

Policy number	Policy 023
Policy title	Provision of Information and Services – Elected Members
Strategic outcomes supported	<p>CL1 – Everyone receives appropriate information in the most efficient and effective way for them.</p> <p>CL7 – People have positive exchanges with the Town that inspires confidence in the information and the timely service provided.</p> <p>CL8 – Visionary civic leadership with sound and accountable governance that reflects objective decision making.</p>

Policy objective:

This policy is to identify the process and expectations for the provision of information and services to elected members when performing their roles, outlined in Sections 2.8, 2.9 and 2.10 in the *Local Government Act 1995*.

Commented [v1]: Added to clarify when this policy applies to elected members.

Policy scope:

This policy applies to all elected members and officers of the Town. This does not apply to Council meetings or informal forums.

Policy definitions:

requests require a response or actioning and include asking for further information, asking a question or seeking clarity on an issue.

Policy statement:

1. To preserve the integrity of the decision-making process, the Town is committed to consistency and equity in the provision of information and services to its elected members.
2. To ensure that all elected members are equally informed regarding queries, issues or any concerns raised, particularly on matters requiring a Council decision, this policy sets the direction regarding appropriate etiquette and methods of information provision to all elected members.
3. While elected members are only to direct the Chief Executive Officer, certain services, mostly administrative in nature, are provided to elected members to support the performance of their roles. This policy sets out such administrative services, and the manner in which they are provided.

Requests for information from elected members

4. Section 5.92 of the *Local Government Act 1995* states that an elected member can access information held by the Town that is relevant to the performance of their functions under the Act, or any other relevant legislation.

5. To ensure consistency and integrity in the way requests from elected members are dealt with, requests for information are limited to information that is relevant to the performance of elected members' functions under Sections 2.8, 2.9 and 2.10 of the *Local Government Act 1995*.
6. Elected members will make every endeavor to obtain information that is already publicly available before making a request.
7. Elected members are to make their requests for information by email to the Chief Executive Officer, copied to the Governance email address.
8. The Chief Executive Officer shall determine who is to respond to the request.
9. Except for requests made in confidence to the Chief Executive Officer, all final responses provided to requests will be sent to all elected members.
10. All requests for information are to be responded to within three working days, unless further time is required, in which case within one working day the request will be acknowledged, and an estimated time of final response provided.
11. To assist with maintaining a shared understanding, elected members shall report any breaches of this policy to the Chief Executive Officer to be addressed.

Commented [v2]: Added the section of the Act that outlines elected member functions

Commented [v3]: Simplified to cover all publicly available information. This previously singled out the website, customer service officers and the admin email address.

Commented [v4]: Added clause to clarify how elected members should communicate anything they believe to be a breach.

Limitations on requests for information

12. Elected members shall not request information relating to operational matters in accordance with this policy.
13. In line with Section 2.10 of the *Local Government Act 1995*, the role of elected members is to represent and facilitate communication with the community as a whole. It is not the role of elected members to request information on behalf of a single elector, ratepayer or resident of the district in accordance with both the Act and this policy. Requests of this nature will be rejected in accordance with clause 14 and are to be dealt with through the general customer service request processes.

Commented [v5]: Added clause in an effort to stop operational requests being dealt with through this policy.

Right to refuse requests for information

14. The Chief Executive Officer may reject a request of information if the request:
 - a. is not considered relevant to the performance of elected members' functions under the Act
 - b. is considered to be of a nature outlined in clauses 12 and 13 of this policy
 - c. is considered to be frivolous or vexatious
 - d. will require significant resources to respond and are considered to impose an unfair and excessive burden on the administration.
15. If an elected members' request for information is rejected in accordance with clause 14, the Chief Executive Officer shall provide written reasons for the rejection within two working days. These reasons are to be communicated to all elected members to provide transparency and maintain a shared understanding.

Commented [v6]: Added for clarity

Commented [v7]: Added in an effort to help improve processes

Register of elected member requests for information

16. A register of elected member requests for information shall be maintained by the Chief Executive Officer, recording the details of all requests for information made by an elected member, including the date of the request, the name of the requesting elected member, a description of the information requested, the date of the response to the request and the name of the officer who responded to the request.

