

Council Policy

Council Policy Name: Meetings, Information Sessions and Decision Making Processes
Responsible Directorate: Finance and Corporate Services **Version:** ~~ADOPTED~~ PROPOSED

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. A key role of a Councillor is to participate in the Local Government’s decision-making processes at Council and Committee meetings. A key function of the CEO is to ensure that advice and information is available to the Council so that informed decisions can be made.
- 1.2. The purpose of this Policy is to set out guidelines for the provision of information to Councillors at Council and Committee meetings and Information Sessions, as well as how Information Sessions will be managed.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1. This Policy is applicable to all Information Sessions and formally-constituted meetings involving Councillors of the City of Busselton.

3. DEFINITIONS

Term	Meaning
Information Session	Councillor workshops, agenda briefing sessions, briefing sessions and community access sessions
Policy	this City of Busselton Council policy titled “Meetings, Information Sessions and Decision Making Processes”

4. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

- 4.1. This Policy links to Strategic Theme 4. LEADERSHIP - A Council that connects with the community and is accountable in its decision making, of the City’s Strategic Community Plan June 2021 and specifically the following Strategic Priorities:
 - a. 4.2: Deliver governance systems that facilitate open, ethical and transparent decision making; and
 - b. 4.4: Govern a professional organisation that is healthy, capable and engaged.

5. POLICY STATEMENT

- 5.1. The City utilises a range of mechanisms to ensure Councillors can make informed decisions, including workshops, briefing sessions, and community access sessions, in addition to its formal Council and Committee meetings.

Council and Committee Meetings

- 5.2. Council and Committee Meetings are conducted in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1995*, the *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996* and the *City of Busselton Standing Orders Local Law 2018*.

5.3. Formal decisions of the Council are made at Council and Committee meetings.

Agenda Briefing Sessions

5.4. Agenda briefing sessions are utilised to discuss matters that appear on the current Council agenda.

5.5. Agenda briefing sessions shall be conducted in an open, accountable manner, subject to confidentiality provisions.

Briefing Sessions and Workshops

5.6. Outside of agenda briefing sessions it is usual for workshops and briefing sessions on a range of matters to be convened by the CEO for the purpose of providing relevant information to Councillors.

5.7. Briefing sessions and workshops are convened to offer Councillors the opportunity to:

- a. explore options and discuss ideas;
- b. discuss future agenda items and strategic direction;
- c. to be briefed on key ongoing projects and have input prior to the allocation of resources in taking forward reports to the Council;
- d. provide feedback and input in relation to decisions being made, or which may be made, by officers (under delegation, authorisation or similar, or 'acting through');
- e. discuss and resolve where possible grievances and concerns.

5.8. Briefing sessions are relatively informal and are not open to the general public (unless invited) due to the preliminary and exploratory nature of the discussions.

5.9. Formal decisions of the Council are only made during a formal Council meeting and therefore collective or implied agreement on any issue during any briefing, information session or workshop cannot bind the Local Government.

Community Access Sessions

5.10. Community Access Sessions provide community members the opportunity to address Councillors on matters of local government business. Administrative matters may be responded to by the CEO or taken on notice.

~~5.11. Community Access Sessions may also be used to present on a matter currently before Council for a decision, either ahead of the Council meeting as a party with an interest (as per the City of Busselton's Standing Orders Local Law) or as an 'other' interested person.~~

~~5.12. At the discretion of the Presiding Member, community members wishing to present on a matter not on a current Council meeting agenda will be heard first, followed by those wishing to present on an item before Council.~~

~~5.13.~~5.11. While Community Access Sessions are not formal meetings of Council, it is important that they are conducted in a way that is consistent with the principles and objectives of the *Local Government Act 1995* in relation to the conduct of business. Accordingly the following will apply

- a. each member of the public will be given an equal and fair opportunity, to be determined by the presiding member, to address Councillors;
- b. an address will be limited to a period of 5 minutes unless the person is granted an extension by the presiding member;
- c. the presiding member may decide that a question or matter is not be responded to where the same or similar question or matter was:
 - i. asked or dealt with at a previous CAS or Council meeting and a response provided; or

- ii. where the question is offensive or defamatory in nature;
- d. no person is to use any electronic, visual or audio recording device or instrument to record the proceedings of CAS without the permission of the presiding member, unless it is at the discretion of the CEO for the purposes of recordkeeping;
- e. a person must comply with the City’s Behaviour Protocols at all times and must not create a disturbance by interrupting or interfering with the proceedings.
- f. community members must show respect to Councillors and employees and must not publicly make adverse reflections on the character or conduct of a Councillor or employee.

5-14-5.12. If the presiding member considers a community member has engaged in conduct contrary to the requirements of 5.13, they may request the person to refrain from the inappropriate behaviour and / or to withdraw inappropriate comments.

5-15-5.13. Where a community member fails to comply with the Presiding Members request, the presiding member may immediately require the person to stop speaking and / or may require the person to leave the Community Access Session.

5-16-5.14. The CEO will keep a record of matters raised at Community Access Sessions, including who they were raised by.

Information Provision

5-17-5.15. Requests by Councillors’ for information should be directed to the CEO or relevant Director and circulated to all Councillors for information. The officer’s response should be circulated to all Councillors.

5-18-5.16. Councillors can ask for personal information of a private nature to be provided on a “Private and Confidential” basis. The CEO will consider the appropriateness of the request and determine whether such information is to be provided.

5-19-5.17. Where a question cannot be sufficiently answered at an Information Session or Council or Committee meeting, any further information is to be circulated to all Councillors.

5-20-5.18. In addition to disclosure requirements that apply at formal meetings, the Department of Local Government guidelines promote disclosure of interests at agenda forums, as participation without disclosing an interest is ethically unacceptable. Interests shall therefore be disclosed at Information Sessions.

6. RELATED DOCUMENTATION / LEGISLATION

- 6.1. *Local Government Act 1995*
- 6.2. *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996*
- 6.3. Department of Local Government Council Forums Guideline

7. REVIEW DETAILS

Review Frequency		3 yearly		
Council Adoption	DATE	23 March 2022	Resolution #	C2203/060
Previous Adoption	DATE	23 March 2022 May 2017	Resolution #	C2203/060 C1705/101