

SHIRE OF DONNYBROOK BALINGUP

COUNCILLOR AGENDA BRIEFING SESSION GUIDELINES



Objectives

For proper decision-making, Councillors must have the opportunity to gain maximum knowledge and understanding of any issue presented to the Council on which they must vote. It is reasonable for Councillors to expect that they will be provided with all the relevant information they need to understand issues listed on the agenda for the next or following Ordinary Council Meetings.

The objectives of Councillor Agenda Briefing Sessions are:

1. For the Executive to brief Councillors on Agenda items; and
2. For Councillors to ask questions of the Executive, to better inform themselves in relation to Agenda items.

Background

The complexity of some items on the Council Agenda means that Councillors may need to be given information additional to that in a staff report and/or they may need an opportunity to ask questions of relevant staff members. This can be achieved by the Councillors convening as a body to become better informed on issues listed for Council decisions at an Agenda Briefing Session.

It is important to note that Agenda Briefing Sessions are not occasions for debate and should be seen as fact-finding opportunities. All questions should go through the Chair and no free-flowing discussion or debate between Councillors is permitted.

Principles

It is imperative that the presiding person applies appropriate procedures between Councillors when agenda items are being covered and that the following principles are applied:

- Accountability
- Openness and Transparency
- Probity and Integrity
- Authority for the Chair
- Meeting Notification

Guidelines for Agenda Briefings

The following guidelines aim to ensure proper standards of probity and accountability at Councillor Agenda Briefing Sessions:

1. There is to be no decision-making during Agenda Briefing Sessions.
2. Agenda Briefing Sessions are to be held in the Council Chamber (or other nominated venue) and are open to the general public, unless discussing confidential items.
3. Agenda Briefing papers will endeavour to be distributed to all Councillors at least three days (72 hours) prior to the meeting.
4. Agenda Briefing documents will be loaded on the Shire's website 2 days (48 hours) prior to the briefing session.
5. The Agenda Briefing Session Chair is to be the Shire President. If the Shire President is unavailable, the Deputy Shire President shall be the Chair. If the Deputy Shire President is unavailable, the attending Councillors shall select a Chair.

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6. Relevant Managers, staff and other parties, as required by the Chief Executive Officer for the provision of information to Councillors, shall attend Agenda Briefing Sessions.
7. Councillors, employees, consultants and other participants shall disclose their financial and conflicting interests in matters to be discussed.
8. Interests are to be disclosed in accordance with the provisions of the Act as they apply to Ordinary Council Meetings. Persons disclosing a financial interest will not participate in that part of the briefing relating to their interest and will leave the meeting room.
9. There is to be no opportunity for a person with an interest to request that they continue in the briefing.
10. As no decisions will be made during the Agenda Briefing Session there is no requirement to keep a formal record (minutes) for each meeting.
11. Items to be addressed will be limited to matters listed on the forthcoming agenda or completed and scheduled to be listed within the next two meetings.
12. Briefings will only be given by staff or consultants for the purpose of ensuring that Councillors are more fully informed; and
13. There will be no debate-style discussion as this needs to take place in the Ordinary Meeting of Council when the issue is set for decision. This is particularly important when Shire planning matters are discussed. Councillors are to avoid expressing their opinions for or against a proposal. Under the provisions of the Town Planning Scheme and other relevant State Acts, decision-makers are required to maintain a high degree of independence from the process leading up to the decision being made.

References:

Local Government Act 1995 (the Act)

Local Government Operational Guidelines Number 05 - Council Forums