

COUNCIL POLICY – Informal Gatherings Policy	
Reference Number	830108
Responsible Business Unit	Office of Chief Executive Officer
Responsible Officer	Chief Executive Officer
Legislation	Local Government Act 1999
Relevant Delegations	Chief Executive Officer
Related Policies Management Guidelines Frameworks	Code of Practice – Access to Council meetings and associated documents Code of Conduct
Link to Strategic Plan	Objective 5.1 - Ensuring Delivery
Council resolution	200.6
Date Adopted	19 November 2018
Review Date	During a Council term
Previous Revisions	14 November 2016, 212.3 9 May 2016, item 85.4 – Code of Practice – Access to Council and Committee meetings & associated documents

POLICY STATEMENT

Informal gatherings provide a valuable opportunity to enhance Council decision-making processes by providing opportunities for Council Members to become better informed on issues and seek further clarification. Informal gatherings, however, should not be used, or be seen to be used, as a replacement for full debate and decision making at Council meetings or Council Committee meetings. Open and transparent Council meetings and Council committee meetings underpin representative democracy and ensure public confidence in Council's decision-making processes.

OBJECTIVES

This policy aims to ensure that the statutory requirements for openness and transparency in Council decision making are observed, while providing an opportunity for confidential discussions among Council members where this is warranted by the nature of the gathering or the matter to be discussed.

SCOPE

This policy applies to informal gatherings of the Council or a Council Committee, including designated informal gatherings or discussions.

The *Local Government (General) Regulations 2013* defines 'designated information gathering or discussion' as:

An event organised and conducted by or on behalf of the council or chief executive officer to which members of the council or council committee (as the case may be) have been invited and that involves discussion of a matter that is, or is intended to be, part of the agenda for a formal meeting of the council or council committee.

An informal gathering which does not involve discussion of a matter that is, or is intended to be part of the agenda for a formal meeting of the Council or the Council Committee, is not a 'designated informal gathering or discussion'

PURPOSE OF INFORMAL GATHERINGS OR DISCUSSIONS

Section 90(8) of the Local Government Act allows informal gatherings or discussions to be held provided that the gathering or discussion does not obtain, or effectively obtain, a decision on a matter outside a formally constituted meeting of the Council or Council Committee.

The Local Government Act sets out the following examples of informal gatherings or discussions:

- Planning sessions associated with the development of policies or strategies
- Briefing or training sessions
- Workshops
- Social gatherings to encourage informal communication between members or between members and staff

Informal gatherings of Council Members or Council Committee Members (either with or without Council staff) are, by their nature, non-compulsory. However, all Council Members and Council Committee Members are encouraged to attend relevant informal gatherings, particularly where the informal gathering or discussion is intended to provide history, context or additional information to Council Members or Council Committee Members.

PURPOSE OF DESIGNATED INFORMAL GATHERINGS OR DISCUSSIONS

Designated informal gatherings or discussions may be used to:

- Discuss issues that involve strategy or policy or other matters of Council administration
- Brief Council Member or Council Committee members on issues relating to their functions.

Designated informal gatherings and discussions will be used solely for the purpose of information sharing and not for the purpose of determining, or effectively determining, matters which should be determined at a formally constituted meeting of the Council or Council Committee.

DESIGNATED INFORMAL GATHERINGS OR DISCUSSIONS TO BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC, EXCEPT IN SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Designated informal gatherings or discussions will be held at a place open to the public, except where the designated informal gathering or discussion has been declared by the Council or Chief Executive Officer to be a confidential information discussion'.

The Council or Chief Executive Officer may, on a case by case basis, declare a designated informal gathering or discussion to be a confidential informal discussion' where the designated informal gathering or discussions is either;

- (1) A planning session of a general strategic nature; or
- (2) Is a briefing session relating to information or a matter of a confidential nature within the ambit of section 90(3) of the Local Government Act.

An informal gathering or discussion of the Council or a Council committee which is not a designated gathering or discussion will not be open to the public, unless otherwise determined by the Council or Chief Executive Officer.

PROCEDURES APPLYING TO DESIGNATED INFORMAL GATHERINGS OR DISCUSSIONS

Both the Chief Executive Officer and the Council are responsible for ensuring designated informal gatherings or discussions are conducted in accordance with the Local Government Act.

Designated informal gatherings or discussions are not subject to the procedural meeting requirements of the Local Government Act and *Local Government (Proceedings at Meetings) Regulations 2013*.

Designated informal gatherings or discussions will be chaired by the Chief Executive Officer or another senior Council officer. The Chair is responsible for ensuring that the purpose, intent and

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outcomes of the designated informal gatherings or discussions are consistent with section 90 of the Local Government Act.

Formal minutes will not be recorded of a designated informal gathering or discussion. Notes of a designated informal gathering or discussion may be tabled at the Council meeting following the designated informal gathering or discussion.

If a designated informal gathering or discussion has been declared to be a confidential informal discussion' then these confidential matters will be scheduled to be discussed at the end of the agenda for the designated informal gathering or discussion where possible. The designated informal gathering or discussion will be open to the public until immediately prior to the discussion on confidential matters commencing and immediately after the discussion has concluded.

PUBLICATION OF INFORMATION RELATING TO DESIGNATED INFORMAL GATHERINGS OR DISCUSSIONS

For all designated informal gatherings or discussions, the following information will be published on Council's website:

1. The place, date and time at which the designated informal gathering or discussion will be held
2. The matter that is to be discussed at the designated informal gathering or discussion
3. Whether or not the designated informal gathering or discussion is to be held at a place open to the public.

Where a confidential informal discussion declaration applies to a designated informal gathering or discussion, the reason for the designated informal gathering or discussion being held entirely or partially in confidence must be published on the Council's website.