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1. Statement

Council is committed to upholding the principles of local government throughout the entirety of the decision making process. This policy establishes clear guidelines for the conduct of councillor briefings and workshops.

2. Purpose and Principles

This policy provides a framework for the orderly and proper conduct of councillor briefings and workshops and aims to increase transparency around the council decision making process in line with the principles of good governance. This policy is consistent with the Local Government Principles identified in section 4 of the *Local Government Act 2009*.

3. Strategic Plan Links

This policy aligns with the following iFuture 2021-2026 Corporate Plan theme/s:

- A Trusted and Leading Organisation

4. Regulatory Authority

- *Local Government Act 2009*
- *Local Government Regulation 2012*
- Meetings Procedures Policy
- Code of Conduct for Councillors in Queensland
- Employee Code of Conduct

5. Human Rights Commitment

Ipswich City Council (Council) has considered the human rights protected under the *Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld)* (the Act) when adopting and/or amending this policy. When applying this policy, Council will act and make decisions in a way that is compatible with human rights and give proper consideration to a human right relevant to the decision in accordance with the Act.

6. Scope

This policy applies to all Councillors and Council employees that attend and participate in briefing sessions and workshops including staff that contribute towards the decision making process.

7. Intent

This policy provides direction and leadership to Councillors and council officers on the purpose, conduct and value of briefing sessions and workshops. Council has an obligation to report, explain and be answerable for the consequences of decisions it makes on behalf of the community it represents. Transparent meeting procedures in the lead up to the council decision-making process ensure greater public confidence.

8. Briefing Sessions

Provide a valuable opportunity to enhance the decision making process and are a forum for the Chief Executive Officer and senior council officers to address any Councillor questions and provide additional background on matters coming before the council for decision. No decision making or voting takes place at these meetings.

Specifically, briefing sessions provide a forum for:

- a) Councillors to be fully informed on complex matters that will allow for more effective discussion and debate during subsequent formal meetings;
- b) Councillors to share their views with each other; and for Councillors to seek further information, clarification and background details from council officers or any guest presenters;
- c) Officers to advise Councillors of their professional opinions and reasoning behind their intended recommendations;
- d) receive deputations from members of the community where the deputation is for an information session or to brief Councillors on a matter where a decision is not required; and
- e) presentations by an external party.

9. Workshops

Are a process for Councillors, staff and where required, external parties can collaborate to develop or advance proposals such as masterplans with the organisation on topics of strategic importance and collectively develop proposals prior to the formal decision-making process commencing.

Examples of workshops include:

- a) discussions to determine strategic priorities;
- b) the development of the budget for the coming financial year;
- c) the initial development of a new Planning Scheme; and
- d) initial input into the development or review of a Council Policy

While workshops are not formal decision-making forums they may be used as the basis for officers to develop a more firm proposal which will be considered formally by Council in the future.

Where a report is presented to Council that has been in part developed by collaborating in a workshop, it will be a requirement to note this in the 'Community and Other Consultation' section of the report template.

10. Schedule

Councillor briefings and workshops shall be held in accordance with the Ipswich City Council Meeting schedule. A notice of meeting for each briefing and workshop will be provided to councillors as part of the Agenda, stating:

- a) the day, time and location of the meeting;
- b) the purpose of the meeting; and
- c) list of officers or external parties presenting

The Mayor or Chief Executive Officer may call a briefing and workshop session as necessary for the discussion of emergent matters.

If a member of the Executive Leadership Team believes it is necessary to schedule a briefing or workshop with Councillors outside of the scheduled sessions, the General Manager shall liaise with the Chief Executive Officer who shall decide whether to call an additional briefing or workshop.

11. Participants

Briefing Sessions and workshops are not formal meetings of Council and are generally not open to the public unless otherwise invited. There is no livestreaming of these meetings.

While no quorum is required, briefings and workshops are open for attendance by all Councillors. In order to make the best use of time, resources and people, the Chief Executive Officer shall determine what council officers are required to attend any given meeting. A register of attendance will be recorded to support transparent and accountable processes.

External persons may attend a briefing or workshop upon invitation from the Mayor or Chief Executive Officer. If an external person (for example a consultant, contractor or guest) is to be present at a briefing or workshop the person's name, title and company shall be included on the Agenda. The external person shall only be present at the briefing or workshop during discussion of the item for which their name appears next to on the agenda.

12. Coordination

The Chief Executive Officer shall coordinate the briefing or workshop. In the event that the Chief Executive Officer is not present another member of the Executive Leadership Team shall coordinate the session. Workshops may be facilitated by Council staff, Councillors or external parties.

