



COUNCIL POLICY

Informal Gatherings

Policy Number:	PO017		
Strategic Plan Objective	Meet all legislative and compliance responsibilities		
Policy Owner:	Chief Executive Officer	Record Number:	16/13893 [v2]
Responsible Officer:	Governance Officer	Minute Reference:	053/2017 (08/03/2017)
Date Adopted:	08/03/2017	Next Review Date:	March 2020

1. POLICY OBJECTIVES

Section 90(8) of the Local Government 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 Council meeting.

This policy provides Elected Members with the opportunity to conduct planning sessions, to receive 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. It aims to assure the public that actual or effective decisions are not made at informal gatherings.

Clear direction is provided to Elected Members and staff in relation to holding informal gatherings.

2. SCOPE

This policy captures informal gatherings and other discussions arranged either by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or by the elected council. Section 90(8) of the Local Government Act provides a list of non-exclusive examples of informal gatherings, which are:

- Planning sessions associated with the development of policies or strategies
- Briefing or training sessions
- Workshops
- Social gatherings to encourage informal communication between Elected Members or between Elected Members and employees.

3. DEFINITIONS

Consensus	An opinion or position reached by a group as a whole
Informal gathering or discussion (in accordance with Local Government [General] Variation Regulations 2016)	An event organised and conducted by or on behalf of the council or chief executive officer to which members of the council or council committee (as the case may be) have been invited and that involves discussion of a matter that is, or is intended to be, part of the agenda for a formal meeting of the council or council committee.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

Informal gatherings are a non-compulsory meeting of the Council. All Elected Members are encouraged to attend as these sessions, particularly those designed to provide history, context or additional information to assist Elected Members to carry out their functions.

Purpose

Informal gatherings and discussions will be used solely for the purpose of information sharing and not for the purpose of debating issues, building consensus positions or otherwise discharging Council's deliberative and decision-making functions.

Informal gatherings will not be used for the purpose of conducting the general business of the council or to stifle debate on issues that may subsequently be dealt with by the Council at a formal meeting. However informal gatherings may be used to discuss issues that involve strategy or policy or other matters of council administration and to brief Elected Members on issues relating to their decision-making function.

Monthly Workshops

The Council has determined to hold informal gatherings in the nature of workshops on the fourth Wednesday of each month, usually held in the Minlaton Council Chambers and commencing at 5.30pm, subject to the CEO's determination that there is appropriate subject matter. These meetings will be open to the public wherever possible.

A list of agenda topics will be prepared and made available to the public on the Council's [website](#). A record of the subject matter discussed may also be kept at the discretion of the CEO.

If a topic falls into a category that would normally be kept confidential if it arose at a Council meeting, the item will be placed last and the gathering will be closed when that item is reached.

Either the Council or the CEO may decide to hold other informal meetings, at other times, as required and public access will be determined on a case by case basis (in accordance with section 8AB of the Local Government [General] Variation Regulations 2016). The Council is aware of the need to balance openness and transparency with opportunities for private discussions between Elected Members and Elected Members and employees.

Procedure at Informal gatherings

There will be no formal meeting procedures or formal minute taking process. Informal gatherings will be chaired by the CEO or another senior council officer and may also be led by an invited trainer or presenter.

The mandatory Code of Conduct for Council Members and mandatory Code of Conduct for Employees must be observed during informal meetings.

Responsibilities

Both the CEO and the Council are responsible for ensuring informal gatherings and discussions are conducted in accordance with this policy and the Local Government Act 1999.

Availability

This policy is available for inspection without charge at Council's Principal Office during normal business hours and on Council's website. A copy of this policy can be downloaded from Council's website or can be obtained from Council's Principal Office.

5. COMPLAINTS

Complaints about this policy can be made in writing to the Governance Officer. Complaints will be managed in accordance with Council's Complaints Policy PO147.

6. REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every four years and as deemed necessary in consideration of any changes to legislation and relevant standards, codes and guidelines.

7. TRAINING

Council is committed to supporting Elected Members and employees in complying with this policy.

This policy will be provided to Elected Members and employees during induction. Training needs will be reviewed annually, during individual performance reviews and as necessary in consideration of any changes to legislation and relevant standards, codes and guidelines.

Elected Members and employees will actively participate in training.

8. RELATED COUNCIL POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

PO147 Complaints Policy

9. REFERENCES AND LEGISLATION

- Local Government Act 1999
- Local Government (Accountability and Governance) Amendment Act 2015
- Local Government (General) Variation Regulations 2016
- Code of Conduct for Council Employees
- Code of Conduct for Council Members

10. COUNCIL DELEGATION

Details of Delegation:	
Delegate:	Chief Executive Officer

11. VERSION HISTORY

Archived Policy Name	Policy Number	Date Adopted	Last Reviewed
Informal Gatherings Policy	PO017	09/03/2016	08/03/2017