



Burwood Inc.1874

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COUNCILLOR BRIEFINGS AND WORKSHOPS POLICY

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Purpose

This policy outlines the framework of informal gatherings of councillors to:

- keep councillors informed of upcoming council business
- provide an opportunity for councillor input into the development of council plans and strategies
- support councillors to acquire the knowledge needed to discharge their role as public officials.

Scope

This Policy applies to all councillors, as well as those council officers and external parties who are involved in briefing or workshop activities.

The information discussed at councillor briefings and workshops may be specific to a particular matter submitted to Council or may relate to a matter that impacts on codes, policies or major strategic change.

Councillor briefings and workshops may also be used solely for councillor professional development in accordance with the *Councillor Induction and Professional Development Policy*.

Definitions

briefing	<p>A session at which information is presented to councillors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) to inform them of specific matters that are, or may, come before Council for consideration, orb) to inform and assist them in discharging their role as a public official (for example, informing councillors of a legislative change that may impact the business of Council in the future). <p>Depending on its nature, a briefing may also form part of a councillors professional development program.</p>
workshop	<p>A session at which a working group or focus group of councillors and other council officials meet to discuss and have input into council strategies, policies or plans that are under development.</p> <p>Depending on its nature, a workshop may also form part of a councillors professional development program.</p>

Not a decision-making forum

Briefing sessions and workshops are not to be used for detailed or advanced discussion where agreement is reached or where a de-facto decision is made.

Decision-making and debate on a resolution is to be left to the open forum of a formal Council or Committee Meeting.

Briefings and workshops are a means to enable councillors to bring an informed mind to the appropriate decision-making forum by:

- receiving information
- asking questions
- sharing ideas
- giving information
- developing understanding
- identifying the need for more information
- exploring issues and concerns.

Accordingly, councillors will be reminded of the following in the invitation to each session and at the commencement of each session:

At this session:

- a. Council will not formally consider any specific reports containing recommendations, and*
- b. Council will not make a binding decision in relation to any matters discussed during the briefing session, and*
- c. Councillors (including the Mayor) must declare and manage any conflicts of interest they may have in relation to any item of business that is the subject of a briefing or workshop, in the same way that they are required to do so at a Council or committee meeting. The Council is to maintain a written record of all conflict of interest declarations made at any briefing session or workshop and how the conflict of interest was managed by the councillor who made the declaration.*

Who attends these sessions?

All councillors are to be invited to attend each briefing and workshop. All councillors are encouraged, but not compelled, to attend.

Members of the Executive Team and other council officials are invited to attend to assist.

Members of the public and other parties may be invited to attend a briefing or workshop to present as a subject-matter expert or to assist with facilitation.

Who chairs the session?

All briefings and workshops are chaired by the General Manager or another council officer nominated by the General Manager.

Timing of sessions

For planning purposes, an annual schedule allocating time for briefings and workshops will be agreed to by Council in advance. However, times may be altered by agreement during the course of the year. Additional sessions may also be held should the need arise throughout the year.

Pre-meeting briefings

Councillor briefings are scheduled prior to each Council meeting and commence at 5.00 pm. These briefings generally focus on agenda items for that evening's meeting.

Additional briefings and workshops

A second session is scheduled in most months of the year to allow additional workshops or briefings that require more time than is available prior to a Council meeting. Those sessions are usually held on a Tuesday (that is not a Council Meeting night) or Thursday and commence at 5.00 pm and must conclude by 7.00 pm.

These sessions may also be used for professional development activities under the *Councillor Induction and Professional Development Policy*.

Scheduling and delivery

Governance & Risk is responsible for the coordination of scheduling, tracking and notifying of briefings and workshops and other pre-session logistics.

Other business units involved in facilitating the sessions are responsible for ensuring that all requirements for successful delivery of the session are met in a timely manner.

Record-keeping

Formal minutes and recordings of the meeting are not required. However, the following records

must be created:

- the date, subject and purpose of the briefing or workshop
- attendance by councillors and presenters or facilitators
- any documents distributed or presentation slides presented
- any conflicts of interests declared at the briefing or workshop, including a record of how the conflict of interest was managed

Can the public inspect briefing or workshop documents?

Documentation given out at councillor briefings and workshops becomes a document of the Council and can be inspected and copied, subject to the provisions of the *Local Government Act 1993* and the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*.

Related Information/Glossary

- Burwood Council's *Code of Meeting Practice*
- Burwood Council's *Code of Conduct for Councillors*
- Burwood Council's *Procedures of the Administration of the Codes of Conduct*
- *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*
- *Local Government Act 1993*
- *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021*

Review

This Policy will be reviewed within the first 12 months of the term of each incoming Council.

Contact

Governance Coordinator on 9911-9908