

Formal Communication – Elected Members and Staff

Policy Objective

To ensure that appropriate protocols and guidelines are in place to:

- Provide clearly defined communications and contact channels between Elected Members and shire staff.
- Ensure that duplication and loss of productive time is minimised.
- Facilitate Elected Members performing their role effectively.

Policy Statement

The Council and Shire are committed to establishing a respectful, harmonious and effective working relationship between the Elected Members and staff of the Shire through open communications between each party.

Whilst the provisions of the *Local Government Act 1995* provide that the Chief Executive Officer is the contact point for contact between Elected Members and the administration, this is impractical on a day to day operational efficiency basis and therefore all communications between Elected Members and the Administration are to be channelled through the Chief Executive Officer and Directors, by utilising the Elected Member enquiries COUHELP email address – couhelp@broome.wa.gov.au

Where the request entails the use of Shire resources (human or physical) to an extent which a Director believes may impact on the effective management or day to day activities of the Directorate, the request is to be referred to the Chief Executive Officer for determination. The Chief Executive Officer will discuss such requests with the originating Elected Member to determine the extent of information or action required.

The Chief Executive Officer may subsequently refer the matter to Council for determination should a resolution not be achieved. Elected Members are to be kept informed of progress towards the resolution of any matter they have requested the Administration to attend to.

1. Requesting Information or a Service

- 1.1 Any Elected Member wishing to make an enquiry or obtain any information regarding an operational/strategic issue shall contact the Shire through the established COUHELP email address – couhelp@broome.wa.gov.au
- 1.2 A Councillor Memo Book can be provided to Elected Members on request in lieu of submitting enquiries via email.
- 1.3 Requests to COUHELP are to include sufficient detail to enable an investigation of the request to occur. Responses will be copied to all Elected Members.
- 1.4 Responses will be issued within 48 hours of receipt, and a record of the response saved within the Shire's record systems.

- 1.5 If the matter is deemed confidential in accordance with clause 1.10, only the referring Elected Member shall receive the response.
- 1.6 Should the matter not be resolved within the nominated timeframe of 48 hours, the Chief Executive Officer or Director (as appropriate) shall provide an update report every ten working days (10) (or as otherwise agreed with the Elected Member) on the matter until resolved.
- 1.7 Telephone communication shall be to the Chief Executive Officer, or the relevant Director.
- 1.8 Any Shire officer contacted directly either verbally or in writing by an Elected Member regarding a Shire matter shall refer them to their Director or the Chief Executive Officer.
- 1.9 Where an Elected Member is seeking information or advice via telephone, without any action being required, there will be no requirement for recording such conversations unless the Chief Executive Officer or the Director determine it is necessary.
- 1.10 In addition to the process outlined above, any Elected Member who wishes to raise a matter on a confidential basis is to send the request direct to the Chief Executive Officer only, with a specific request that the matter be dealt with in confidence and a reason/s outlining why. Where there is conjecture as to the sensitivity or otherwise of such matters raised, the Chief Executive Officer will consult with the President to ascertain whether the request should be dealt with as a confidential matter. The Chief Executive Officer will prepare a response and provide this back to the individual Elected Member in line with the parameters stipulated in clauses 1.4 and 1.6.

2. Elected Members Undertaking Personal Business Transaction with the Shire

- 2.1 Where an Elected Member wishes to undertake personal business transactions with the Shire (e.g. pay rates, dog or cat registration, apply for a building approval or licence or any other service offered by the Shire) the Elected Members may use the Customer Service Team to facilitate these transactions.
- 2.2 Where a personal business transaction becomes complex and queries arise this will be referred to the relevant Director.

3. Staff Contacting Elected Members

- 3.1 No staff (other than the Chief Executive Officer and Directors) are permitted to contact Elected Members unless:
 - (i) They have been requested to do so by the Chief Executive Officer or Director.
 - (ii) They are dealing with an ongoing matter and the Chief Executive Officer or Director was aware of the ongoing contact.
- 3.2 Where a personal business transaction becomes complex and queries arise this will be referred to the relevant Director.
- 3.3 All staff contact with Elected Members when approved should be via email so appropriate records can be kept otherwise file notes may be required.
- 3.4 It is acknowledged that the Executive Assistant to the CEO, Manager Governance, Strategy and Risk, and Senior Administration and Governance Officer are required to contact Elected Members for specific matters.

