

## **MEETINGS AND OTHER FORUMS ADMINISTRATION AND PARTICIPATION**

### **OBJECTIVES**

This Procedure supports Councillors in performing their duties as elected officials. It is designed to enhance the flow of information and allow Councillors to be provided with timely information in anticipation of attending forums other than Ordinary Meetings which require organisation by way of a program. This Procedure outlines the notice periods that are to be afforded to Councillors to allow participation in all activities from an informed position. In recognition of the contribution the community makes to the decision-making of Council this Procedure enables members of the public to attend a public question time forum. This forum allows for members of the public to directly address Councillors on matters of public concern. In recognition that there are some matters that require confidentiality and sensitivity Council may debate matters in closed session.

The objectives of this Procedure are:

1. To provide for specific timeframes within which Councillors will be provided with information to enable the effective and timely provision of information to Councillors prior to attending an information sharing forum;
2. To provide for an agreed approach and structure to non-decision making forums;
3. To ensure that the Local Government Principles are reflected in the conduct of non-decision making forums; and
4. To enable members of the public to participate in the democratic process.

### **SCOPE**

This Procedure applies to all Councillors and all Council officers who are involved in the organisation or participation in the non-decision making forums.

## Non-Decision Making Forum (Workshop)

### 1. Background

Council has committed to a formal process of information sharing at which Councillors are to be provided with formal reports and information to assist in meeting the requirements of their role as elected official. Councillors and the Executive officers of the organisation attend this forum.

#### 1.1. Process

- 1.1.1. A Workshop Program for each Councillor and Executive Workshop will be provided to the Councillors and will follow this order of presentation:
  - a. Executive
  - b. People and Strategy
  - c. Customer and Regional Prosperity
  - d. Asset and Environmental Sustainability
  - e. Council Sustainability
  - f. Matters raised by Councillors
  - g. Miscellaneous Business
- 1.1.2. Each General Manager is at liberty to introduce a matter for discussion connected to the Portfolio responsibilities by way of a report with or without attachments for the express purpose of providing information to assist Councillors to perform their public duties in accordance with the principles of *Local Government Act 2009*.
- 1.1.3. Each Councillor is at liberty to approach any General Manager or the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to request a report on a particular topic.
- 1.1.4. Each General Manager may invite a content matter expert or any number of officers who are able to provide information to Councillors to attend the Workshop for the purposes of assisting in the workshop process.
- 1.1.5. Any questions the Councillors may have can be asked in this forum and a Councillor is not required to follow the procedures outlined in the Acceptable Requests Policy or Procedure within this forum.
- 1.1.6. A Councillor may not ask questions unrelated to the information that is the topic of the presentation and must conduct themselves at all times in accordance with the Councillor Code of Conduct.
- 1.1.7. The Workshop is not a forum at which any decisions are made.

#### 1.2. Schedule

- 1.2.1. Generally, two Councillor and Executive Workshops will be scheduled each month.
- 1.2.2. Councillor and Executive Workshops may also be held on other days as agreed by the Councillors and the Executive.
- 1.2.3. Each Councillor and Executive Workshop shall be held at the Council Chamber in Beaudesert or at another place as agreed by the Councillors and the Executive.

- 1.2.4. The Mayor, Councillors or the Chief Executive Officer may, from time to time, request a Councillor and Executive Workshop be arranged as necessary for discussion of an urgent matter.

## 2. Public Question Time

### 2.1. Background

Council has committed through its Community Plan and Corporate Plan to develop initiatives and processes to communicate and engage with the region's diverse community.

Public Question Time is not a formal meeting of Council and Councillors cannot make any decisions on behalf of Council during Public Question Time. Public Question Time provides an opportunity for questions to be submitted to Councillors as a collective group and for responses to be provided where possible.

A broad range of other options for communication with Council are listed on Council's website. Councillors are also available individually to receive and respond to questions from members of the Scenic Rim community by telephone or email.

Council's Standing Orders Procedure details how a member of the public may have a matter considered at a Council Meeting by way of a formal deputation.

### 2.2. Procedure

#### 2.2.1. When Public Question Time will be held:

- (a) Public Question Time will be held immediately prior to the opening of the scheduled Ordinary Meetings of Council. The forum will be conducted in the venue where the Ordinary Meeting has been held and will be chaired by the Mayor (or in their absence, the Deputy Mayor);
- (b) A period of 30 minutes is set aside for Public Question Time;
- (c) The Chairperson may close Public Question Time when either the 30 minute period allocated has ended or all questions accepted for discussion in accordance with this procedure have, in his or her opinion, been duly heard.

#### 2.2.2. Participation in Public Question Time

- (a) Subject to prior commitments and other considerations, all Councillors and Executive officers of Council in attendance at the preceding Ordinary Meeting, will attend Public Question Time. Additional Council officers may attend Public Question Time at the invitation of the Chairperson; and
- (b) Questions will only be accepted from residents of the Scenic Rim Regional Council area or other people directly affected by Council decisions.

