Council Forums

Introduction

This policy ensures that any meetings held outside formal Council Meetings complies with the *Local Government Act 1995* (the Act).

Objective

To guide Elected Members and Shire Officers on holding Council Forums with transparency and accountability.

Scope

This policy applies to all Council Forums involving Shire Officers and Council Members.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Key documents	Integrated Planning Strategies; Budgets; Reports; Strategic Plans; Project Briefs; Financial Plans; Asset Management Plans; Officer reports; Delegation Register; Policies; and frameworks.

Please refer to the Shire of Toodyay Glossary (Definitions) document located on the Shire of Toodyay (Shire) website for other definitions not listed: https://www.toodyay.wa.gov.au/documents/470/corporate-documents-glossary-(definitions)

1. **Policy Statement**

   The Shire's meeting structure follows the Governance Framework. Council can only make decisions in formal meetings under the auspices of Part 5 of the *Local Government Act 1995.*

   Council Forums are informal, non-decision-making sessions that support informed discussion and strategic planning. Section 5.23(1) of the Act prescribes those meetings that are required to be open to the public. Council Forums are not.

   The Shire President or the Chief Executive Officer may invite members of the public to Council Forums as per their discretion and when deemed necessary.

   Council Forums include:

   1.1 **Agenda Forums**

   - help members understand issues for upcoming meetings;

   - provide a Q&A session for members to seek clarity on complex matters; and

   - Provide an opportunity to raise matters that may not have been considered or require further research.

1.2 Councillor Briefings

- involve informal discussions on various topics including reports, sector changes, future developments, local issues and regional matters;

- This is the forum where external persons will present detailed information to allow a Q&A for Council members to seek clarity directly from the external person.

1.3 Councillor Workshops

- Involve informal two-way discussions on strategic matters like corporate documents, policies, strategies, plans and local laws.

- Provide a forum to discuss emerging issues and trends to reduce public misinformation.

2. Development of Key documents

Forums help Shire Officers create, amend and review key documents including:

2.1 Financial Planning activities

Including but not limited to Budget Reviews, Annual Budget deliberations and project briefs.

2.2 Strategic Planning activities

Includes review and input into strategic documents such as the Council Plan, financial plans, informing strategies, asset management plans and workforce plans.

2.3 Corporate Document activities

Includes review and input into delegations, policies, and other corporate documents.

3. Protocols and Procedures

The following meeting procedures apply:

1. Adverse Reflection

(a) Do not criticize previous Council decisions; the character or actions of others or use offensive or objectionable language against another Member or employee.

(b) If anyone does use such language they must take it back and apologize to the Presiding Member and Councillors.

2. Preserve Order

(a) The Presiding Member keeps order and can call any Member to order.

(b) Members must stay quiet and be seated when the Presiding Member speaks.

3. Presiding Member

(a) The Shire President chairs Council Forums. If absent, the Deputy President or another appointed Member will chair.

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4. **Disclosure of Interests**

   (a)   Members and Shire Officers must disclose any financial or proximity interests related to matters discussed at forums.

   (b)   Those with such interests must leave the room during discussions.

5. **Document Handling**

   (a)   All forum agendas and supporting documents must be clearly marked "Confidential – Not for Public Release".

   (b)   Documents must be stored securely in the Council's document management system with restricted access.

   (c)   Notes taken during forums will record attendance and questions only and will not be published publicly.

6. **Debate**

   No debates or decisions are made at Forums.

7. **Additional Matters**

   (a)   Members can request to include matters at a Forum through the Shire President and/or the CEO.

   (b)   Members can ask questions, give feedback, or suggest ideas, on other matters.

8. **Frequency of Meetings**

   Council sets the date and time of monthly Forums when adopting its annual schedule. Other dates may be scheduled as needed at the discretion of the CEO and/or at the request of the Shire President to the CEO.

9. **Conduct**

   Members must follow the Shire of Toodyay Code of Conduct for Council Members, Committee Members and Candidates.

   Shire Officers must follow the Shire of Toodyay Worker's Code of Conduct.

10. **Transparency Safeguards**

    Formal Council Meeting agendas and reports will continue to be published in accordance with statutory requirements. Decisions will only be made at formal Council meetings, which remain open to the public.

11. **Quorum**

    A quorum is not required for Forums but the CEO, in consultation with the Shire President may reschedule if necessary.

12. **Managing Conflicts of Interest**

    (a)   No Council Member or Shire Officer should raise matters if they have or may perceive to have a Financial or Proximity Interest.

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(b) Members and Shire Officers must disclose interests in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1995* and the Shire of Toodyay Code of Conduct.

(c) Members must make written disclosures of Interest to the Presiding Member at all Forums.

(d) Officers must make written disclosures of Interest to the CEO at all Forums.

(e) If the interest is Financial, or Proximity related, the Member or Shire Officer must leave the room during the discussion.

Reference Information

- Local Government Operational Guideline Council Forums;
- Council Delegates Roles and Responsibilities Policy (GOV12);
- Live Streaming and Recording of Council Meetings Policy (GOV19);
- Corporate Documents Policy (ADM1).
- Risk Management (ADM18) – containing the Risk Matrix tables.
- https://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/local-government/strengthening-local-government/intergrated-planning-and-reporting
- https://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/local-government/strengthening-local-government/intergrated-planning-and-reporting/informing-strategies

Legislation

Local Government Act 1995

Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996

Local Government (Audit) Regulations 1996

Associated documents

Code of Conduct for Council Members, Committee Members and Candidates

Code of Conduct for Workers

Governance Framework

Document control information	
Document Category	Governance
Document Title	Council Forums
Document ID	GOV10
Document Owner (position title)	Chief Executive Officer
Author (position title)	Governance Coordinator

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