



Councillors Workshops and Briefing Sessions Policy and Procedure

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Scope

This Policy applies to Councillors and Council employees, including contract and casual employees engaged by Council, members of Council Committees and external parties.

Purpose

The purpose of Workshops and Briefing Sessions is to engage with Councillors, on matters of significant importance and interest.

The Workshops and Briefing Sessions allow the Lord Mayor, Councillors, Executive and Staff to:

- clarify issues, exchange information (including confidential) and to seek feedback/general direction on proposals
- provide a forum for discussion on initiatives and discuss options in determining Council's strategic corporate direction
- ensure effective communications and information flow between staff and Councillors
- provide a team building forum in which to develop trust and understanding between those attending the workshops or briefing.

Councillor Workshops and Briefing Sessions are often held prior to Council making a resolution in a Council Meeting. Workshops and Briefing Sessions are not decision-making forums but an opportunity to provide background information or context and present options that supports a resolution or action in Council. Information provided to these forums are confidential. Feedback obtained from Councillors at a Workshop or Briefing Session will help guide Council Officers in preparing reports or other documents

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seeking a decision by Council and ensure that all issues and views are properly canvassed in the report or other documents such as submissions.

Policy

Under the Local Government Act 1993, a Council can hold a Workshop or Briefing Session under its general powers as a body corporate. Workshops and Briefing Sessions are informal gatherings and can provide useful background information to Councillors on the business of Council. Councillor Workshops and Briefing Sessions may involve Councillors, Council staff and invited external participants.

Council Workshops and Briefings often provide Councillors with information that leads to forming a Council position on a particular item or issue. In a majority of cases the information presented is provided under the agreement and understanding that it requires the knowledge or feedback from Councillors before a final position can be provided to Council in the form of a report. The information provided in these forums is confidential.

Respect

Councillor Workshops and Briefings may be attended by external participants and Council staff, including a range of staff who are not listed under the Interaction Between Councillors and Staff Policy.

Councillors and staff are to observe the conduct obligations of the Code of Conduct, and to remain courteous, professional and respectful of all attendees. The Chair will call to order anyone who behaves in a manner contrary to the conduct obligations of the Code of Conduct, including the use of offence behaviour or language.

Confidentiality

Matters discussed in Council Workshops and Briefings are generally confidential in that they contain information that could provide an unfair or false representation of Council's position on a particular matter. Information provided as part of Workshops and Briefings that is marked confidential should be treated the same as matters held in the Confidential Agenda in Council. Photos or videos of presentations are not permitted. Confidential information distributed to an external party or media would be considered as a breach of Section 664* of the Local Government Act in that, Councillors must not, at any time, disclose materials classified as confidential in reports presented to our discussions held at Council.

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Confidential items for the purpose of this policy relate to the same as per the Council Code of Meeting Practice:

- a) Information that would, if disclosed, confer a commercial advantage on a person with whom the council is conducting (or proposes to conduct) business
- b) Commercial information of a confidential nature that would, if disclosed:
 - I. Prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied it, or
 - II. Confer a commercial advantage on a competitor of the council, or
 - III. Review a trade secret
- c) Information that would, if disclosed, prejudice the maintenance of law
- d) Matters affecting the security of the council, Councillors, council staff or council property
- e) Advice concerning litigation, or advice that would otherwise be privileged from production in legal proceedings on the ground of legal professional privilege.
- f) Alleged contraventions of any code of conduct requirements applicable under Section 440.

Conflicts of Interests

Councillors and staff are reminded of their obligations under the Code of Conduct. Conflicts of interests are to be managed in accordance with the Code. Councillors and staff are responsible for the identification, declaration and management of any interests. Forms will be made available at workshops to assist in declaring interests.

Chair

The Lord Mayor or in their absence, Deputy Lord Mayor, will Chair Workshops/Briefing Sessions.

In the absence of the Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor, the Chair will be selected from amongst the Councillors in attendance.

Quorum

Although Workshops and Briefing Sessions are not decision-making forums, attendance by Councillors at these sessions provide an opportunity for informal discussion on a matter prior to it being considered at a Council Meeting.

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A quorum for the purposes of whether a Workshop or Briefing Session will proceed will be at least four Councillors.

Remote Attendance

Workshops and Briefing Sessions are held in the Level 12 Boardroom at 126 Church Street, Parramatta.

Due to COVID-19, the introduction of remote Workshops/Briefing Sessions provided Councillors with the flexibility to attend sessions, whilst juggling other work/personal commitments.

Attendance at Workshops/Briefing Sessions will continue to remain flexible, with provisions being made for in-person and remote attendance.

Catering

Light refreshments will be provided at Workshops/Briefing Sessions in accordance with Councillors' Expenses and Facilities Policy.

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Procedure

Workshops and briefing sessions can be organised:

1. As a result of a resolution at a Council Meeting;
2. As approved by the Executive Team in consultation with the Lord Mayor.

The following table outlines the steps and responsibilities for organising Workshops and Briefing Sessions:

Step	Detail	Responsibility
1	Annual dates for Workshops and Briefing Sessions are set, calendar placeholder invites sent to Councillors and Executive Team, and dates entered into the Councillor Portal and on Council's intranet	Governance
2	Request sent to Governance for a Workshop or Briefing session	Facilitator
3	Date tentatively booked in the Workshop / Briefing Session schedule	Governance
4	Confirmation of Workshop / Briefing sessions	Executive Team
5	Complete Workshop / Briefing Session briefing note and send to Governance	Facilitator
6	Update calendar invite to "CONFIRMED" with details of the session. Attach briefing note and add any additional internal invitees	Governance
7	Send details of the confirmed Workshop / Briefing Session to external invitee	Facilitator
8	Prepare presentation material and provide to Councillors a minimum of two (2) days prior to the Workshop / Briefing session, except in exceptional circumstances approved by the Lord Mayor.	Facilitator
9	Coordinate Councillor RSVPs for confirmed Workshop/Briefing Session	Governance
10	If confirmed number of Councillors is less than quorum, cancel session	Lord Mayor / CEO
11	Supply four (4) hard copies for Councillors in attendance OR, should more than four (4) Councillors request a copy, supply each Councillor who has put in a request with a copy, whichever is the larger.	Facilitator

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Step	Detail	Responsibility
12	Hold session and capture Councillor and staff attendance	Facilitator
13	Complete Outcome Summary and send to Governance	Facilitator
14	Upload Outcome Summary and any presentations / handouts to Councillor Portal	Governance
15	Register Workshops / Briefing Sessions briefing note, presentation / handouts and outcome summary in record management system	Governance

Definitions

Briefing:	Sessions at which information is presented prior to items being put forward at a Council Meeting.
Workshop:	Sessions which Councillors and Staff meet to discuss and/or have input into Council strategies.

REFERENCES	Local Government Act 1993 Local Government (General) Regulation 2021 Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009
POLICIES	Code of Conduct Code of Meeting Practice Interactions Between Councillors and Staff
ATTACHMENTS	

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