

MEMBER POLICY – COUNCIL FORUMS

PURPOSE

Council Forums enable Council Members and the Administration to meet informally to exchange information, discuss strategic concepts, develop mutual understanding and consensus views as set out in the Local Government Guideline Number 5 – Council Forums.

OBJECTIVE

This policy establishes the Shire's Council Forums governance framework consistent with Department of Local Government Guideline Number 5 – Council Forums.

DEFINED TERMS

"Council Forum Program" provides the order of matters for discussion at a Forum and is named as such so that a distinction can be made between a Council Forum Program where no decisions are made by Council and a Council Meeting Agenda where decisions are made by Council in the form of Council Resolutions.

"Presentations" is included as a heading within the Council Forum Program for the purpose of (Consultants and/or the CEO and his Senior Management Team) making "presentations" in relation to matters for discussion as described below. Note: "Presentations" means the act of presenting information on a particular topic.

"Public Questions" is included as a heading within the Council Forum Program for the purpose of an individual member of the public using the opportunity to ask a question relating to a matter included in the Council Forum Program. Public Questions may be made in accordance with Council's Public Question Time Information Sheet Guidelines.

"Submissions" is included as a heading within the Council Forum Program for the purpose of an individual member of the public, who can demonstrate that they may be affected (whether adversely or favourably) by a matter included in the Council Forum Program, making a submission. Public submissions may be made in accordance with Council's Public Submission Information Sheet Guidelines.

"Concept Forum" is a heading in the Council Forum Program to provide opportunity to discuss Concept Forum Items which:

- (a) Provide an opportunity for the Chief Executive Officer and the Executive Management Team to inform Councillors of significant and strategic matters, provide updates on major projects, and introduce and consult on matters that will be provided for consideration at a future Council meeting.
- (b) Enable Councillors to identify matters for future consideration by Council.
- (c) Enable Councillors to ask questions and seek additional information in respect to matters for future consideration by Council.

- (d) Enable the administration to obtain guidance through Council Member consensus in respect to the early development of matters for future consideration by Council.
- (e) Enable, where required, external consultants to provide presentations to Council on matters for future consideration by Council.
- (f) Provide an opportunity to discuss, propose, formulate philosophies, ideas, strategies and concepts for the good government of local government and the district that it serves.

"Confidential Matters" - both agenda and Concept Forums may include Confidential Matters, which are determined in accordance with Section 5.93 of the *Local Government Act 1995*.

POLICY STATEMENT

The following provisions establish the governance framework by which the Shire will conduct Council Forums:

- (a) The chairperson for the forum will be elected by Council. In the chair's absence, Councillors in attendance at the forum will elect a Councillor to preside at the forum.
- (b) The Council Member, Committee Member and Candidate Code of Conduct and the Employee Code of Conduct apply respectively to Council Member and staff participation in a Council Forum.
- (c) The chair of the Council Forum will facilitate the meeting's progress through the order of business listed in the Council Forum Program.
- (d) The chair will maintain order of persons in attendance and all persons in attendance must comply with the directions of the chair.
- (e) Elected members, staff consultants and other participants are to disclose direct and indirect financial or proximity interests and interests affecting impartiality in relation to matters discussed at forums.
 - i. Persons disclosing a direct or indirect financial or proximity interest are required to leave the room while the matter in which they have declared an interest is discussed.
- (f) Forums are not formal Council meetings and therefore debate of items included in a Council agenda and decision making (resolutions) are prohibited at Council Forums.
- (g) All questions and discussions are to be directed through the chair.
- (a) Council Forums will be open to the public, except when matters of a confidential nature are discussed. The chairperson is to be guided by the principles set out in, subject to the provisions of Section 5.23 of the *Local Government Act 1995*.
- (b) Where a confidential matter is to be discussed, the forum will when determining when to go behind closed doors, meaning members of the public will be required to leave the meeting venue and will only be asked to return after discussion of confidential matters has been concluded.

- (c) Notes are to be retained in respect to the business of the Council Forum. The notes are to include a precis of the information exchanged or provided in the forum. The notes are to be distributed within five days following the Council Forum. The notes are to be tabled and be "received" by Council at its next Ordinary Meeting of Council.
- (d) Where a particular idea or concept is raised at a Council Forum and is consensually agreed by Council to be worthy of further Council discussion and/or deliberation, Shire officers will be asked to prepare a discussion paper which sets out salient points relevant to the idea or concept.
- (e) Where a discussion paper is produced for presentation at a Council Forum, a Consensus Forum Outcome shall be recorded in a Council Forum Outcomes schedule.
- (f) Any Consensus Forum Outcome arising as a consequence of the presentation of a discussion paper to a Council Forum shall be tabled at the next available Council meeting in the form of an agenda item, with the resulting officer recommendation reflecting the Consensus Forum Outcome arising from the Council Forum.
- (g) No formal decisions will be made at Council Forums. All outcomes arising from Council Forums will be by consensus agreement amongst those Councillors present.

Council Forum Program

The Council Forum Program is to consist of the following headings:

- 1. DECLARATION OF OPENING**
- 2. RECORD OF ATTENDANCE/APOLOGIES**
- 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
- 4. PRESENTATIONS**
- 5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (relating to the contents of the program)**
- 6. PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS (relating to the contents of the program)**
- 7. CONCEPT FORUM MATTERS**
- 8. CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS**
- 9. COUNCILLOR UPDATE ON MEETINGS ATTENDED**
- 10. MEETING CLOSURE**

Distribution of Program

The Council Forum Program is to be distributed to Elected Members at least three days prior to the meeting.

Council Forum Schedule

- (a) Council Forums are to be convened two weeks prior to a scheduled Ordinary Meeting of Council; and
- (b) Council may set the date, time and duration of Council Forums when adopting its meeting schedule for Ordinary Meetings of Council.

GUIDELINES

Department of Local Government Guideline Number 5 – Council Forums

Local Government Act 1995

STATUTORY ENVIRONMENT

Department of Local Government Guideline Number 5 – Council Forums.

Record of Policy Review						
Version	Author	Council Adoption	Resolution	Reason for Review	Review Date	CEO Signature
01	Neville Hale (ACEO)	28/09/17	56-17/18	New Policy		
02	Graeme Fardon	27/09/18	41-18/19	<i>Policy Review Project – 1/09/2018</i>		
03	Graeme Fardon	17/12/20	97-20/21	Biennial Policy Review	Dec 2020	
04	Nicole Gibbs	27/4/23	215-22/23	Biennial Policy Review/convening of Concept Forum	April 2025	