The Coordinator shall assume responsibility for the good governance and order of the meeting and is responsible for determining the order of business of the agenda.

The relevant General Manager shall introduce each session, introducing the purpose for the briefing or workshop and the presenter/facilitator.

13. Administration

The Chief Executive Officer in consultation with the Mayor and Councillors will determine the matters to be presented at a briefing session or workshop.

The types of matters deemed appropriate for consideration include matters that are:

- a) of particular strategic significance for Council;
- b) involve notable community engagement, impact or concern;

- c) involve complex procedural, legal or factual considerations; or
- d) the Chief Executive Officer considers appropriate for a Councillor Briefing

A copy of the Agenda and any briefing notes/attachments shall be circulated to Councillors electronically a minimum of five (5) full calendar days (must include a Saturday and Sunday) prior to the meeting. In exceptional circumstances, where a meeting is convened at short notice outside of the regular schedule, briefing material is to be provided at the earliest opportunity. Where external presenters are providing material, best efforts are to be made to have briefing material in advance, in-line with the above provisions.

For each Agenda item, the Agenda shall state the title of the item, the name of the person who will lead the discussion, the time allotted to each agenda item and whether the item is a Briefing Session or Workshop.

In planning and conducting the briefing or workshop, presenters are able to take the material circulated to Councillors with the agenda as read. Presenters are to clearly present the purpose, key points and summary of next steps and to ensure that at least half of the allotted time is set aside for discussion and questions from the Councillors.

Presentations and background material presented as part of a briefing or workshop that is confidential in nature shall be clearly marked 'CONFIDENTIAL' by the officer preparing the material.

Matters arising from briefings or workshops will be recorded with a response regarding the outcome provided to Councillors if required. Where the matter arising relates to the business of an upcoming Council meeting the response will be provided prior to the commencement of the Council meeting.

To demonstrate and support a transparent decision making process, minutes from briefing sessions and workshops are published online following the completion of the related Council Meeting or no later than 30 days following.

Minutes are required to include:

- a) the name of each Councillor who attended the meeting;
- b) other persons (e.g. members of the public, council officers) who attended the meeting, other than Councillors;
- c) the matters discussed at the meeting;
- d) any conflicts of interest declared;
- e) a copy of presentation material provided during the briefing (including slide decks, handouts etc. but not confidential documents); and
- f) any matters arising as a result of the discussion

14. Roles and Responsibilities

Councillors are obliged to comply with the local government principles including 'transparent and effective processes, and decision-making in the public interest' and should refrain from consensus building or making formal or implied decisions during briefings and workshops.

Employees are obliged to provide sound and impartial advice during briefings and workshops consistent with their responsibilities outlined in the *Local Government Act 2009*.

15. Confidentiality

It is accepted that Councillors will be in receipt of confidential information that may or may not be part of a formal Council meeting. Councillors must use Council information in a way that promotes and maintains the public's trust and confidence in the integrity of the local government. The release of confidential information is prohibited by the *Local Government Act 2009*.

Councillors and Council Officers have a responsibility to ensure that such information is treated confidentially, so as not to harm, prejudice or compromise the interests of Council or any individual or organisation, or enable any individual or organisation to gain a financial advantage.

16. Conflicts of Interest

During a briefing session or workshop Councillors must declare conflicts of interest on any matters being discussed in accordance with the relevant provisions of the *Local Government Act 2009*.

A Councillor who has a Conflict of Interest in a matter to be addressed in a briefing or workshop cannot attend the meeting for that agenda item unless the local government has previously approved their participation in that matter under the provisions of the legislation.

This requirement recognises that discussion at briefings and workshops may influence Councillors when deciding a matter at a Council meeting.

These declarations will be recorded in the minutes to ensure that a transparent and effective process is maintained and the ethical and legal behaviour of Councillors and local government employees is upheld.

17. Key Stakeholders

- Mayor and Councillors
- Chief Executive Officer
- Executive Leadership Team
- Meetings Coordination Manager

18. Monitoring and Evaluation

This Policy establishes a clear operating framework to ensure that Council meets the requirements of accountability and transparency associated with conduct of briefing sessions and workshops.

The effectiveness of this policy should be reviewed on each occasion where there is a significant change to the structure of the Committee and Council meetings to ensure Councillor Briefings and Workshops remain as the most effective forum.

19. Policy Owner

The Executive Services Branch of the Coordination and Performance Department is responsible for authoring and reviewing this policy.