

Logan City Council

Staff Interaction Procedure and Acceptable Request Guidelines

Logan City Council
2020

Document Control

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Amendment History

Version Number	Description of Change	Author / Branch	Date
1.0	Creation	Corporate Governance	4 December 2019
2.0	Amended terminology	Corporate Governance	27 April 2020
3.0	Amendments from Councillor review	Corporate Governance	27 May 2020
4.0	Amended Act references	Corporate Governance	14 July 2020
5.0	Amendments for Councillor Advisors	Corporate Governance	28 October 2020
6.0	Amendments for various branches	Corporate Governance	9 December 2020

2.7 Refusal to provide advice or information

Should a request for advice or information be raised that:

- is considered to be outside of the scope of a Councillor's official duties; or
- will take a significant amount of resources to satisfy or cause an undue impact on employees' 'business as usual' responsibilities

the matter will be escalated to the Chief Executive Officer. The Chief Executive Officer is to make a decision as to whether it is considered that the fulfilment of the request is required to allow the Councillor to perform their duties.

If the Chief Executive Officer confirms that the advice or information requested is not deemed to be required for the Councillor to carry out their official duties, the Councillor has the opportunity to apply for access to the documents via Council's Right to Information process. The Right to Information application form is available on Council's website. The Councillor will be required to pay the processing fee as if he/she were a member of the public making an application. This fee is not eligible for Council reimbursement.

2.8 Complaints

If a Councillor is not satisfied with a response to their request for advice or information, the Councillor should in the first instance raise the concern with the Chief Executive Officer or relevant Director.

Under no circumstances is it acceptable for a Councillor to directly contact a Council employee regarding a complaint about their request for advice or information.

3 Emergency and after hours service

Council's after-hours emergency service number is 3412 3412.

The after-hours emergency service is currently managed by Brisbane City Council (BCC). BCC has been providing this service since 2001. The after-hours emergency service operates:

- Monday to Friday - 5pm to 8am; and
- Saturday, Sunday and public holidays – 24 hours.

Councillors must use the after-hours emergency service process if they become aware of an issue after hours that is an emergency. This will ensure the effective operation of the after-hours service as well as duty of care for on call officers and other staff.

When an issue arises after hours that is not an emergency as prescribed in the after-hours emergency procedure, but is of such urgency that to delay contact would bring harm to Council or damage the reputation of Council, Councillors may contact one of the Council employees listed below:

- Chief Executive Officer;
- Director;
- Manager.

4 Summary of process for handling Councillor requests

The table below summarises the process for the handling of Councillor requests:

TYPE OF REQUEST	FORM OF REQUEST	PROCESS
Advice (e.g. technical advice, current status of development application, request for allocation of capital budgets)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email • Telephone • In Person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Advisor or Mayoral/Councillor Administrative Support staff will submit the request to the relevant Director or Branch Manager or Program Leader. • For Development Assessment Branch, Councillor Advisors or Mayoral/Councillor Administrative Support staff may submit requests to the Director, Branch Manager, Branch Program Leaders or Development Assessment Coordinators. • For Sport, Leisure and Facilities Branch, Sport and Recreation Services Coordinator, Sport and Recreation Leasing Coordinator, Sport and Recreation Planning Coordinator or Divisional Sport and Recreation Officers. • For Administration Branch, the Risk Management and Insurance Coordinator. • Responses can be provided via email, by telephone or in person. • If a meeting is required, this may be arranged by the relevant Council employee with the assistance of the Councillor Advisor or Mayoral/Councillor Administrative Support staff. • Minutes of any meeting should be taken by a Mayoral/Councillor Administrative Support Staff or another Councillor Officer.
Information (Access to Council documents for a purpose related to your role as a Councillor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email • Telephone • In person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Advisor or Mayoral/Councillor Administrative Support staff will submit the request to the Chief Executive Officer, Director or relevant Branch Manager. • Information may be provided electronically or viewed.
Access to documents for a private purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right to Information application – available on Council’s website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application will be dealt with under the Right to Information process.

TYPE OF REQUEST	FORM OF REQUEST	PROCESS
Briefing session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email • Telephone • In person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organised as required by the relevant Director, Branch Manager or Program Leader. • Meeting to be held in one of the dedicated Councillor meeting rooms • A Council Officer or Mayoral/Councillor Administrative Support staff will attend and minute the meeting and save minutes in Council's records management system.
Request for administrative support (e.g. stationery, office supplies, stenographic or clerical service)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email • Telephone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided in accordance with Council's Councillor Expenses and Entitlements Policy.

5 Councillors' interaction with Council employees

Local Government has two (2) distinct areas of expertise:

- The operational arm headed by Chief Executive Officer and encompassing the employees of Logan City Council;
- The strategic arm headed by the Mayor and encompassing all Councillors.

The Mayor and Councillors, as the strategic arm, set the long term direction of the City and the means for achieving the required outcomes. The Chief Executive Officer and staff provide expert support to the Mayor and Councillors in this role.

