

How We Work Together Procedure



1. RATIONALE

The purpose of this procedure is to support the How We Work Together Policy and provide guidance to all persons in the City of Marion workplace regarding interactions and communications.

2. OBJECTIVES

Interactions between people in the work place will occur in a number of different ways. It is recognised that one of the most common interactions within the City of Marion is between employees and elected members. Through these interactions, requests for information/documentation will come via phone, email, ward briefing, council meetings, etc. All requests should be made in accordance with the How We Work Together Policy and Procedure. This Procedure provides guidance to employees and elected members regarding how these interactions will be managed.

3. PROCEDURE

Council Reporting

Information and advice is provided to elected members for formal decision making via reports within Council and Committee meetings. The intent of these reports is to provide the Council with enough information for elected members to make informed decisions that adds value to the community. Reports will be written using the Council Report template and will be easily understood by all.

Questions Taken on Notice

From time to time, questions are raised within Council meetings that cannot be answered at the time. When this occurs, staff will indicate that the question will be 'taken on notice' and responded to via email. A log of all questions taken on notice during Council meetings will be retained on the Elected Member Extranet.

Draft Agenda for General Council Meetings:

All Elected Members will be issued a draft agenda and where ever possible draft reports at least 10 clear days before the meeting.

Elected Members are requested to consider the following points when reviewing the draft agenda:

- Review the size of the agenda (is the agenda too large or small based on the number and complexity of reports? Is there any reports missing that should be presented?)
- Review the information contained within the reports (do I have all required information to make a decision? Is the information easy to understand? Is the information relevant? Could it be presented in a different format (i.e. options paper))

Any feedback on the draft reports should be provide to the relevant Senior Leader Team (SLT) Manager or General Manager as soon as practical for consideration.

In accordance with the Act, it is important the draft reports are not debated or decisions are made outside of a formal Council meeting.

As the draft agenda and reports are still working documents, they may change between the distribution of the draft and final agenda due to matters such as late items, motions and question on notice, accuracy of information not being available at the time when the draft is issued. As such, it is essential that employees and elected members do not distribute these publically until they are officially published.

Face to Face Meetings

How We Work Together Procedure



All people in the workplace will be required to undertake face to face meetings at times to work through issues/matters. This includes employees and elected members. If an elected member wishes to meet with an employee, it is appropriate to request a meeting through the relevant SLT Manager or General Manager or request a meeting through the Unit Manager Governance and Records who can arrange the meeting on their behalf. The meeting will be arranged through the corporate calendar on outlook.

If an employee wishes to meet with an elected member, they should discuss this with their SLT Manager in the first instance and then request a meeting with the Elected Member.

It is important for employees and elected members to be clear on their respective roles in a face to face meeting. In accordance with section 59(3) of the Act an elected member has no direct authority over an employee with respect to the way in which the employee performs his or her duties.

External Liaison

Both employees and elected members work with external groups. It is important that both elected members and employees are kept informed of what the other is doing and work together to maintain these relationships. Keeping in mind the roles of employees and elected members, operational matters should be managed by Council employees whilst elected members undertake a representative role. When undertaking community consultation for specific projects there should be one central point of contact. Elected Members will be informed of any upcoming consultation activities and can have a role in promoting engagement opportunities to external groups. Elected Members can provide feedback they receive from external groups through the consultation process/staff member. Elected Members will then be presented with the consultation findings from the staff member to inform their decision making.

Elected Members are also appointed as Council Liaisons with various groups such as community groups, sporting groups and schools. These roles are structures such that the nominated Elected Member assists in communication and exchange of information between the Council and the external body. Elected Members are not appointed as members of the external body and do not have any voting rights when matters are brought before the body for decision. The purpose of the liaison role is:

- To act as a point of contact for Council
- Observe and participate in discussions at a meeting of the external body (but not vote when a matter is decided upon)
- Act as an information provider from Council to the external body and vice-versa
- Act as an advisor, mentor, coach and support for the external body.

Ward Briefings

Ward briefings are internal interactions between elected members of individual ward, or a combination of wards and key employees of the City of Marion. The aim of ward briefings is to focus on operational issues within the ward or wards that are useful for the elected members to be aware of as part of their representational role within the community. The ward briefings are not decision making forums and are captured by Councils Informal Gatherings Policy. Ward briefings are informal but briefing notes will be retained. These notes will be distributed by staff to Elected Members at least 4 days before the meeting.

Elected Member Extranet

The Elected Member Extranet is a password protected website which provides information to elected members from any computer that has internet access. It has been tailored to meet elected members' requirements and includes news, information, important documents, and links to the public website. Its aim is to provide information in an efficient manner in order to reduce emails, and ultimately, excessive print-outs. All agendas and reports are placed on the Elected Member Extranet weekly.

Emails

How We Work Together Procedure



Email is one of the most common forms of communication and interactions between employee and elected members. These interactions must occur in accordance with the Council's Policies for internet and email access and usage.

The types of matters where elected members and employees will use email are:

- Notification of a matter/incident
- Consultation/feedback from elected members on certain matters
- Distribution of briefing notes, minutes and agendas

If matters are urgent or require discussion, employees will phone elected members rather than email.

4. RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER POLICIES

It is noted that a number of the interactions and communications between employees and elected members fall within the parameters of the Informal Gatherings Policy. This Policy outlines that elected members can conduct planning sessions, hold informal briefings and educational sessions, and convene other informal gatherings without prejudicing the requirements for openness and transparency as required by the *Local Government Act 1999* (the Act).

Section 90(8) of the Act allows informal gatherings to be held provided that the discussion does not lead to a decision, or effectively obtain a decision, on a matter that would ordinarily be dealt with at a meeting of Council. This policy reflects the intention of the legislation for informal gatherings to be used for briefing, planning and educational sessions and is aimed at avoiding any perception that informal gatherings will be used to build consensus for council agenda items and decision making.

Section 90 (8) of the Local Government Act 1999 provides the following:

The duty to hold a meeting of a council or council committee at a place open to the public does not in itself make unlawful informal gatherings or discussion involving—

- (a) members of the council or council committee; or*
- (b) members of the council or council committee and staff,*

provided that a matter which would ordinarily form part of the agenda for a formal meeting of a council or council committee is not dealt with in such a way as to obtain, or effectively obtain, a decision on the matter outside a formally constituted meeting of the council or council committee.

5. COMPLAINTS

In the event that a person feels that the How We Work Together Policy and/or Procedure has been breached, individuals are requested in the first instance to try and resolve the matter using the organisational values and by approaching the individual directly notifying them of the potential breach and seeking appropriate resolution of the matter.

In the event that the individual does not feel comfortable directly addressing the breach or the breach sits within either the Code of Conduct for Council Employees or Code of Conduct for Council Members, the procedures within these codes and associated procedure will apply.

How We Work Together Procedure



6. REFERENCES

This Procedure should be read in conjunction with the:

- Code of Conduct for Employees
- Code of Conduct for Council Members
- Local Government Act 1999
- Work Health Safety Act 2012
- Independent Commissioner Against Corruption Act 2012
- Informal Gatherings Policy
- How We Work Together Procedure
- Addressing Employee Performance and/or Conduct Procedure
- Elected Member Code of Conduct - Procedure for Investigating Complaints

7. REVIEW

This procedure will be reviewed in conjunction with the How We Work Together Policy, 12 months after a Council General Election.