

Formal Communication – Elected Members and Shire Employees

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 employees.
- Ensure that duplication and loss of productive time is minimised.
- Facilitate Elected Members performing their role effectively.

Policy Statement

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

Whilst the provisions of the *Local Government Act 1995* (The Act) provide that the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is the contact point for contact between Elected Members and the Shire administration, this is impractical on a day to day operational efficiency basis and therefore all communications between Elected Members and Shire Administration are to be channelled through the CEO 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 CEO for determination. The CEO will discuss such requests with the originating Elected Member to determine the extent of information or action required.

The CEO 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 Requests to COUHELP are to include sufficient details to enable an investigation of the request to occur. Responses will be copied to all Elected Members.
- 1.3 Responses will be issued within 48 hours of receipt, and a record of the response saved within the Shire's record system.
- 1.4 If the matter is deemed confidential in accordance with clause 1.10, only the referring Elected Member shall receive the response.

- 1.5 Should the matter not be resolved within the nominated timeframe of 48 hours, the CEO 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.
- 1.6 Telephone communication shall be to the CEO, the relevant Director or their respective Executive Assistants. If the CEO or Director is not available and the matter requires action, the Senior Administration and Governance Officer (in the first instance, or alternatively the Manager of Governance Strategy and Risk) will be the point of contact who shall record the matter as a COUHELP.
- 1.7 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 CEO.
- 1.8 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 CEO or the Director determine it is necessary.
- 1.9 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 CEO 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 CEO will consult with the Shire President to ascertain whether the request should be dealt with as a confidential matter. The CEO 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 Member may use the Shire administration 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. Shire employees Contacting Elected Members

- 3.1 No Shire employees (other than the CEO and Directors) are permitted to contact Elected Members unless:
 - (i) They have been requested to do so by the CEO or Director; and/or
 - (ii) They are dealing with an ongoing matter and the CEO or Director is aware of the ongoing contact.
- 3.2 All Shire employee contact with Elected Members should be via email so appropriate records can be kept otherwise file notes may be required.
- 3.3 It is acknowledged that the Executive Assistant to the CEO, Manager Governance, Strategy and Risk, Senior Administration and Governance Officer and Marketing and Communications Coordinator are required to contact Elected Members for specific matters.

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

- 4.1 Elected Members who are delegates of a Committee or Working Group of Council may contact officers who have been nominated as responsible officers by the CEO for the Committee or Working Group.
- 4.2 Any contact to these officers must be directly related to the matters pertaining to the business of the Committee or Working 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 CEO or relevant Director for determination.

5. Appointments with the Chief Executive Officer and Directors

Elected Members in acknowledging the everyday pressures placed on the CEO and Directors, will wherever possible make appointments in advance to meet with the CEO or Directors, at the CEO'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.

6. 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 and 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.

7. Communication Procedures - General

- 7.1 Enquiries and complaints from Elected Members regarding service delivery and requests for work are to be delivered by email to COUHELP.
- 7.2 Confidential complaints or comments in relation to Shire employees and other matters are to be in writing and directed to the CEO (ceo@broome.wa.gov.au) and will be handled in accordance with the Shire of Broome Code of Conduct and the General Complaints Policy
- 7.3 All other non confidential information forwarded via email (with the exception of those indicated in 7.1 and 7.2 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 CEO 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 Shire employees without the express permission of the CEO.

- 7.4 All written correspondence from Elected Members, other than requests for works or enquiries as indicated in the 7.1 point, will be forwarded to the CEO in the first instance.
- 7.5 When an Elected Member forwards correspondence from a member of the public, Shire employees 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 employees respond to all correspondence on related Council or Shire matters.

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