

## Council Policy

**Council Policy Name:** Meetings, Information Sessions and Decision Making Processes  
**Responsible Directorate:** Finance and Corporate Services **Version:** DRAFT

### 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. A key role of a Councillor is to participate in the Local Government's decision-making processes at Council and Committee meetings. A key function of the CEO is to ensure that advice and information is available to the Council so that informed decisions can be made.
- 1.2. The purpose of this Policy is to set out guidelines for the provision of information to Councillors and the Council at Council and Committee meetings and Information Sessions, as well as how Information Sessions will be managed.

### 2. SCOPE

- 2.1. This Policy is applicable to all convened Information Sessions and formally-constituted meetings involving Councillors of the City of Busselton.

### 3. DEFINITIONS

| Term                | Meaning   |
|---------------------|---|
| Information Session | Councillor workshops, agenda briefing sessions, briefing sessions and community access sessions             |
| Policy              | this City of Busselton Council policy titled "Meetings, Information Sessions and Decision Making Processes" |

### 4. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

- 4.1. This Policy links to Strategic Theme 4. LEADERSHIP - A Council that connects with the community and is accountable in its decision making, of the City's Strategic Community Plan June 2021 and specifically the following Strategic Priorities:
  - a. 4.2: Deliver governance systems that facilitate open, ethical and transparent decision making; and
  - b. 4.4: Govern a professional organisation that is healthy, capable and engaged.

## 5. POLICY STATEMENT

- 5.1. The City utilises a range of mechanisms to ensure Councillors can make informed decisions, including workshops, briefing sessions, and community access sessions, in addition to its formal Council and Committee meetings.
- 5.2. All Councillors should have access to the same information when making decisions.
- 5.3. Councillors' requests of officers for information shall be circulated to all Councillors for information and the officer's response shall be circulated to all Councillors.
- 5.4. Councillors can ask for personal information of a private nature to be provided on a "Private and Confidential" basis. The CEO will consider the appropriateness of the request and determine whether such information is to be provided.
- 5.5. Where a question cannot be sufficiently answered at an Information Session or Council or Committee meeting and further information is required to be provided by officers it shall be circulated to all Councillors.
- 5.6. In addition to disclosure requirements that apply at formal meetings, the Department of Local Government guidelines promote disclosure of interests at agenda forums, as participation without disclosing an interest is ethically unacceptable. Interests shall therefore be disclosed at Information Sessions

### Council and Committee Meetings

- 5.7. Council and Committee Meetings are conducted in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1995*, the *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996* and the *City of Busselton Standing Orders Local Law 2018*.
- 5.8. Formal decisions of the Council are made at Council and Committee meetings.

### Agenda Briefing Sessions

- 5.9. Agenda briefing sessions are utilised to discuss matters that appear on the current Council agenda
- 5.10. Agenda briefing sessions shall be conducted in an open, accountable manner, subject to confidentiality provisions.

### Briefing Sessions and Workshops

- 5.11. Outside of agenda briefing sessions it is usual for workshops and briefing sessions on a range of matters to be convened by the CEO for the purpose of providing relevant information to Councillors.
- 5.12. Briefing sessions and workshops are convened to offer the Councillors the opportunity to:
  - a. explore options and discuss ideas;
  - b. discuss future agenda items and strategic direction;
  - c. to be briefed on key ongoing projects and have input prior to the allocation of resources in taking forward reports to the Council;
  - d. provide feedback and input in relation to decisions being made, or which may be made, by officers (under delegation, authorisation or similar, or 'acting through'); discuss grievances and concerns to be resolved where possible.

- 5.13. Briefing sessions are relatively informal and are not open to the general public (unless invited to attend) due to the preliminary and exploratory nature of the discussions.
- 5.14. Formal decisions of the Council are only made during a formal Council meeting and therefore collective or implied agreement on any issue during any briefing, information session or workshop cannot bind the Local Government.