4. Staff Contact for Committees, Working and Reference Groups of Council

- 4.1 Elected Members who are delegates of a Committee, Working or Reference Group of Council may contact officers who have been nominated to support the Committee, Working or Reference Group.
- 4.2 Any contact to these officers must be directly related to the matters pertaining to the business of the Committee, Working or Reference Group.
- 4.3 If a matter is raised that is complex, strategic in nature or requiring resources the officer will refer such matters to the Chief Executive Officer or relevant Director for determination.

5. Appointments with the Chief Executive Officer and Directors

Elected Members in acknowledging the everyday pressures placed on the Chief Executive Officer and Directors, will wherever possible make appointments in advance, to meet with the Chief Executive Officer or Directors, at the Chief Executive Officer's discretion, stating the nature of the request for a meeting.

Management Guidelines

The Shire of Broome Code of Conduct for Council Members, Committee Members and Candidates at clause 20 guides Council on communication and relationship with local government employees. Predominantly communication is through electronic means to the CEO, Directors and COUHELP.

COUHELP

COUHELP has been developed to provide a centralised email address for Councillor enquiries – this email address is not for the general public. The emails are monitored by the Manager Governance, Strategy & Risk and the Senior Administration and Governance Officer, recorded in Synergy Records and referred to the responsible Director for a response.

If a Councillor Memo is submitted, this will be recorded in Synergy Records and referred to the responsible Director for a response, with a hardcopy of the response provided to the submitting Councillor.

COUHELP responses are to be provided to **ALL** elected members to ensure consistent communication.

The Chief Executive Officer or Director will endeavour to respond to a Councillor enquiry within 48 hours of receipt of the COUHELP email.

A response may be to acknowledge receipt of the query and advise the elected member that the matter requires further investigation or is not within the resource capability of the Shire of Broome at that time.

Communication Procedures - General

- Enquiries and complaints from Elected Members regarding service delivery and requests for work are to be delivered by email to COUHELP.
- Confidential complaints or comments in relation to staff and other matters are to be in writing and directed to the Chief Executive Officer (ceo@broome.wa.gov.au) and will be handled in accordance with the Shire of Broome Complaints Policy.
- All other non confidential Information forwarded via email (with the exception of those indicated in dot point one and two above) should be sent to the Shire address shire@broome.wa.gov.au This information will then be recorded in the electronic records system and forwarded to the Chief Executive Officer or relevant Director for attention, who may further delegate. Under no circumstances should any emails relating to formal or confidential Council business be forwarded to staff without the express permission of the Chief Executive Officer.
- All written correspondence from Elected Members, other than requests for works or enquiries as indicated in the first dot point, will be forwarded to the Chief Executive Officer in the first instance.
- When an Elected Member forwards correspondence from a member of the public, staff will arrange a response if required. A copy of the response will be forwarded to the Elected Member for their information. In meeting the objectives of this policy, it is appropriate that Shire staff respond to all correspondence on related Council or Shire matters.

Document Control Box							
Document Responsibilities:							
Owner:	Chief Executive Officer			Owner Business Unit:	Office of the CEO		
Reviewer:	Director Corporate Services			Decision Maker:	Council		
Compliance Requirements:							
Legislation:	Local Government Act 1995 Local Government (Rules of Conduct) Regulations 2007 - Reg 10						
Industry:							
Organisational:	BOP 1.3.5 - COUHELP						
Document Management:							
Risk Rating:	Medium	Review Frequency:	Biennially	Next Due:	12/2023	Records Ref:	
Version #	Decision Reference:	Synopsis:					
1.	18 December 2001	OMC Initial adoption					
2.	12 December 2019	Review and converted to new Policy Template					
3.	18 November 2021	OMC Review with minor changes					