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for the management of the operational requirements of Council in the provision of services to the community and the implementation of Council's objectives with the support of all Council employees.

In achieving this, Councillors and Council employees are equally responsible to act courteously and respectfully towards each other and in a manner consistent with the relevant codes of conduct.

5.1 General interaction with Council employees

Councillors may interact with the Chief Executive Officer, Directors, Branch Managers and Program Leaders to discuss specific projects or services that they are directly responsible for. A request for an appointment, including specific details on the matters to be discussed, may be coordinated by a Councillor Advisor or Mayoral/Councillor Administrative Support staff and minutes will be taken of the meeting by Administrative Support staff or a Council officer.

A Director may determine that a specific subject matter expert is better placed to provide the information or commentary to the Councillor. In these circumstances, the Council employee will initiate the contact with the Councillor with the assistance of the Councillor Advisor or Mayoral/Councillor Administrative Support staff as required. Where this occurs, meeting attendees will be:

- The subject matter expert;
- The relevant manager or Program Leader;
- The Councillor/s making the enquiry; and
- Minute taker.

For the Development Assessment Branch, meeting attendees will be:

- The subject matter expert;
- The Manager, Program Leader or Development Assessment Branch Coordinator;
- The Councillor/s making the enquiry; and
- Minute taker.

The protocol for general interaction between Councillors and Council employees during a meeting of council is outlined in the Council's Local Government and Committee Meetings Code.

5.2 Briefing sessions

Councillors, as the strategic arm of Council, will require specific briefing sessions regarding significant events, projects or other matters as they arise to ensure that they have an appropriate level of background knowledge to participate in informed discussion at Committee or Council meetings.

An annual program of briefing sessions will be scheduled for a range of topics as required. These briefings will be coordinated by the Corporate Governance Branch.

The purpose of a briefing session is to inform Councillors only, not to provide a closed forum for debate on the matter or provide an opportunity for Councillors to influence the recommendations of the Committee report outside of the Committee process.

To ensure adherence to the legislated requirements, minutes from the briefing session along with associated background material or information packs and any outcomes are to be published and made available to all Councillors.

5.3 Non Council-related interactions between Councillors and Council employees

It is recognised that Councillors and Council employees often live in the same community, interact as members of community/sporting/volunteer organisations as individuals and may form friendships as a consequence of these associations. The requirements of this Procedure do not in any way impact on the ability of community members (including Councillors and Council employees) to interact from a community/social perspective.

However, it must also be recognised that the abovementioned interactions should not be used as a forum to discuss Council related matters.

If during the course of general conversation a Council related matter is raised by either party, it is appropriate to terminate that topic of discussion and advise the Councillor or Council employee to raise the matter through the appropriate Council channels.

Should this behaviour become repetitive, these matters need to be raised through the appropriate channels as follows:

- Councillor reporting repetitive/inappropriate interactions to the Chief Executive Officer. The Councillor is to provide a brief written outline of the discussion/interaction;
- Council employee reporting repetitive/inappropriate interactions to their Director. The Council employee is to provide a brief written outline of the discussion/interaction.
- Should a third party become aware of repetitive communication between a Councillor and Council employee in contravention of this Procedure, this should be reported to the Chief Executive Officer.

6 Councillor Advisors

6.1 Councillor Advisors' interaction with the community

Councillor Advisors may attend meetings with community members in the absence of the Mayor or a Councillor to receive information. Councillor Advisors must provide any information received to the Mayor or a Councillor within a reasonable time of the meeting.

However, Councillor Advisors must not:

- Purport to speak on behalf of the Mayor or a Councillor, without the express permission of the Mayor or the Councillor to which they are appointed
- Purport to have decision making authority on behalf of either Council, the Mayor or a Councillor
- Make public statements on behalf of either Council, the Mayor or a Councillor.

6.2 Councillor Advisors' interaction with Council employees

A Councillor Advisor to the Mayor may request the Mayoral Administrative Team to undertake those administrative tasks outlined in the Councillor Expenses and Entitlements Policy and Procedure.

A Councillor Advisor to a Councillor may request the Team Leader of the Councillor Administrative Support Team to undertake those administrative tasks outlined in the Councillor Expenses and Entitlements Policy and Procedure.

However, Councillor Advisors must not direct Council employees.

Councillor Advisors may request advice and information on behalf of the Mayor or a Councillor in accordance with Section 2 of this Procedure.

7 Suspected breaches of Policy or Procedure

Any suspected breach of the Staff Interaction Policy or this Procedure is to be communicated immediately, in writing, as follows:

- Any suspected breach by a Council employee may constitute a breach of the Code of Conduct and is reported to the People & Culture Manager for investigation and action as appropriate.
- Any suspected breach of this policy by a Councillor may constitute a breach of the Councillor Code of Conduct and will be referred to the Office of the Independent Assessor for investigation and action as appropriate.

8 Definitions

Definitions for terms used within the Procedure can be found in the Staff Interaction Policy (DM: 13315443).