### **Community Access Sessions**

- 5.15. Community Access Sessions provide community members the opportunity to address Councillors on any matter of local government business or to ask a question of Council in an informal setting. Questions are to be addressed to the Mayor as Presiding Member and debate is not to be entered into. Administrative matters will be responded to by the CEO.
- 5.16. Community Access Sessions may also be used to present to Council on a matter currently before them for a decision. The City of Busselton's Standing Orders Local Law provides the right for parties with an interest in a matter before Council to address Council on an agenda item. Parties with an interest are encouraged to address Council at the relevant Council meeting. Community Access Sessions provide an opportunity for people who do not meet the party with an interest criteria (as per the Standing Orders) to present to Council on a matter before Council.
- 5.17. Community members wishing to present on a matter not on a current Council meeting agenda will be heard first, followed by those wishing to present on an item before Council.
- 5.18. While Community Access Sessions are not formal meetings of Council, it is important that they are conducted in a way that is consistent with the principles and objectives of the *Local Government Act 1995* in relation to the conduct of business. Accordingly the City of Busselton Standing Orders Local Law will apply.
- 5.19. Community members attending a Community Access Session must comply with the City's Behaviour Protocols at all times.
- 5.20. Further, speakers must show respect at all times to Councillors and employees and must not publicly make adverse reflections on the character or conduct of a Councillors or employee. Community members wishing to raise issues in relation to conduct should refer to the City's Code of Conduct, Management of Complaints of Alleged Breaches of Behaviour and / or Public Interest Disclosure Guidelines.
- 5.21. If the Presiding Member considers a community member has engaged in the type of conduct referred to in paragraph 5.20, the Presiding Member may request the person to refrain from the inappropriate behaviour and to withdraw inappropriate comments. Where a speaker fails to comply with the Presiding Members request, the Presiding Member may immediately require the person to stop speaking and may further require the person to leave the Community Access Session.
- 5.22. Where a speaker engages in conduct of the type referred to in paragraph 5.20, the Presiding Member may refuse further requests from that person to speak at Community Access Session for such a period as the Presiding Member considers appropriate.

## 6. RELATED DOCUMENTATION / LEGISLATION

- 6.1. *Local Government Act 1995*
- 6.2. *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996*
- 6.3. Department of Local Government Council Forums Guideline

## 7. REVIEW DETAILS

| Review Frequency  |      | 3 yearly    |              |           |
|-------------------|------|-------------|--------------|-----------|
| Council Adoption  | DATE |             | Resolution # |           |
| Previous Adoption | DATE | 10 May 2017 | Resolution # | C1705/101 |

# Council Policy

**Council Policy Name:** Meetings, Information Sessions and Decision Making Processes  
**Responsible Directorate:** Finance and Corporate Services **Version:** Adopted

## 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. A key role of a Local Government Councillor is to participate in the Local Government’s decision-making processes at Council and Committee meetings. A key function of the organisation’s CEO is to ensure that advice and information is available to the Council so that informed decisions can be made.
- 1.2. It is not always possible for all information that a Councillor may need to be able to fully and confidently participate in formal decision-making processes to be provided in the course of a formal meeting process. Therefore, the City utilises a range of mechanisms to ensure informed decisions can be made including workshops, briefing sessions, community access sessions and various electors’ meetings in addition to its formal Council and committee meetings.
- 1.3. The purpose of this Policy is to set out the guidelines for the provision of information to Councillors and the Council and other matters relating to the various forums utilised

## 2. SCOPE

- 2.1. This Policy is applicable to all convened information sessions and formally-constituted meetings involving Councillors of the City of Busselton held in the course of carrying out the business of the local government.

## 3. DEFINITIONS

| Term   | Meaning   |
|--------|---|
| Policy | this City of Busselton Council policy titled “Meetings, Information Sessions and Decision Making Processes” |

## 4. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

- 4.1. This Policy links to Strategic Theme 4. LEADERSHIP - A Council that connects with the community and is accountable in its decision making, of the City’s Strategic Community Plan June 2021 and specifically the following Strategic Priorities:
  - a. 4.2: Deliver governance systems that facilitate open, ethical and transparent decision making; and
  - b. 4.4: Govern a professional organisation that is healthy, capable and engaged.

