

Councillor & Employee Interaction Policy



Approval Body:	COUNCIL
Endorsement Date of Current Version:	10 September 2024 1.0
Current Version:	<i>Policy documents change from time to time, and it is recommended that you consult the electronic reference copy on SharePoint to ensure you have the current version.</i>
Compulsory Review Cycle:	4 years
Review Date:	10 September 2028 <i>It is recognised that, from time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this document. Where an update does not materially alter this document, such a change may be made administratively.</i> <i>Examples include a change to the name of a Council department, a change to the name of a Federal or State Government department, and a minor update to legislation which does not have a material impact. However, any change or update which materially alters this document must be by resolution of Council.</i>
Responsible Department:	Communications & Corporate Governance
Responsible Team:	Corporate Governance – Office of Council
Relevant Legislation:	Local Government Act 2020 Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020 Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 Equal Opportunity Act 2010 Fair Work Act 2009 'Right to Disconnect'
Relevant Council Documents:	Councillor Communications Policy Employee Communications Policy Employee Social Media Policy Councillor Code of Conduct Civic Protocol Policy

	Civic Functions Policy Staff Code of Conduct Good Governance Framework City of Casey Emergency Management Communications Plan Protocols for Councillors Land Use Planning Policy
ECM ID:	

1. Purpose and Intent

To enable Councillors and Council employees to work together in their respective roles and meet their responsibilities; to support professional, respectful, effective working relationships and the building of trust between Councillors and Council employees.

This Policy:

- Supports Council employees to discharge their obligations and responsibilities under the Act.
- Ensures Councillors are provided with consistent, coordinated, accurate, timely and well-informed advice and information to help them to fulfil their role in an effective manner.
- Provides a framework for interactions between Councillors and Council employees.
- Provides guidelines to facilitate a positive working relationship between Councillors and Council employees.
- Supports transparent decision making and good governance arrangements.
- Provides Councillors with confidence that community enquiries they raise on behalf of constituents will be managed in accordance with Council policies and procedures.
- Recognises the responsibilities of the Council to comply with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* and the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*.
- Supports Councillors to conduct themselves with integrity as outlined in Part 6 of the Act (Section 123, relating to misuse of position; Section 124, relating to directing a Council employee; and Section 125, relating to confidential information).

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all Councillors and Council employees and covers interactions through all forms of communication including face-to-face, online, by phone, text message or in writing.

This Policy is to be read in conjunction with the Councillor Code of Conduct, Staff Code of Conduct and any other relevant Council policy.

3. Definitions

Key term	Definition
Business	Relates to all Council owned and operated sites.
Case Management Team	Means Council employees nominated as a case manager for managing Councillor requests.
Council	Means Casey City Council, being a body corporate constituted as a municipal Council under the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i> .
Council employees	Means the Chief Executive Officer and employees of Council appointed by the Chief Executive Officer including contractors and volunteers.

Councillors	Means the individuals holding the office of a member of Casey City Council.
ELT	Means the Executive Leadership Team at the Casey City Council.
The Act	Means the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i> .

4. Policy

The Act prescribes the roles and functions of Councillors and Council employees, and to some degree, the nature of the relationship between them.

The core role of a Councillor is to participate in the decision-making of the Council, represent the local community in that decision-making and contribute to the strategic direction of the Council.

The administrative, or operational arm of Council, comprises the Chief Executive Officer and Council employees who are responsible for implementing Council policy and decisions, providing service delivery and professional advice to Councillors to enable decision-making by Council.

Among other functions, Section 46(3)(c) of the Act states the CEO is responsible for “managing interactions between members of Council employees and Councillors and ensuring that policies, practices and protocols that support arrangements for interaction between members of Council employees and Councillors are developed and implemented”.

This Policy is intended to contribute to respectful and constructive relationships between Councillors and Council employees, by articulating their different but complementary roles and establishing clear and effective interaction and communication protocols.

The Policy also seeks to mitigate potential risks and unintended consequences that may arise when Councillors deal directly with Council employees and seeks to safeguard the integrity of both Councillors and Council employees.

4.1. Councillor and Council employee interactions

While this Policy provides advice around formal interactions between Councillors and Council employees, it does not prevent Councillors and Council employees from interacting, holding informal conversations or exchanging pleasantries. Practical common sense is to be applied during these interactions.

At the commencement of the Council Term, a communication guide will be developed to establish proper greeting and meeting acknowledgements that will guide Council employees in procedural formalities.