Maintaining confidentiality in requests for information

17. Elected members must send confidential requests to the Chief Executive Officer and indicate that a request is being made in confidence. Responses to confidential requests will not be sent to all elected members.
18. Identifying personal information related to any electors, ratepayers or residents of the district included by an elected member in a request will be redacted if a response is to be sent to all elected members.

Commented [v8]: Added to align with current processes

Permitted verbal requests and provision of information

19. Verbal requests and provision of information, in person or by phone, is not to occur without approval from the Chief Executive Officer, except in the following circumstances:
- preparing for a concept forum presentation
 - gaining support or information to assist in representing the Town on an external body or committee
 - an event briefing when representing the Town in an official capacity
 - a media briefing when representing the Town in an official capacity
 - requesting a service outlined in the Town's Customer Service Charter through customer service channels
 - seeking clarification on a request made in writing.
20. Any requests for information or services as a result of verbal communication, that fall outside of the exemptions in clause 19, must be put in writing, as outlined in clause 7 of this policy.

Commented [v9]: This section has been added to provide clarity for elected members and employees, to ensure that the correct channels for providing and requesting information are used and the principles of this policy are achieved.

Methods of providing information to elected members

21. The accepted methods for the provision of information from the administration to elected members, as well as exemptions, are as follows:

Method	Criteria
Email	Emergency or urgent situations within the Town. Matters that are considered to be high risk and imminent, are deemed to be out of the ordinary or are irregular in nature. Enquiries about availability to attend meetings or events, responses to media enquiries and proactively published media releases, and, responses to requests from elected members, and administrative matters dealt with by the Governance area.

Councillor portal	<p>Items of a routine nature that are purely for noting by elected members where no feedback is expected, such as updates on usual business, progress of key projects and progress towards advocacy priorities.</p> <p>Matters in which feedback is sought from elected members. This could include draft documents that will require a Council decision such as policies, strategies and plans. Elected members are to be given at least one week to provide their feedback. Elected members may request that an item be presented at a concept forum if deemed to be complex or require further discussion.</p>
Concept forum	<p>Complex matters in which feedback or input is sought from elected members to help guide an officer report that will be presented for an eventual Council decision.</p> <p>Information only' or 'update' items to be provided when requested by an elected member or approved by the Chief Executive Officer. These should only be on topics that are contentious, high risk or have significant community impact.</p>

Commented [v10]: Changed from consensus outcome to better reflect the nature of concept forums

Requests for services from elected members

22. Pursuant to Regulation 10 of the Local Government (Rules of Conduct) Regulations 2007, elected members are only to direct the Chief Executive Officer. It is the Chief Executive Officer's responsibility to direct the administration in ensuring that the needs of elected members are being met. That being said, it is acknowledged that elected members require some provision of administrative services to support the performance of their roles.
23. Such provision of services, and/or administrative requests, from elected members are to be sent and resolved through the Governance email. These requests include, but are not limited to:
 - a. general governance advice
 - b. declaration of gifts received
 - c. reimbursement claims
 - d. management of event invitations (to elected members)
 - e. training and conference requests
 - f. support in relation to Council meetings
 - g. IT support
 - h. support in the attendance of external meetings relevant to their role
24. Email in response to provision of services will not be sent to all elected members.
25. Other types of administrative support may be provided as determined by the Chief Executive Officer. Administrative requests are to be acknowledged within one working day with a proposed time of resolution.

Scheduling of meetings, training and events

26. The Chief Executive Officer shall endeavor to consult all elected members by email or telephone prior to any decision being made to cancel or reschedule the date or time of any committee meeting, concept forum, workshop, training or other event scheduled for the purpose of elected member involvement, that elected members have been invited to attend.

Related documents

[Local Government Act 1995](#)

[Local Government \(Rules of Conduct\) Regulations 2007](#)

Responsible officers	Manager Governance and Strategy
Policy manager	Office of the Chief Executive Officer
Approval authority	Council
Next evaluation date	

Revision history

Version	Approved, Amended, Rescinded or Reviewed	Date	Authority	Resolution Number	Key Changes/Notes
1	Approved	21/05/2019	Council	84/2019	Item 10.1
2	Amended	17/09/2019	Council	171/2019	Item 10.3
3	Reviewed and Amended	21/04/2020	Council	384/2020	Item 15.7