## 5. POLICY STATEMENT

### Information Provision

- 5.1. All Councillors should have access to the same information when making decisions.
- 5.2. Councillors' written questions of officers regarding agenda reports shall be circulated to all Councillors for information and the officer's response shall be circulated to all Councillors.
- 5.3. Where a question cannot be sufficiently answered at any information session or meeting and further information is required to be provided by an officer, it shall be circulated to all Councillors.
- 5.4. Councillors however can ask for personal information of a private nature to be provided on a "Private and Confidential" basis.

### Council and Committee Meetings

- 5.5. Council and Committee Meetings are conducted in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1995*, the *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996* and the City of Busselton Standing Orders Local Law.
- 5.6. Formal decisions of the Council are made utilising the Council and Committee meeting process.

### Reports to Council or a Committee

- 5.7. All reports shall include the details of the reporting officer/s and the options that may be available to the Council should it not agree with the officer's recommendation.
- 5.8. All reports listed for consideration at a meeting are to be provided at the time of agenda distribution, unless they meet the criteria for a late item of urgent business for consideration by the Council or Committee.
- 5.9. Any officers' report shall not duplicate the subject of a motion of which a Councillor has given notice, and where this is unavoidable, the Councillor's notice of motion will take precedence in the order of business of the meeting.

### Briefing Sessions and Workshops

- 5.10. It is usual for workshops and briefing sessions on a range of matters to be convened by the CEO to provide information to Councillors to enable informed decisions to be made.
- 5.11. The Council currently has a meeting cycle of formal Council meetings, preceded by various briefing sessions and workshops in the week before the meeting and on the day of the meeting.
- 5.12. Agenda briefing sessions are utilised to discuss matters:
  - a. that appear on the Council agenda; and
  - b. in relation to a matter of consideration or information at the time.
- 5.13. Agenda briefing sessions shall be conducted in an open, accountable manner and held in accordance with the Code of Conduct, subject to the confidentiality provisions relating to agenda reports.
- 5.14. Other briefing sessions and workshops are convened to offer the Councillors the opportunity to:
  - a. explore options and discuss ideas;
  - b. discuss future agenda items and strategic direction;
  - c. to be briefed on key ongoing projects and have input prior to the allocation of significant resources in taking forward reports to the Council;

- d. provide feedback and input in relation to decisions being made, or which may be made, by officers (under delegation, authorisation or similar, or ‘acting through’);\*
- e. discuss grievances and concerns to be resolved where possible.

\* The CEO will often refer particular matters to a briefing, information session or workshop for discussion and officers may then make decisions having regard for the nature of the discussion. They may be relatively informal and not open to the general public unless invited to attend due to the preliminary and exploratory nature of the discussions.

5.15. Formal decisions of the Council are only made during a formal Council meeting and therefore collective or implied agreement on any issue cannot bind the Local Government during any briefing, information session or workshop.

5.16. In addition to disclosure requirements that apply at formal meetings, the Department of Local Government guidelines promote disclosure of interests at agenda forums, as participation without disclosing an interest is ethically unacceptable. Interests shall therefore be disclosed at agenda briefing sessions (informal and formal), information sessions and workshops etc.

### Community Access Sessions

5.17. Community members are offered the opportunity to address the Councillors on items that are listed on an agenda or any other matter of local government business during specially convened Community Access Sessions. The CEO and Directors, or their representatives, are to attend Community Access Sessions if items pertaining to their directorate are listed on the Agenda.

### Electors’ and Special Electors’ Meetings

5.18. Matters discussed at electors’ meetings provide important input into Council decision-making processes. All annual meetings of electors and special meetings of electors shall be convened in City-owned buildings to ensure that the venue is appropriate for the conduct of such a meeting.

5.19. The CEO, or his representative, shall attend all meetings of electors and is requested to have Directors in attendance, such that wherever possible, electors can be provided with the information that they are seeking at the meeting.

## **6. RELATED DOCUMENTATION / LEGISLATION**

- 6.1. Local Government Act 1995
- 6.2. Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996
- 6.3. Department of Local Government Council Forums Guideline

## **7. REVIEW DETAILS**

| Review Frequency  |      | 3 yearly    |              |           |
|-------------------|------|-------------|--------------|-----------|
| Council Adoption  | DATE | 10 May 2017 | Resolution # | C1705/101 |
| Previous Adoption | DATE | 13 May 2015 | Resolution # | C1505/112 |