Communication Protocol

Council Members and Administration
## Purpose

1.1 City of Prospect Mayor and Councillors have a unique role within the organisation as representatives of the wider community, while also representing the organisation to the community. The Mayor’s and Councillors’ conduct within this role is governed by the *Local Government Act 1999*, and the Code of Conduct for Council Members, which inform how they to interact as individuals with community members and with Council staff.

1.2 The Communication Protocol (the Protocol) recognises the importance of maintaining positive working relationships between the Mayor, Councillors and staff in support of excellence in service delivery to our community. Due to the nature of the Mayor’s and Councillors’ roles, it is acknowledged that the Mayor and individual Councillors are likely to have frequent interactions with Council staff outside of formal Council Meetings and scheduled Councillor Information Sessions.

1.3 The Protocol provides opportunity for the Mayor and CEO to work together in a spirit of cooperation, collaboration and partnership to enact Council’s’ decisions, promote the City, respond to public enquiry and work towards Council’s strategic objectives for the benefit of the community.

1.4 The Protocol is established to streamline the process by which the Mayor and Councillors submit requests for information or services, and to maximise organisational efficiency in the consideration and prioritisation of such requests.

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### Table 1: Reference Information

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<thead>
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<th>Reference Number:</th>
<th>CR19/12944</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type:</td>
<td>Council Policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responsibility:</td>
<td>Director Corporate Services</td>
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<td>Responsible Officer(s):</td>
<td>Manager Governance &amp; Administration</td>
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<td>Initial Adopted Date:</td>
<td>Council Date Adopted</td>
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<tr>
<td>Last Review Date:</td>
<td>New</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next Review Date:</td>
<td>June 2023</td>
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| Legislation:      | *Local Government Act 1999:*
|                   | • Section 61 Access to information by members of councils |
|                   | Code of Conduct for Council Members 2013 |
|                   | • Part 2 - Behavioural Code:
|                   |   o Relationship with Council staff, para 2.11-2.14 |
|                   | Code of Conduct for Council Employees |
|                   | *Freedom of Information Act 1991* |
| Related Documents: | Code of Conduct for Council Members – Complaint Handling Procedure Under Part 2 |
|                   | Code of Practice for Public Access to Meetings and Documents |
|                   | Customer Service Charter |
1.5 The Protocol establishes agreed practices for meetings (outside of Council Meetings) or ad hoc interactions between Councillors and staff, in recognition of the role of the organisation’s CEO and Executive Leadership Team in delivering on Council’s strategic objectives and operational requirements.

2 Scope

2.1 The Protocol outlines the values expected by our community with interactions between the Mayor and Council Members (Member) and Council Employees (Employee), instilling open and honest discussion in a respectful and transparent manner. The values and behaviours reflect the purpose of the Local Government Act and the Code of Conduct for Council Members.

3 Legislative and Corporate Requirements

3.1 The Communication Protocol is to be read and implemented in conjunction with the Local Government Act 1999 (the Act), Code of Conduct for Council Members (the Code) and Council’s other relevant policies, strategies and documents, including:

3.1.1 Access to information by members of council is primarily provided by Section 61 of the Act “Access to information by members of councils”. Such requests for information shall be in connection with the performance or discharge of the functions and duties of a Member.

This policy does not restrict Council Members from exercising their rights as a citizen to use provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 1991, to seek access to documents held by Council.

3.1.2 Improper use of the information acquired by virtue of the Members position as set out under Section 62(3) of the Act.

3.1.3 Adherence to the role of a Council Member as outlined under Section 59 of the Act “Roles of members of councils”.

4 Application of Protocol

4.1 Council Members will be provided access to all documents and information held by Council unless they are not relevant to the Member’s function or duties. The process undertaken by administration in considering and responding to requests for information, work or actions is illustrated at Appendix 1.
5 Mayor and Councillor Meetings and Internal Briefings

5.1 Meetings may happen across a range of topics and issues to ensure community and organisational needs are identified and addressed in a timely and efficient manner. These meetings can occur between the Mayor, Councillors, CEO and Directors in order to respond to a wide range of issues and opportunities.

5.2 These meetings are to promote the productive working relationship between the Council and Administration.

5.3 These meetings are not public meetings.

5.4 Examples of regular internal meetings/ briefings include:

5.4.1 Council Agenda Review Meeting - these are regular meetings for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor to meet with the Chief Executive Officer and Executive Leadership Team, and other staff as required, to review the Council Agenda prior to Council meetings. These meetings ensure that the presiding member (and deputy) is fully briefed on items being presented and thereby contribute to effective decision-making by Council.

5.4.2 Mayor with Chief Executive Officer - these are regular meetings for the CEO to brief the Mayor on activities such as project updates and progress of enacting Council resolutions, as well as strategic and major operational matters. These meetings also provide an opportunity for the Mayor to update the CEO on matters being raised amongst the community, and to provide updates on external meetings attended by the Mayor. These meetings support a strong working relationship between the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer.

5.4.3 Mayor and/ or Council Members with Chief Executive Officer and/ or Director/s - these meetings occur on and as needs basis, providing an opportunity for senior staff to brief on strategic projects and project delivery, events and major Council activities. The meetings are to ensure the Mayor and/or Council Members are appropriately informed on relevant matters to support them in their role as representatives of Council and the organisation.

5.4.4 Mayor with Executive Assistant - regular meetings to support the Mayor including diary management, facilitation of responses to community and media enquiries, to acknowledge invitations and prepare for speaking engagements. In addition, the discussions will facilitate incoming and outgoing communication, as such ensuring the Chief Executive Officer remains abreast of outgoing correspondence.

