

Policy Title: Councillor Portfolio Protocols
 Policy No: 212

Directorate: Executive
 Responsible Officer: Chief Executive Officer

Adopted Date: General Meeting – 20/04/2016
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Version	Decision Number/Council meeting or CEO Approval	Decision Date	History
1	General Meeting	20 April 2016	Adoption

Authorities: *Local Government Act 2009; Local Government Regulation 2012*

INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of this policy is to clarify expectations and set clear directions for the role of Portfolio Councillors. This includes defining the relationship between the Portfolio Councillor and the staff within the portfolio area, their involvement in directing and suggesting policy, and their role in representing Council on issues that fall within the portfolio.

PURPOSE:

In adopting the Councillor Portfolio Guidelines the Council accepts that the main role of Portfolio Councillor Chair is to be a spokesperson within the Council Chamber for those issues falling within their allocated portfolio, and not to be involved in the day to day operation of the portfolio.

OBJECTIVES:

- Council will be better informed by the Portfolio Chair who may have a more intimate understanding of the portfolio's activities and issues rather than Councillors generally;
- The Portfolio Chair will thus be able to speak with knowledge of his/her portfolio at Council meetings and publicly if requested to by the Mayor;
- To maximise the use of all Councillors' time whilst ensuring Council has at its disposal all relevant information for making decisions;
- The Portfolio Chair will be better able to represent and understand the topical or pending issues of the portfolio area;

- By the Portfolio Councillors providing their (and hopefully Council's) views regarding issues, it will assist the Officers in understanding the Council's preferences and direction.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PORTFOLIO COUNCILLOR AND SENIOR OFFICERS:

- Portfolio Councillors and the relevant senior officer will establish a professional relationship whereby regular briefings are provided to the Councillors. These briefings should be strategic in nature and held at an agreed time;
- Proposals and initiatives should also be discussed between the Portfolio Chair and the Senior Manager to assist the development of reports for consideration by Council at a formal Council meeting. However the report preparation and content will always remain the Officer's responsibility. It is essential that reports presented to Council are written by Officers in a manner that reflects their own professional judgement;
- The Portfolio Councillors are not permitted to give direction to Senior Managers or any staff member;
- The Senior Officer will keep minutes of briefing notes of all meetings with Portfolio Councillors;
- Any issues or problems relating to a portfolio should be discussed with the relevant General Manager in the first instance. Where the issue or problem cannot be resolved between the Portfolio Councillor and the General Manager, the matter is to be escalated to the Chief Executive Officer and the Mayor.

PORTFOLIO COUNCILLOR RESPONSIBILITIES:

Portfolio Councillors should:

- Take a particular interest in the subject for which they hold the portfolio, and familiarise themselves with media articles and publications about the subject matter;
- Speak to any reports tabled at Council meetings and provide verbal updates to workshops when necessary, with the relevant Senior Officer invited to make comment;
- Represent the Council when required in relation to portfolio related matters;
- Participate as Council's representative on External Bodies and at the "Coal Face" on issues relevant to the portfolio;
- Communicate with Council's administration through the Senior Officers.

Portfolio Councillors:

- Cannot direct Council staff;
- Must abide by Council decisions;
- Must abide by Council policies;
- The communication of information to Councillors in general should not change, with all Councillors being kept well-informed of major controversial issues requiring all Councillors' knowledge for possible future Council action. Portfolio holders may advise what extra information should be communicated to Council. This may be via email or information report to Council;
- There is no provision for a Portfolio Councillor to sign any documents as a portfolio holder.

PORTFOLIO COUNCILLORS AND THE MEDIA

Councillors are free to make statements and contact the media as individuals as they wish. However this protocol relates to statements and interactions with the media in their capacity as a Portfolio Chair:

- The Mayor is the principal spokesperson for Council;
- When a Councillor, as a Portfolio Chair, is to interact with the media on behalf of Council, the following applies:
 - Portfolio Chair (utilising Council's Executive Support) may issue media releases on behalf of the Council as long as the content of those releases complies with the following:
 - It directly relates to the Councillors Portfolio area(s);
 - It is consistent with Council Policy and Council decisions;
 - The Mayor and the Chief Executive Officer is advised of all such releases provided to the media;
 - Media contact is to be undertaken through Executive Support.
- Copies of all media statements made by Portfolio Chair are to be circulated to all Councillors;
- Council will provide media training to all Portfolio Chairs;
- Difficult media requests should be deferred or taken on notice so that a considered response may be provided. Questions relating to another portfolio should be directed to the relevant Portfolio Chair.

EVALUATION AND REVIEW

This Policy is to be reviewed every four (4) years, and may be reviewed at other times at the discretion of Council and/or the Chief Executive Officer.

RELATED POLICIES / LEGISLATION:

Local Government Act 2009

Policy 209 Information, Communication and Technology

Policy 114 Councillor Code of Conduct

Policy 117 Public Disclosure Process

Policy 220 Handling of Confidential Information (Closed Meetings)

Policy 243 Caretaker Period

Policy 316 Councillor Interaction with Council Staff