

Policy No. 98: Council Meeting Administration

POLICY MANUAL

Policy No. 98	Council Meeting Administration
Purpose	The purpose of this Policy is to provide information to Councillors, staff and the community regarding administrative arrangements and procedural requirements for Council Meetings.
Department	Governance
Author	Wezley Frankcombe, Manager Governance and Performance
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POLICY

1. Definitions

Nil

2. Objective

To outline processes and arrangements to ensure Council Meetings are conducted efficiently and in compliance with relevant legislation.

3. Scope

This Policy applies to Councillors, staff and the community of Meander Valley Council.

4. Policy

- a. The frequency, dates and times of Council Meetings will be determined annually prior to the end of the calendar year, for the following calendar year. The General Manger may arrange for a Special Meeting in accordance with the relevant legislation.
- b. If the scheduled Council Meeting falls on a week day that is a public holiday, the Council Meeting will be held on the next business day of the same week that is not a public holiday.

5. Live Streaming

- a. Council Meetings and the Annual General Meeting, where practicable, are to be live streamed to the public. A link to the live stream should be included in the respective Agenda and on the Council's website.
- b. This Policy applies to the open sessions of ordinary Council Meetings, Special Council Meetings (held in open session) as well as the Annual General Meeting of the Council. Closed Council Meetings will not be live streamed or recorded.
- c. If technical difficulties are experienced, the Meeting shall continue and live streaming will not occur for that Meeting.
- d. A decision to live stream Meetings that are not held in the Meander Valley Council Chambers will be assessed and made by the General Manager, on a case-by-case basis.
- e. Live streamed recordings are retained for at least six months.
- f. Audio Recording will occur for the following Meetings:
 - i. open sessions of ordinary Council Meetings;
 - ii. open sessions of Special Council Meetings;
 - iii. the Annual General Meeting of the Council; and
 - iv. public meetings convened under sections 59 or 60F of the Local Government Act 1993.
- g. Any part of a Meeting held in closed session is not recorded. Transcripts of audio recordings will not be prepared.
- h. Audio recordings will be publicly available and stored on the Council's website for at least six months. The Council can provide a copy of an audio recording on receipt of a request in writing which may require an administrative fee to payable for this service.

6. Public Question Time

This section of the Policy applies to Public Question Time at ordinary Council Meetings.

- a. Public Question Time will be managed to the following conditions:
 - i. A minimum of at least 15 minutes is available, as required, at each ordinary Council Meeting for Public Question Time.
 - ii. This time may be extended at the discretion of the Chairperson.
 - iii. Debate or discussion about questions or answers is not permitted.
 - iv. The Chairperson may refuse to accept a question. If this happens, reasons will be provided.
 - v. Statements and/or preamble of a question will not be published in the Minutes of the respective Council Meeting.
 - vi. A limit of two questions per person applies per Meeting.

- vii. Multiple-part questions framed in such a way as to circumvent the limit of two questions per person, will be treated as individual questions.
- b. In addition to 6a, questions asked during Public Question Time may be asked With or Without Notice:
- c. Questions on Notice:
 - i. Questions on Notice must be submitted in writing at least seven days before the ordinary Council Meeting. The seven-day period does not include the day notice is given or the day of the ordinary Council Meeting.
 - ii. The questions and responses will generally be published in the Agenda of the next ordinary Council Meeting, however, if more time is required to respond to complex questions, the questions will be acknowledged in the Agenda of the next ordinary Council Meeting, with the date of the later ordinary Council Meeting at which response/s will be published.
 - iii. If more than two questions per person are submitted, additional questions will be treated as correspondence and a written response will be provided in keeping with the Council's Customer Service Charter.
 - iv. Only questions will be published in the Agenda. Accompanying correspondence, attachments, statements or preamble will not be published.
 - d. Questions Without Notice:
 - i. Members of the public who attend an ordinary Council Meeting to ask Questions Without Notice will be asked to write their name and questions on arrival at the Council Chambers, to assist with minute-taking.
 - ii. The Chairperson will determine the order in which people will be invited to ask their questions.
 - iii. Questions must be succinct. Public Question Time is not an opportunity to make statements or engage in lengthy preamble.
 - iv. Questions asked during Public Question Time and answers given, will be minuted with attribution to the person asking the question and to the person who answers the question.
 - v. A member of the public is to supply questions asked in writing by close of business on the day of the Council Meeting the question was asked. Failure to do so will limit the ability of the minute taker to publish the question in the minutes of the Meeting.
 - vi. The Chairperson will advise whether the Question Without Notice will be Taken on Notice so it can be answered at a future ordinary Council Meeting.

7. Councillor Question Time

This section of the Policy applies to Councillor Question Time at ordinary Council Meetings.

- a. Councillor Question Time is managed to the following conditions:
 - i. The Meeting Agenda of ordinary Council Meetings will provide for Councillor Question Time.
 - ii. Debate or discussion about questions or answers is not permitted.

- iii. The Chairperson may refuse to accept a question. If this happens, reasons will be provided.
 - iv. A limit of three questions per Councillor applies per Meeting.
- b. Questions on Notice:
- i. Questions on Notice must be submitted in writing at least seven days before the ordinary Council Meeting. The seven-day period does not include the day notice is given or the day of the ordinary Council Meeting.
 - ii. The questions and responses will usually be published in the Agenda of the next ordinary Council Meeting, however, if more time is needed to respond to complex questions, the questions will be acknowledged in the Agenda of the next ordinary Council Meeting, with the date of the later ordinary Council Meeting at which response/s will be published.
 - iii. Only questions will be published in the Agenda. Accompanying correspondence, attachments, statements or preamble will not be published.
- c. Questions Without Notice:
- i. The Chairperson will determine the order in which Councillors will be invited to ask their questions.
 - ii. Questions must be succinct. Councillor Question Time is not an opportunity to make statements or engage in lengthy preamble.
 - iii. The Chairperson will advise whether the Question Without Notice will be Taken on Notice so it can be answered at a future ordinary Council Meeting. Questions to be Taken on Notice will be recorded in the Minutes.
 - iv. If Questions Without Notice are asked and answered at the Meeting, they will not be recorded in the Minutes.

8. Councillor Leave of Absence Applications

Councillors are requested to submit their Leave of Absence Applications in writing to the Mayor or General Manager at least seven days prior to the Meeting. Applications for Leave of Absence for Councillors will be dealt with in a Closed Council Meeting.

9. Councillor Declaration of Interest

- a. Councillors must comply with Part 5 of the *Local Government Act 1993* Pecuniary Interests, which states that:
- i. *A councillor must not participate at any meeting of council, council committee, special committee, controlling authority, single authority or joint authority in any discussion, nor vote on any matter, in respect of which the councillor has an interest or is aware or ought to be aware that a close associate has an interest.*
 - ii. *A councillor has an interest in a matter if the councillor or a close associate would, if the matter were decided in a particular manner, receive, have an expectation of receiving or be likely to receive a pecuniary benefit or pecuniary detriment.*

