

Informal Gathering Policy

1 Policy Statement

Section 90(8) of the *Local Government Act 1999* allows informal gatherings or discussions of Council to be held. Council must have an Informal Gathering Policy compliant with *the Local Government Act 1999* and *Local Government Act (General) Regulations 2013* which ensures transparency, accountability and trust in Council's decision making.

2 Scope

Informal Gatherings which fall under this policy are Gatherings arranged by the Council or the Chief Executive Officer and this Policy applies to informal gatherings of the Council or a Section 41 Committee of Council, including designated informal gatherings or discussions.

3 Definitions

Act refers to *Local Government Act 1999*.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) means the Chief Executive Officer of a council and includes a Deputy or other person acting in the office of Chief Executive Officer.

Council Member is a person elected as a Councillor or Mayor of the Council.

Committee are Section 41 Committees established by Council.

Designated Informal Gathering or discussion means 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.

Informal Gathering is an informal forum, whereby Council Members can exchange information, engage in conversation and exchange ideas or meet for the purpose of a social gathering or training, or for the purpose of a Designated Informal Gathering.

Planning Sessions of a general or strategic nature include the future planning of Council business such as the budget, business plans and strategic plans. For example an Informal Gathering or discussion providing an update of a current Council Project may not be considered a planning session, whereas the planning for future projects may be.

Staff includes staff, contractors, volunteers and all others who perform work on behalf of Council.

4 Legislation and References

Local Government Act 1999

Local Government Act (General) Regulations 2013

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5 Policy

5.1 Purpose of Informal Gatherings

5.1.1 Informal Gatherings provide an informal forum for receiving information and discussion and are not for obtaining decisions. These sessions are not compulsory; Council and/or Committee Members, however, are encouraged to attend.

For example section 90(8) of the Act outlines:

- a. planning sessions associated with the development of policies or strategies;
- b. briefings or training sessions;
- c. workshops; and
- d. social gatherings to encourage informal communication between Council Members or between Council Members and staff.

5.1.2 Informal Gatherings will be chaired by the Mayor or the CEO in their absence.

5.1.3 The CEO and/or Mayor may invite or permit a person(s) to attend an Informal Gathering.

5.2 Closed Informal Gatherings –Training

5.2.1 Council may hold Closed Informal Gatherings for the purpose of Council Member Training including:

- a. Mandatory Training;
- b. Group Training; and
- c. Individual Training.

5.3 Closed Informal Gatherings – Other

5.3.1 Council may hold Closed Informal Gatherings for the purpose of Social Gatherings including:

- a. Relationship building (between CEO and Council Members);
- b. Christmas functions;
- c. Workshops;
- d. Other occasions.

5.4 Designated Informal Gatherings or Discussions

5.4.1 A matter which would ordinarily form part of the agenda for a formal Council and/or Council Committee Meeting is considered a Designated Informal Gathering and will not be dealt with in such a way as to obtain, or effectively obtain, a decision.

Open Designated Informal Gatherings or Discussions

5.4.2 Council will hold Open Designated Informal Gatherings or Discussions, unless it has been declared Closed by the CEO in accordance with the Informal Gathering Regulations 8AB.

Closed Designated Informal Gatherings or Discussions

5.4.3 Council may hold Closed Designated Informal Gatherings or Discussions. Regulation 8AB (1)(b) outlines it may be declared closed by the CEO provided it is:

- a. assessed on a case by case basis; and
- b. if the designated informal gathering or discussion—
 - is a planning session of a general or strategic nature; or
 - is a briefing relating to Information or a matter of a confidential nature as outlined in section 90(3) of the Act.

5.4.4 The date, time, location and reasons as to why the session is closed will be published on the City of Playford website.

6 Administration

6.1 As Informal Gatherings or Discussions are not formal meetings of Council minutes are not recorded.

6.2 If there are Informal Gathering Items which are both Open and Closed to the Public open items will be scheduled first.

7 Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer, Council and Committee Members to ensure all Informal Gatherings and Designated Informal Gatherings are conducted in accordance with this Policy, the Local Government Act and Local Government (General) Regulations 2016.

8 Relevance to Strategic Plan

1: Smart Service Delivery Program

Outcome 1.2 Improved service delivery

9 Supporting Documentation

- [Council Member Support Policy](#)
- [Local Government Act 1999](#)
- [Local Government \(General\) Act Regulation 2013](#)
- Designated Informal Gathering Notice Template

10 Approval and Change History

Version	Approval Date	Approval by	Change
1.0	22 Mar 2016	Council Resolution 2524	New Policy
2.0	20 Dec 2016	Council Resolution 2767	Revised policy in response to release of <i>Local Government (General) Variation Regulations 2016</i> .