When interacting with Councillors, Council employees are to:

- Ensure that interactions are professional and courteous.
- Understand they are not accountable to individual Councillors and are not required to take direction from them.
- Address Councillors in all formal and public settings as ‘Mayor’, ‘Deputy Mayor’ or ‘Councillor (surname)’.
- Respectfully provide impartial and valid advice to Councillors to support decision-making in the best interest of the community.
- Except for Senior Leadership Team members, refrain from advocating to Councillors directly on Council matters so as to not create a position to seek to direct or influence Councillors or be seen to be pre-empting a Council decision.

When interacting with Council employees, Councillors are to:

- Ensure communication is professional, courteous and respectful.
- Ensure that all communication is in writing via email . This allows for appropriate record keeping and tracking of Councillor requests.
- Keep communication between Councillors and Council employees private. Communication should not be circulated, forwarded to members of the public, to other Councillors, posted on social media or released without the permission of the Council employee.
- Use Council-provided email accounts for Council-related matters. Private email accounts are not appropriate for Council-related interactions and should not be used by Councillors or Council employees for Council-related matters.
- Refrain, in any private or public forum, from directing or unduly influencing Council employees.
- Not request access to documents or copies of information that relate to operational matters or decisions made by Council employees under their delegated authority or as Authorised Officers.
- Not influence the authoring of Council reports or recommendations.

It is recognised that from time to time, Councillors and Council employees may interact in a personal capacity. In these instances, Councillors and Council employees should:

- Declare the nature of the relationship to the relevant Director and Manager to ensure any conflicts of interest are addressed as they arise.
- Manage a clear separation between the private aspects of their relationships and their professional responsibilities. In such situations, both parties are to refrain from discussing Council business.

There may be instances where Councillors interact directly with Council employees that support them on various committees or organisations that have Council representation. This is appropriate, but the interaction must only be with respect to the business of the committee/organisation.

There will be instances where Councillors need to interact directly with delegated Council employees in the preparation of speeches, media interviews and responses. This is appropriate, but the interaction should only be in respect to the media enquiry or speech.

If a matter or interaction falls outside of those outlined, or if a Councillor is unsure, then Councillors should direct their enquiry to the Office of Council.

4.2. Responsibilities

Councillors

- Adhere to the requirements outlined in this Policy.
- Advocating to the community on the appropriate channels for routine requests, including but not limited to, customer requests on local issues, process for federal and state advocacy and ward-related matters.

Chief Executive Officer

- Responsible for all interactions between Councillors and Council employees.
- Where extended dialogue or repetitive communication is occurring between Councillors and Council employees on a matter, the Chief Executive Officer will determine whether to bring the matter to the next practical briefing session, where a shared discussion can occur, or provide a briefing note via the Councillor Portal to streamline communications.

Director and Managers

- Responsible for ensuring all information provided to Councillors is accurate.
- Provides advice or support to assist Councillors in carrying out their duties.

Employee Contact / Content Subject	CEO	Relevant Director	Department Manager	Manager Communications & Corporate Governance	Head of Corporate Governance	Head of Communications	IT Service Desk support	Office of Council team	Case Manager
Policy, strategy, framework	X	X	X	X				X	
Council Meeting / Briefing reports		X	X	X	X			X	
Governance matters, including Council meeting rules and procedures, conflict of interest enquiries, personal interest returns	X			X	X			X	
Media & Communications, incl speech requests	X	X		X		X		X	
IT assistance			X				X	X	
Matters relating to the Planning and Environment Act 1987	X	X	X					X	
Administrative Support								X	
Councillor Conduct matters and Code of Conduct	X			X				X	
Governance, Local Government legislation, governance rules				X	X			X	
Operational requests / complaints from residents and community members escalated to Councillors								X	X

4.3.3 Response times

Councillor requests shall be responded to in line with Council's Customer Service Charter.

Councillors and Council employees may contact each other outside of business hours due to work and other commitments. Councillors and Council employees are not expected to read or respond to correspondence outside business hours.

The recipient will respond to the correspondence and/or respond to messages the next business day, during business hours (Monday to Friday, 8.00 am to 5.30 pm). If a Councillor is not able to reach the nominated Council employee contact for the work-related matter, or an urgent matter has arisen, then the CEO or the relevant Director should be contacted.

Reasonable requests for advice and information prior to a Council meeting will be prioritised.

