.
- 2.2 Members of the public shall not address the meeting on any matter not included in the agenda.
- 2.3 The Presiding Member may call persons to come forward in an order that allows for as many persons as possible to address the meeting on the widest range of items on the agenda. Persons are to state their name and address.

- 2.4 Public question time will be limited to two (2) minutes per member of the public, with a limit of two verbal questions per person. Additional questions may be asked by a participant, but only after all persons who want to ask a question have done so, and if there is time remaining.
- 2.5 Statements are not to precede a question during public question time and questions must be succinct and to the point. Statements may only be made during public statement time.
- 2.6 Members of the public are to keep their questions brief to enable everyone who wants to ask a question to do so.
- 2.7 A minimum of 15 minutes shall be allocated for public question time. The Presiding Member may extend public question time in intervals of 10 minutes, but the total time allocated for public question time is not to exceed 45 minutes in total.
- 2.8 Participants are to direct their questions to the Presiding Member. Questions should be asked politely, in good faith, and not reflect adversely or be defamatory of a Councillor or officer or the local government. The Presiding Member may decide to –
 - a) Accept or reject any question with their decision being final;
 - b) Request the CEO respond to a question; or
 - c) Take a question on notice. A written response will be provided by the Town as soon as possible.
- 2.9 Where a Councillor is of the opinion that a person is asking a question about an item not on the agenda, or it is a statement, they may bring it to the attention of the Presiding Member who will make a ruling.

3. Questions In Writing

- 3.1 Only residents or ratepayers of the Town may submit questions to the Town in writing.
- 3.2 The Town will accept a maximum of two written questions per resident or ratepayer. To ensure equity between residents and ratepayers, each part of a multi-part question will be treated as a separate question.
- 3.3 Questions lodged by midday on the day immediately prior to the scheduled Briefing Session, will be responded to where they can at the Briefing session.
- 3.4 These questions and responses will be distributed to Councillors and made available electronically at the Briefing Session.

- 3.5 The Presiding Member may decide to accept or reject any written question and their decision is final.
- 3.6 The Presiding Member may rule questions out of order where they are substantially the same as questions previously submitted to the Town and which have already been responded to.

4. Public Statement Time

- 4.1 Members of the public may make public statements at a Briefing Session.
- 4.2 Statements at a Briefing Session must relate to an item on the agenda.
- 4.3 The Presiding Member may call persons to come forward in an order that allows for as many persons as possible to address the meeting on the widest range of items on the agenda. Persons are to state their name and address.
- 4.4 Public statement time will be limited to two (2) minutes per person.

- 4.5 The persons making a statement are to keep their statements brief to provide everyone who wants to make a statement the opportunity to do so.
- 4.6 A minimum of 15 minutes is allocated for public statement time. The Presiding Member may extend public statement time in intervals of 10 minutes, but the total time allocated for public statement time is not to exceed 45 minutes in total.
- 4.7 Statements are to be directed to the Presiding Member and are to be polite and not stated in a way to reflect adversely or be defamatory of a Councillor or officer or the local government.
- 4.8 Where a Councillor is of the opinion that a person is making a statement on an item not on the agenda they may advise the Presiding Member who will make a ruling.
- 4.9 Written statements will be circulated to Councillors and will not be read out unless specifically requested by the Presiding Member prior to the commencement of the meeting.

5. Deputations

- 5.1 The public may make a deputation at a Briefing Session. Deputations are encouraged to be made at the Briefing Session rather than a Council Meeting to allow Council ample opportunity to consider the information contained in the deputation prior to making a decision on the matter.
- 5.2 Deputation requests must deal with an item on the agenda.

- 5.3 A person making a deputation is to request as such by:
- a) making a written request to the CEO before midday on the day of the Briefing Session; or
 - b) making a request to the Presiding Member at the Briefing Session.
- 5.4 Where a request is received pursuant to Clause 5.3(a), the CEO may either approve the request or refer it to the Presiding Member to decide whether or not to approve the request.
- 5.5 A deputation may consist of no more than five people, only two may address the Council. Others can respond to specific questions from members or unless otherwise ruled by the Presiding Member. Additional members may be allowed to speak if the Presiding Member allows it.
- 5.6 Speakers cannot address Council for longer than 10 minutes unless the Presiding Member agrees to an extension.
- 5.7 A person making a deputation is prevented from making a public statement at the session on the same matter.
- 5.8 Councillors may ask a question of any person making a deputation at the Briefing Session.

6. Recording of Proceedings

The Briefing Session will be live streamed when held in the Council Chamber, on the Town’s streaming platform. An audio recording of the Briefing Session will be provided on the Town’s website in the event that a video is unavailable.

Document Control box			
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