

## 1 PURPOSE

This procedure provides guidance to Elected Members and officers as to the procedures and protocols to be observed around Confidential Special Council Workshops and Confidential Briefing Sessions.

## 2 SCOPE

These guidelines and protocols are sets of principles that aim to achieve enhanced, meaningful engagement of members and to facilitate an equal and equitable participation of Elected Members in informal meetings.

## 3 POLICY STATEMENT

The intent of Confidential Special Council Workshops and Confidential Briefing Sessions is to provide an opportunity for Elected Members to request additional information and ask questions to assist them in making decisions on issues affecting the council in an informal discussion setting.

### Meeting notes

Though these are informal meetings, to adhere to the requirements for recording of council business and actions, notes will be taken that record:

- Start and end time
- Attendance and apologies of elected members
- Attendance of officers
- Declarations of interest
- Presentations
- Item titles
- Next steps for items ie. to be presented to Council, deferred, no longer required
- Actions arising
- Questions by members

These notes will be made available to Elected Members.

### No decision making

As Confidential Special Council Workshops and Confidential Briefing Sessions are designed to allow Elected Members to ask questions on items on future agendas no debate or decision making will be allowed to take place.

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**Confidential Briefing Sessions**

Briefing Sessions enable Elected Members to discuss significant matters among themselves and with senior officers and also to consider agenda items prior to them being presented at an Ordinary Council Meeting.

Items that should be presented to a briefing session are:

- Agenda briefing items - relate to an agenda item for a subsequent Ordinary Council Meeting
- Items for information - significant matters that require Council to be briefed
- Strategic items - discussion of new plans, strategies, major projects, etc. in the early stages of planning.

Agenda briefing items presented to informal meetings are followed by a report to an Ordinary Council Meeting that allows Elected Members to consider and make a decision. The briefing item and notes from the informal meeting will indicate which Ordinary Council Meeting the report will be presented to.

Procedural agenda matters, for example standard nominations to committees or appointment of a Deputy Lord Mayor, do not require briefing prior to being presented to Council.

Receive & note agenda matters, for example correspondence and quarterly reports, are not required to be presented to briefings unless they are of a significant nature.

**Agenda**

The agenda will contain the following sections:

- Presentations
- Agenda briefing reports
- Items for information
- Strategic items

**Workshops**

Workshops can assist Elected Members to understand a complex issue, a significant policy change, or provide an opportunity to scrutinise a governance or compliance requirement, for example an annual budget.

Small workshop items can be included as Strategic Items at Confidential Briefing Sessions. Significant workshop items should be the subject of a separate informal meeting.

Workshop items presented to informal meetings are usually followed by a report to an Ordinary Council Meeting that allows Elected Members to consider and make a decision. The workshop item and notes from the informal meeting will indicate which Ordinary Council Meeting the report will be presented to.

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**Guidelines**

- a) Informal meetings are held:
  - Briefings - the week prior to Ordinary Council Meetings
  - Workshops - at the request of Council or as recommended by the Chief Executive Officer.
- b) Informal meetings will generally be held as required on weekdays at the agreed starting time of Council meetings (for the term of the council), with the preference being Tuesdays. Additional informal meetings on Saturdays can be scheduled as required.
- c) Informal meetings, where possible, will not run for more than 3 hours.
- d) Informal meetings will be held at the Civic Centre, Harry Chan Avenue, Darwin in the Function Area or Meeting Room 1, to provide a relaxed setting outside of the Council Chamber.
- e) The time, date and location of informal meetings may be subject to change by the Chief Executive Officer where necessary.
- f) Informal meetings are not open to the public or media and are considered confidential in their nature.
- g) Guests may make presentations to informal meetings as required, though the preference is for these to be formally received and noted at Ordinary Council Meetings.
- h) Elected Members and officers will be required to declare conflicts of interest in a similar manner to that of an Ordinary Council Meeting.
- i) No decisions will be made at informal meetings as they provide the opportunity for discussion, questions and answers, and the provision of guidance to officers.
- j) The Chair of informal meetings will be the Lord Mayor or, if they are unavailable, the Deputy Lord Mayor, to ensure the smooth running of the meeting. If the Deputy Mayor is unable, those elected members present may select one from amongst themselves to preside at the informal meeting.
- k) Governance officers will ensure that the agenda is provided to Elected Members in line with the standard availability of business papers, to allow time for review of the subject matters.
- l) All Elected Members are required to attend informal meetings.
- m) The attendance of senior officers is for the purposes of discussions, questions and answers only; these officers will take a non-participatory role at the informal meetings.

**Protocols**

Informal meetings should be undertaken as per 0043.100.E.R Meetings Policy.

- a) The Chair of the meeting ensures that every Elected Members’ input is heard and not overlooked or lost.
- b) One Elected Members speaking at a time is a right that must be allowed for all participants.
- c) Elected Members and officers are to be addressed by their title or office that they hold.
- d) Discussion must be focussed on the subject matter of the items.
- e) There should be no side discussions that interrupt the discussion.
- f) Problems, issues and solutions expressed as part of the discussion may lead to positive outcomes and should not be talked down.

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## 4 DEFINITIONS

**CEO** refers to the Chief Executive Officer of City of Darwin appointed in accordance with the Local Government Act.

**Council** refers to the City of Darwin Council.

## 5 LEGISLATIVE REFERENCES

*Local Government Act 2008 (NT)*  
*Local Government (Administration) Regulations 2008 (NT)*  
*Local Government (Accounting) Regulations 2014 (NT)*  
*Information Act 2002 (NT)*

## 6 PROCEDURES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

City of Darwin 0014.100.E.R Code of Conduct - Elected Members  
 City of Darwin 0043.100.E.R Meetings Policy

## 7 RESPONSIBILITY AND APPLICATION

This procedure will be adopted by Council and managed by the Government Relations & External Affairs department.

This policy is to be reviewed every four (4) years within the Term of the Council and may be reviewed at other times at the discretion of Chief Executive Officer.

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