4.4. Meeting etiquette

Meetings between Councillors and Council employees are considered appropriate to discuss matters relating to an agenda item for a Councillor Briefing or Council Meeting in the broad interest of the whole Council. In these situations, Councillors may request the meeting via the relevant Department Manager, Director or through the Office of Council.

Both Councillors and Council employees commonly work in a hybrid manner, which means that communication and interactions may occur online through Microsoft Teams, via telephone, or face-to-face.

When meeting in person, Councillors and Council employees should use the meeting rooms available on the ground floor at Bunjil Place to hold these interactions and not meet in the Councillor-only lounge, as this may be disruptive to other Councillors working in this space. Councillors should not locate a Council employee at their desk.

Council employees will need to capture the key topics discussed on the Record of Discussion form. Where Councillors and Council employees verbally discuss matters, it is best practice to make a note capturing important elements of the discussion or provide a follow-up email outlining the discussion for appropriate record keeping.

If a Councillor wishes to meet with a member of the community, and have a Council employee present, the Councillor should submit a request via email outlining the purpose to the relevant Director and Manager. The Council employee in attendance will ensure the Record of Discussion is completed.

Where a meeting is held with a member of the community, the meeting rooms outside Customer Service at Bunjil Place are to be used or alternatively, this could be held at a Council facility within the municipality. Councillors cannot bring community members into the workplace.

4.5. Communication channels

Councillors will be provided with a regular electronic newsletter called ***In the Know***.

The ***In the Know*** newsletter provides Councillors with high-level information from departments on key updates, media reports, advocacy updates and other relevant information to support Councillors in their roles.

A Council employee's contact details will be provided at the end of each article should Councillors wish to seek further information from that department on that item.

Councillors also have access to a **Councillor Portal** that will provide access to:

- Meeting documents and attachments
- Committee delegate papers
- CEO Performance Review documentation
- Councillor induction materials
- In the Know attachments
- General resources and documentation
- Forms

4.6. Access to workplaces

Councillors are provided with a dedicated work zone on the ground floor of Bunjil Place to undertake their Council business. This space is to be used only by Councillors. Council employees, except for the Office of Council team and ELT members, should not use the dedicated work zone for interactions with Councillors (see section 4.3- Meeting etiquette) and are encouraged to book an appropriate meeting space on the ground floor. Councillors cannot bring community members into the workplaces.

Where a meeting is held with the Mayor and Council employees, this may take place within the Mayoral Office or alternatively in an appropriate meeting space on the ground floor.

Should the meeting involve more than one Councillor and several Council employees, the boardroom may be considered an appropriate meeting space for this purpose. This can be coordinated through the Office of Council team. Councillors should not be setting up or conducting business in other areas within the Bunjil Place office space.

Councillors are able to access the Ground Floor Councillor workstation/lounge, Mayoral Office, meeting rooms on the Ground Floor to meet with Council employees (rooms G.01, G.07, and G.08, G.09), the Ground Floor bathrooms and Hub, Bunjil Place basement, the faith room and first aid stations on level 2.

5. Breaches

If Councillors or Council employees breach the Policy, this will be managed in accordance with their respective Code of Conduct.

- Councillor Code of Conduct [<insert links>](#)
- Staff Code of Conduct

Councillors are encouraged to notify the Mayor and/or CEO if any person does not adhere to the requirements set out in this Policy. For Council employees, they are encouraged to notify their supervisor. Should a Councillor or Council employee wish to make an anonymous report, they can use Council's anonymous reporting line, Your Call, to report such matters.

6. Relevant Forms

Title	Link
Insert link to Cr form for Customer Requests	

7. Document History

Date approved	Change Type	Version	Next Review Date
DD Month 2024	Document Initiation	1.0	DD Month 2028

Contact the City of Casey:

Web: casey.vic.gov.au

Email: caseycc@casey.vic.gov.au

Phone: 03 9705 5200

Post: PO Box 1000, Narre Warren VIC 3805

NRS: 133 677 (for the deaf, hearing or speech impaired)

Customer Service Centres:

Narre Warren: Bunjil Place, Patrick Northeast Drive

Cranbourne: Cranbourne Park Shopping Centre

ABN: 43 320 295 742



TIS: 131450 (Translating and Interpreting Service) المترجم الفوري 翻译 مترجم شفاهى ਦੁਆਰਾ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ලഭਿਤ

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