#### 2.2.3. Submitting a Question

Members of the public wishing to attend Public Question Time to put a question to Councillors for consideration and response, should submit their question in writing in accordance with the following process:

- (a) Proposed questions should be submitted with reasonable notice to allow for a response to be prepared. Reasonable notice is:

- (i) a minimum of five full business days prior to the scheduled date of the Ordinary Meeting; and
  - (ii) determined at the discretion of the Chairperson with consideration as to the complexity of proposed question(s) and any other relevant factors. Complex questions should be lodged early to provide reasonable notice;
- (b) Proposed questions must be submitted in writing to the Chief Executive Officer and clearly identified as questions for Public Question Time;
  - (c) The Chairperson may refer questions which are not accepted for discussion at Public Question Time directly to a Council Department for a formal response, or refer the question to a future Public Question Time;
  - (d) Where the number of questions received for a Public Question Time may exceed the allotted time, questions may be referred to the next Public Question Time at the discretion of the Chairperson;
  - (e) The Chairperson will be assisted by Council's Chief Executive Officer to determine whether each submitted question will be accepted for discussion at Public Question Time. The decision to accept questions at Public Question Time is made at the discretion of the Chairperson;
  - (f) The Chairperson may accept questions at Public Question Time without notice at his or her discretion.

2.2.4. Questions may not be accepted in certain circumstances

- (a) If a question includes submission or comment which is inappropriate, the Chairperson may:
  - i) decide not to refer a written question to public question time; and/or
  - ii) if the question is asked from the floor, require the person to cease making or withdraw the question or comment;
- (b) An inappropriate question is a question which:
  - i) does not relate to Council activities;
  - ii) is offensive, defamatory or includes improper language;
  - iii) requests Council make a decision on a matter;
  - iv) is unduly long; or
  - v) includes or requests information which may constitute a breach of privacy or confidentiality;
- (c) The Chairperson may refuse to accept any question about a matter which:
  - i) is subject to current legal or regulatory compliance process;

- ii) relates to an application which is awaiting Council determination;
  - iii) is more appropriately dealt with through other established Council processes (eg. Complaints Management);
  - iv) has already been responded to by Council; or
  - v) involves participation in lobbying activity contrary to the requirements of the *Integrity Act 2009*;
- (d) A person who has submitted a proposed question may be notified prior to the meeting if their question will not be accepted for discussion at Public Question Time.

#### 2.2.5 How Public Question Time will be run

Public Question Time will run as follows:

- (a) The Chairperson will facilitate Public Question Time and exercise absolute control of the conduct of proceedings including the determination of:
  - i) priority of speakers; and
  - ii) whether a person shall be further heard;
- (b) Priority will be given to questions submitted on notice;
- (c) Questions may be delivered from the public gallery only at the invitation of the Chairperson and must be addressed to the Chairperson;
- (d) Questions may be answered, reserved for answer or refused for answer by the Chairperson or, at the request of the Chairperson, by another Councillor or a Council officer;
- (e) At any time the Chairperson may require a question to be produced in writing prior to further consideration;
- (f) At any time the Chairperson may direct any question be placed on notice for response after further consideration by Council and/or its officers;
- (g) During Public Question Time, the Chairperson or nominated respondent may provide information only in relation to the question. Decisions of Council may only be made at an Ordinary Meeting;
- (h) Where directed by the Chairperson, the Chief Executive Officer will provide a written response to a person who has submitted a question;
- (i) No recordings may be made or images taken during Public Question Time;
- (j) Public Question Time will conclude once 30 minutes has elapsed, or at the discretion of the Chairperson.

## DEFINITIONS

NIL

## RELATED DOCUMENTS

1. *Local Government Act 2009*;
2. *Local Government Regulation 2012*;
3. Standing Orders Policy;
4. Standing Orders Procedure - Standing Orders;
4. Standing Orders Procedure - Administration and Conduct;
5. Meetings and Other Forums Policy;
6. Confidentiality of Council Information; and
7. Acceptable Requests Policy.

This Procedure supports the Scenic Rim Regional Council Corporate Plan 2018-2023, in particular Theme – Open and Responsive Government

## APPROVAL AND REVIEW DETAILS

Approval and Review	Details
Approval Authority	Council
Administrator	Principal Specialist Governance and Assurance
Next Review Date	3 years unless further legislative changes require earlier review

Approval and Amendment History	Details
Original Approval Authority and Date	Approved 27 May 2019
Amendment Authority and Date	Adopted 14 December 2020
Notes	This Procedure is extracted from Standing Orders and Meetings and Other Forums to demonstrate a concise reference framework. For the way programs are prepared and shared and non-decision making meetings .

**Adopted By:**

**Scenic Rim Regional Council**

**Adopted: 14 December 2020**

## Version Information

Version No.	Date	Key Changes
1	27/05/2019	New as a result of review due to changes in Local Government Act and Regulations
2	14/12/2020	Revised and amended with new model templates.