

## Council Forums, Workshops and Information Sessions

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<b>Policy Owner:</b>	Chief Executive Officer
<b>Person Responsible:</b>	Executive Assistant
<b>Date of Approval:</b>	17 May 2017 <sup>Resolution 090517</sup>
<b>Amended:</b>	16 September 2020; 15 March 2023
<b>Integrated Framework Reference:</b>	Strategic Community Plan
<b>Applies to:</b>	All Staff and Council attending Councillor Information sessions

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*This policy was adopted by Council to set governing principles in place that align with the Strategic Community Plan 2022 - 2032: Focus Area Performance: Outcome SF.2: Accountable and Transparent Governance.*

### OBJECTIVES

To ensure that Council Forums, Workshops and Information Sessions:

- 1 Provide relevant information to ensure Councillors are better informed when participating in Council decision making processes.
- 2 Provide a platform for two-way communication between Councillors and key staff on Council related matters.
- 3 Provide an inclusive opportunity for general community members to receive the same information on Agenda Items being provided to Councillors on a range of relevant topics.

### DEFINITION

**Agenda Forum** refers to the non-statutory meeting held by Council to ask questions, receive presentations and seek clarity of officer reports on the upcoming agenda.

**Briefing Sessions** refers to a non-statutory meeting held by Council to ask questions on the published agenda.

**Community Engagement Forums** refers to community engagement sessions scheduled in the various localities where Councillors and staff share information and engage in open discussions with the community.

**Council Workshops** refers to the non-statutory meeting held by Council to provide input and guidance on the development of matters that have a strategic impact and/or relate to the delivery of the Strategic Community Plan.

## **POLICY**

The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC) (Operational Guideline Number 05) acknowledges that many local governments, especially those in rural areas, need to conduct pre-meeting forums as Councillors need an opportunity to discuss issues within the freedom of a forum rather than in a formal Council meeting.

### **1 AGENDA FORUMS**

#### **1.1 Matters dealt with at agenda forums may include;**

- breaking down of complex issues before Council;
- clarification of items on the Council agenda;
- requests for additional information on items on the Council agenda; and
- discussion of confidential items on the agenda and which will be discussed with members of the public excluded.

#### **1.2 Public Presentations and Deputations**

Members of the public and applicants will have the opportunity to present or make a deputation to Councillors at an Agenda Forum. The purpose of allowing for presentations and deputations is so that the public/the applicant has the opportunity to put their position to Council, and members of Council will have an opportunity to ask questions of members of the public and/or applicant.

Requests for presentations and deputations will only be allowed at either the Agenda Forum or Ordinary Council Meeting; not for both.

#### **1.3 Public Question Time**

There is no Question Time at an Agenda Forum. Members of the public may make presentations and deputations at Agenda Forums, and may ask questions on any topic relevant to the local government at each Council Meeting.

#### **1.4 Points/Requests for Clarification by Councillors**

Councillors will have the opportunity to ask questions of any officer or person in attendance to provide further information or clarification.

#### **1.5 No Debate**

No debate, or discussion between Councillors that could be interpreted as debate, will be permitted.

#### **1.6 No Decisions**

No decision will be made at an Agenda Forum by the Council, other than the election of Presiding Member in the absence of the President or Deputy President.

### **1.7 Modifications to Council Agenda**

Following information forthcoming prior to or as part of the Agenda Forum, the CEO may at that officer's discretion, choose to modify or withdraw an officer's agenda item prior to the Council Agenda being finalised and released for formal distribution.

## **2 COUNCIL WORKSHOPS**

Council Workshops generally relate to strategic matters that are not yet on a Council meeting agenda.

Matters to be discussed at a Council Workshop may include:

- the brainstorming of ideas;
- policy development and direction (but not adoption);
- Budget Sessions; and
- ongoing discussion of the Shire's strategic direction.

## **3 BRIEFING SESSIONS**

Briefing Sessions are on Agenda Forum and Council Meeting days and used for presentations to be made to Council. Relevant updates on projects, or other progress reports would be generally presented in this setting. These sessions are also used to accommodate external groups wishing to make presentations to Council for information purposes only and can also be used by a Community Group wishing to address a specific matter with council. Open discussion between Council, and staff and presenting stakeholders relating to the matter at hand.

## **4 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FORUMS**

Predominantly scheduled in a less formal setting, allowing the community to openly engage with Council on a "Question and Answer" basis; and also used, to a lesser extent, for topical information sharing. Open engagement and free discussion is encouraged.

## **5 CONFIDENTIALITY**

Agenda forums and Community Engagement Forums are open to all members of the public. Matters of a confidential nature included in a Council agenda will be discussed at closed agenda forum sessions in accordance with the provisions of the LG Act (i.e. not open to the public).

Council Workshops are generally closed to the public to facilitate the open discussion of preliminary ideas and concepts by Councillors, but may be open to the public where the CEO or Shire President believe it would be beneficial.

## **6 PRINCIPLES**

The following guidelines apply to Forums, Workshops and Briefing Sessions to ensure openness and accountability is safeguarded:

- 6.1** Forums, Workshops and Briefing Sessions are not to become “de facto” meetings and there must be no implication of debate or collective or collaborative decisions being made or implied.
- 6.2** Agenda Forums, Briefing Sessions and Council Workshops are to be held prior to Council Meetings with additional sessions as required and called by Council or the Shire President or convened by the CEO in liaison with the Shire President.
- 6.3** Notice of Forums, Workshops and Briefing Sessions will be given by via email invitation and will include a list of topics or a program. Councillors wishing to have an item included on the program are to advise the CEO and the Shire President via email at the earliest opportunity. The public will be informed of items which will be discussed in Agenda Forums by advertisement along with the items on the Council agenda on the Shire website.
- 6.4** Members of the public and applicants will have the opportunity to present or make a deputation to Councillors at an Agenda Forum. The purpose of allowing for presentations and deputations is so that the public/the applicant has the opportunity to put their position to Council, and members of Council will have an opportunity to ask questions of members of the public and/or applicant.
- Requests for presentations and deputations will only be allowed at either the Agenda Forum or Ordinary Council Meeting; not for both.
- 6.5** Forums, Workshops and Briefing Sessions are to be chaired by the Shire President. The CEO is responsible for the presentation of information and for providing direction to staff.
- 6.6** Councillors and staff must disclose conflicts of interest in matters to be discussed in Forums, Workshops and Briefing Sessions. Interests must be disclosed at the start of the session and in accordance with the provisions of the LG Act as they apply to Ordinary Council meetings. Persons disclosing a financial interest must not participate in that part of the session relating to their interest and leave the room unless the forum otherwise allows. Interests affecting impartiality should also be disclosed and dealt with in accordance with the Local Government (Model Code of Conduct) Regulations 2021.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is responsible for the administration of the Forums, Workshops and Briefing Sessions in terms of officer attendance, convening sessions, notice of items to be discussed at the session, and the keeping of a record of the proceedings including reporting details of the sessions on a quarterly basis.

## **7 RECORDING OF PROCEEDINGS**

An audio recording will be taken of questions from elected Members and answers from Members and officers, public presentations and deputations at Agenda Forums; and these audio recordings are to be circulated to Council before the issuance of the Ordinary Council Meeting Agenda to the public.

References:

<https://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/department/publications/publication/council-forums>

Elected Member Policy 4.10 - Transparency & Accountability