



Designated Informal Gatherings Policy

Reference Number:	1.13
Type:	Council Policy
Category:	Governance
Relevant Community Plan Outcome:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be bold and innovative in our practices, leadership and decision making.• Practise transparent and accountable governance.
Responsible Officer(s):	Manager Governance and Operational Support
First Issued/Approved:	March 2016
Minutes Reference:	CoS 5/11/2018, Item 3.24
Last Reviewed:	May 2019
Next Review Due:	May 2021
Applicable Legislation:	Local Government Act 1999
Related Policies:	Council Member Code of Conduct Policy
Related Procedures:	

1. Purpose

To ensure Council Members have sufficient opportunity to conduct planning sessions, to receive informal briefings and educational sessions, and convene other informal gatherings without prejudicing the requirements for openness and transparency as required by the Local Government Act 1999.

Section 90(8) of the Local Government Act allows informal gatherings to be held provided that the discussion does not lead to a decision, or effectively obtain a decision, on a matter that would ordinarily be dealt with at a Council meeting. This policy reflects the intention of the legislation for designated informal gatherings to be used for briefing, planning and educational sessions and is aimed at avoiding any perception that designated informal gatherings will be used to infer or pre-empt a decision for Council agenda items.

2. Scope

The Local Government (General) Regulations defines as designated informal gathering and discussions 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”

Section 90(8) of the Local Government Act provides a list of non-exclusive examples of informal gatherings, which are:

- 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.

3. Policy Statement

Designated informal gatherings and discussions are used for the purpose of information sharing and not for the purpose of debating issues, pre-empting decisions or otherwise discharging Council's deliberative and decision-making functions.

Informal gatherings of Council Members, or Council Members and Council staff are, by their nature, a non-compulsory gathering of Council. Council Members are encouraged to attend these sessions as relevant, particularly those designed to provide education, history, context or information to assist Council Members to carry out their functions.

The Council (through a resolution) or Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will determine when a designated informal gathering or discussion will take place.

Designated informal gathering or discussions may be used to:

- discuss issues that involve strategy or policy
- brief Council or Committee Members on issues relating to their functions.

Designated informal gatherings will be open to the public, unless the Council or the CEO has declared it to be held in confidence. This will only occur if the planning or briefing session is in relation to information or a matter that fits with the ambit of section 90(3) of the Local Government Act.

Every Council Member will be notified of a designated informal gathering via email. Council will also publish on its website a schedule of designated informal gatherings including information in relation to the:

- place, date and time of the designated informal gathering, including if the location is a public place.
- the subject matter
- whether it will be held in confidence, and the reason for it being held in confidence.
- informal gatherings will not involve a formal minute taking process

An informal gathering or discussion of the Council or a Council Committee which is not a designated informal gathering or discussion will not be open to the public, unless otherwise determined by the Council or CEO. Informal gatherings that will not be open to the public are:

- social gatherings to encourage informal communication between members or between members and staff.
- where senior Council Members meet individually or with small groups of other Councillors for the purpose of mentoring and skill development, typically this centres around the nuances of managing meeting procedures and the like.
- council Member Training Sessions.

4. Definitions

Key Term – Acronym	Definition
Nil	Nil