

# Councillor Briefings and Workshops - Council Policy

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<b>Policy Owner</b>	<i>Customer Support and Governance</i>
<b>Link to Corporate Plan</b>	<i>Financial Sustainability</i>
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<b>Related Legislation</b>	<i>Local Government Act 2009 Local Government Regulation 2012</i>
<b>Related Documents</b>	<i>Code of Conduct for Councillors in Queensland Meetings - Council Policy</i>

<b>Policy Version</b>	<b>Approval Date</b>	<b>Adopted/Approved</b>
<i>1</i>	<i>21/04/2021</i>	<i>Adopted at Ordinary Meeting of Council</i>

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## 1. PURPOSE

This Policy provides a framework for the orderly and proper conduct of Councillor briefings and workshops and aims to provide transparency around Council decision-making in line with the Local Government Principles identified in section 4 of the *Local Government Act 2009* (LG Act).

This Policy provides direction to Councillors and Council officers on the purpose, conduct and value of Councillor briefing sessions and workshops. Council has an obligation to report, explain and be answerable for decisions it makes on behalf of the community it represents.

## 2. SCOPE

This Policy applies to all Councillors and Council employees that attend and participate in Councillor briefing sessions and workshops, including staff that contribute towards the decision-making process.

## 3. POLICY

### 3.1 Introduction

Council is committed to upholding the principles of local government throughout the entirety of the decision-making process. Transparent meeting procedures ensure public confidence in Council's decision-making process.

### 3.2 Councillor Briefing Sessions

Councillor briefing sessions provide a valuable opportunity to enhance the decision-making process and are a forum for the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and senior Council Officers to address Councillor questions and provide additional background on matters coming before the Council for decision.

In respect to Councillor briefing sessions: -

- i. no decision-making or voting takes place at these meetings;
- ii. Councillors are encouraged, but not obliged, to attend; and
- iii. the requirements for local government meetings prescribed in the Meetings - Council Policy and LG Act and *Local Government Regulation 2012* (LG Regulation) do not apply, including that Councillor briefing sessions be open to the public and the recording of minutes.

Specifically, Councillor briefing sessions provide a forum for: -

- i. Councillors to be fully informed on complex matters that will allow for more effective discussion and debate during subsequent formal meetings;
- ii. Councillors to share their views with each other;
- iii. Councillors to seek further information, clarification and background details from Council Officers or any guest presenters;
- iv. Officers to advise Councillors of their professional opinions and reasoning behind their intended recommendations; and
- v. presentations by external parties.

### 3.3 Councillor Workshops

Councillor workshops are a process for Councillors, Council officers and where required, external parties to collaborate to develop or advance proposals, such as masterplans with the organisation on topics of strategic importance and collectively develop proposals prior to the formal decision-making process commencing. Examples include discussions to determine strategic priorities, the development of the budget, initial input into the development or review of Council policies, plans etc.



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Councillor workshops are not formal decision-making forums and may be used as a basis for Officers to develop a firmer proposal which will be considered formally by Council in the future. Where a subsequent report is presented to Council that has been in part developed by collaborating in a Councillor workshop, it is a requirement to note this in the consultation section of the report template.

## 3.4 Administration

Councillor briefing sessions and workshops shall be scheduled by the CEO, with notice provided by Executive Support.

The Mayor or CEO may call a Councillor briefing session or workshop as necessary for emergent matters.

The CEO in consultation with the Mayor and Councillors, will determine the matters to be presented at a Councillor briefing session or workshop. Councillors may formally request a Councillor briefing session or workshop be held about a specific matter by a notice of motion at a Council meeting.

Councillor briefing sessions and workshops are not formal meetings of Council and are generally not open to the public unless otherwise invited.

Whilst no quorum is required, Councillor briefing sessions and workshops are open for attendance by all Councillors. In order to make the best use of time and resources, the CEO shall determine which Council Officers are required to attend any given session. A register of attendance will be recorded to support transparent and accountable processes.

External persons may attend Councillor briefing sessions or workshops upon invitation from the Mayor or CEO.

Councillor briefing sessions and workshops may be facilitated by the Mayor or CEO or another Councillor or member of the Executive team as required. The relevant General Manager shall introduce each session providing the purpose for the briefing or workshop and the presenter/facilitator.

Presentations and material for the briefing session, where appropriate and where possible, be provided to Councillors 2 days in advance of the meeting.

## 3.5 Roles and Responsibilities

Councillors are obliged to comply with the [Code of Conduct for Councillors in Queensland](#) and the local government principles, including 'transparent and effective processes, and decision-making in the public interest' and should refrain from making formal or implied decisions during Councillor briefing sessions and workshops.

Officers are obliged to provide sound and impartial advice during Councillor briefing sessions and workshops consistent with their responsibilities outlined in the LG Act.

## 3.6 Confidentiality

Councillors will be in receipt of confidential information that may or may not be part of a formal Council meeting. Councillors must use Council information in a way that promotes and maintains the public trust and confidence in the integrity of the local government. The release of confidential information is prohibited by the LG Act.<sup>1</sup>

Councillors and Council Officers<sup>2</sup> have a responsibility to ensure that confidential information is treated confidentially, so as not to harm, prejudice or compromise the interests of Council or any individual or organisation, or enable any individual or organisation to gain, directly or indirectly a financial advantage.

## 3.7 Conflicts of Interest

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<sup>1</sup> *Local Government Act 2009* - section 171

<sup>2</sup> *Local Government Act 2009* - section 200



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Councillors must as soon as they become aware, declare conflicts of interest on any matters being discussed or proposed to be discussed at Councillor briefing sessions or workshops in accordance with the relevant provisions of the LG Act<sup>3</sup>.

A Councillor who has a prescribed or declared conflict of interest in a matter to be addressed in a Councillor briefing session or workshop must not attend the session relating to the matter unless the local government has previously approved by resolution their participation in the matter under the provisions of the LG Act.

Council Officers must declare any actual, perceived or potential conflicts of interests in accordance with their obligations under the Code of Conduct, Disclosures (Conflicts of Interest and Prescribed Personal Interests) - Council Policy and the LG Act.

This requirement recognises that discussions at Councillor briefing sessions or workshops may influence Councillors when deciding a matter at a Council meeting.

These declarations will be recorded to ensure that a transparent and effective process is maintained, and the ethical and legal behaviour of Councillors and Council officers is upheld.

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<sup>3</sup> *Local Government Act 2009* - Chapter 5B

