

# Public Meeting Guidelines



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## Public Meeting Guidelines

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Portfolio:	Office of the CEO
Team / Department:	Governance and Policy
Responsible Officer:	Manager Governance and Policy
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### 1. Purpose

Public meetings are held to allow residents, ratepayers or guests of the City to provide verbal submissions relevant to the nominated topic to which the meeting relates. It is the intention that these public meetings are held in an open and transparent manner that encourages community involvement.

Public meetings are held for a number of purposes (including to meet requirements under legislation such as the *Development Act 1993*), however unlike official Council and Committee meetings or Development Assessment Panel meeting, public meetings will not be governed by the *Local Government Act 1999*, *Local Government (Procedures at Meetings) Regulations 2013* or the *Development Act 1993*.

The purpose of this document is to establish protocols for public meetings. These protocols may be varied to suit the specific requirements of the public meeting at the discretion of the Chair.

These protocols will not relate to any formal Council or Committee meeting established under the *Local Government Act 1999* or the *Development Act 1993*.

### 2. Applies To

All staff and members of the public attending or participating at a public meeting.

### **3. References**

Nil

### **4. Definitions**

Nil

### **5. Procedure**

Public meetings may be established for a number of purposes, however it is primarily intended that they be used to hear the views from the community on a specific topic (through verbal submissions), rather than to debate or make decisions relating to the topic. Debate and decision making will occur in a separate forum.

#### **Location and Times**

Public meetings will be held in the Council chamber and public gallery unless an alternate venue has been nominated.

Public meetings will ideally take place on weekday evenings, to maximise opportunities for public attendance.

#### **Attendance**

Any member of the public is invited to and may attend a public meeting. Elected members will be invited to all public meetings although they will not have an official role in the public meeting unless otherwise determined. As this is not an official council or committee meeting, a quorum is not required to enable the public meeting to commence.

Each public meeting will have a coordinating staff member responsible for the overall coordination of the meeting. A suitable meeting time will need to be established, taking into account the availability of all relevant staff and elected members.

#### **Promoting the Public Meeting**

Advance notice of the date and time of the public meeting should be provided at least two (2) weeks prior to the meeting, where possible.

The purpose, date and time of public meeting is to be advertised on Council's public website, and in other relevant communication channels (e.g. print media, social media) where appropriate.

Each public meeting will have an agenda that will be published one (1) week prior to the public meeting on Council's public website, unless otherwise determined.

## **During the public meeting**

The Mayor is to be invited to Chair the meeting (unless otherwise determined). The Chair will commence the meeting, and provide a key overview on the purpose of the meeting as well as informing the community of the established meeting protocols.

Every person wishing to make a verbal submission must indicate their intention to do so. Where a person has not already provided indication to the coordinating staff member that they wish to speak at the public meeting, they must fill out the relevant registration. This register will be made available near the entrance of the facility in which the public meeting is being held. The register will be provided to the Chair at the commencement of the public meeting.

Where there are specific groups of people raising similar issues, it may be beneficial to choose a single representative to put forward the collective views of the group.

Each person that has registered their interest to make a verbal submission will be invited to speak by the Chair. Verbal submissions will be considered in the order they were received, unless an alternative order has been determined at the discretion of the Chair.

## **Providing a verbal submission**

Once the person has been invited to speak by the Chair, they should commence their verbal submission by stating their name and address.

Each person making verbal submissions as part of a public meeting may be allocated 5 to 10 minutes to provide their submission (unless otherwise agreed with or determined by the Chair, taking into account the volume of verbal submissions to be considered at the public meeting and the nature and purpose of the meeting).

The person speaking will be given a reminder when there is one minute remaining. Extensions of time for verbal submissions may only be granted at the discretion of the Chair.

The following guidelines have been established for those providing verbal submissions:

- The submission should be limited to the topic for which the public meeting is being held.
- All verbal submissions must be presented truthfully, factually and in an appropriate manner and not lead to any unfair damage or distress to a third party.
- Only appropriate language should be used. Individuals should refrain from speaking down to, harassing or making racist, abusive, sexist or unnecessary critical remarks about people or organisations.
- All allegations must be stated as allegations and should be supported by some factual evidence.

The Chair will have the authority to terminate any verbal submission at anytime that fails to conform to these guidelines or any other reasonable request of the Chair.

Any person wishing to use visual aids as part of their verbal submission (e.g. PowerPoint presentation) or similar electronic forms must make sure they are compatible with Council technology and have been made available to coordinating staff member prior to 3.00pm on the day of the public meeting. These visual aids will be for visual support only and will not form part of a verbal or written submission retained by the Council.

The Chair will have total discretion as to how each verbal submission will be responded to if required.

### **Conduct during the public meeting**

While it is recognised that many individuals may attend public meetings to either share their views as part of their verbal submission or to hear verbal submissions being presented, members of the public should be mindful that each person that has registered to speak is entitled to have their views heard.

Members of the public should refrain from general conversation or commentary that may cause disruption to the meeting.

Should the meeting become unruly or unmanageable the Chair has the discretion to either ask individuals disrupting the meeting to leave, or in extreme circumstances, the Chair may close the meeting.

Public meetings do not enjoy parliamentary privilege and any unfounded allegations made against the reputation of a person or organisation may result in legal liability.

To limit disruption to the meeting, any mobile telephones brought into the meeting are to be switched off, switched to silent or vibration alert mode, with telephone calls not to be taken within the immediate vicinity of the public meeting.

### **Minutes and Audio Recording**

No formal minutes of this meeting will be taken of the meeting or provided as an outcome of the meeting.

An audio recording may be taken of the meeting and all verbal submissions, however this will not be made available to the public outside of the Freedom of Information application process. In the case of public meetings which are held for the purposes of the Development Plan Amendments prepared under the *Development Act 1993*, these records may also be used by Council for the purposes of preparing their report for the Minister. No transcripts will be made available.

## **Outcomes**

Given that the purpose of this meeting is primarily to hear verbal representations made by members of the public, no discussion, decisions or voting will occur at the public meeting.

Public meeting forums have no decision making authority under the *Local Government Act 1999*. Any decisions that are to be made as a result of the public meeting will either be referred to staff in accordance with delegated authority or referred to the appropriate Council or Committee for further consideration.

An attendance sheet may be circulated during a public meeting to allow for attendees to be updated on any outcomes relating to the public meeting.