5.5 On an as needs basis determined by the CEO or Directors, opportunity is made for the Mayor (and/ or Council Members) to also meet with relevant Managers and/ or Staff on specific projects, events and activities to ensure the operation of the function of Mayoral (and/ or Council Members duties is supported.
6 Council Information & Workshop Sessions

6.1 Refer Guideline and Protocol – Appendix 2.

7 Request for Information

7.1 Refer Flowchart – Appendix 1.

7.2 Depending on the nature of information sought, the Mayor and Councillors can direct their request to the Office of the Chief Executive Officer or to the relevant Director (if known). The request may be submitted in person, via meeting, by phone or by email. The request should identify the information and/or document being sought, stating the reason why it is being sought and with enough detail to permit the Chief Executive Officer or the relevant Director to action the request.

7.3 The timeframe for a response will be determined by the urgency of the matter and the time required to research and prepare an effective response, noting that efforts will be made to ensure the responses are timely.

7.4 The response is to be forwarded to the addressees included in the initial incoming communication unless requested or determined otherwise.

7.5 The CEO and Directors may (at their discretion) include all Council Members in the response where relevant.

7.6 Where the document or information is restricted (e.g. legal advice or confidential matters), access may be granted by the Chief Executive Officer as view only (where appropriate), and arrangements will be made with the Member/s.

8 General Request For Services

8.1 Refer Flowchart – Appendix 1

8.2 Council Members may lodge requests for service, and the making a complaint from residents or the public in person, by phone, by email to admin@prospect.sa.gov.au, via Council’s Customer Request Management (CRM) System, or via My Local Services App. For consistency, the CRM is the preferred single point for incoming requests of this nature.

8.3 Once lodged, all requests are managed in the CRM System and allocated to the relevant officer for actioning. All matters will be prioritised and dealt with in an equitable and timely manner as defined in the Customer Service Charter.

9 Governance

9.1 Council Members may make the following enquiries to the Manager Governance & Administration:

9.1.1 Council Member Conferences, Education, Training and Professional Development;

9.1.2 Interpretations and advice on legislative and policy matters;
9.1.3 General administrative support e.g. preparing motions on notice.

9.2 All such matters will be dealt with in a timely manner as staff resources permit, and prioritised accordingly.

10 Information Technology

10.1 The Information Technology (IT) Help Desk will provide support to Council Members for hardware and applications installed by City of Prospect to carry out Council business. This includes support for iPads and default applications, iOS issues and email.

10.2 The Help Desk operates 9.00am-5.00pm on Monday-Friday and can be contacted via email (it@prospect.sa.gov.au) or phone. The Manager Knowledge and Information must be copied in on correspondence to the Help Desk (through george.pajak@prospect.sa.gov.au)

10.3 If the physical device is required to investigate or resolve an issue, it must be delivered to one of Council’s operating sites. Once the issue is resolved, the device will be returned to the same site for collection.

10.4 If a technician is required for assistance, an appointment must be scheduled to ensure the technician will be available.

10.5 All such matters will be dealt with in a timely manner as staff resources permit, and prioritised accordingly.

11 After Hours Enquiries

11.1 Council utilises an overflow and after-hours service provider for all matters relating to Council business. This service provides the public and Council Members with an out of hours source of information and contact point.

11.2 All enquiries or matters may be raised via Council’s business hours contact number and will be handled in accordance with standard and emergency operating procedures.

12 Complaints

12.1 Where a complaint against the application of the policy arises, the complainant should report the allegation in writing, to the Council, addressed to the Chief Executive Officer. The complaint is to be administered in accordance with Council’s Code of Conduct for Council Members Complaint Handling Procedure under Part 2, as amended from time to time.

13 Review

13.1 The Policy can be reviewed once per Council term or as required by legislation.

13.2 The Chief Executive Officer reserves the right to review this policy at any time with their primary duty of care role.
14 **Access to the Policy**

14.1 The Policy is available to the public:

www.prospect.sa.gov.au

Customer Services, 128 Prospect Road, Prospect SA 5082.

15 **Further Information**

For further information about this policy please contact:

Director Corporate Services
City of Prospect
128 Prospect Road
Prospect SA 5082

8269 5355
admin@prospect.sa.gov.au
WHAT

Queries and Issues across the City (Services)

- Tree
- Pothole
- “Things I’ve seen”
- Hazard Identification
- Cracked Kerb
- Website Issue
- Bins Fallen
- Urgent and Non Urgent

Request for Information

- Refer the following page for details

HOW

Customer Request Management (CRM)
Council Member Login

- Executive Assistant, Infrastructure & Environment to check regularly and escalate to Directors and/or CEO as necessary

Email
admin@prospect.sa.gov.au

- Information Management Staff to check regularly and escalate to Directors and/or CEO as necessary

My Local Services App
WHAT

**Request for Information**
- Extra information to help ahead of Council meeting
- Seeking information updates/status on behalf of resident
- Informing Members of background information or history
- Media query

**Governance**
- Assistance with Motions
- Understanding Legislation
- Breadth of Councillor role
- Training and Development

**Information Technology**
- Download Agenda
- IPad (or other CoP device)
- CoP Log-in Problem
- Hardware Provided by Council only

**Other**
- Admin Email
- Phone
- Meeting

Refer the following page for details

HOW

**Governance**
- Email Direct to Governance Officer and/or Governance Manager cc CEO

**Information Technology**
- Email Direct to IT Help Desk cc IT Manager
WHAT/ HOW

**Email**

- Email the Director or Email EA of responsible department and cc the relevant Director (no need to email or cc CEO as the Director will inform CEO as required)
- Director to triage, forward and/or respond/acknowledge
- Staff response timeframe to be realistic and practicable. Issues:-
  - If Urgent & Simple – respond as soon as practicable
  - If Complex – acknowledge and explain where to from here
  
  E.g.
  - Detailed email to be provided
  - Suggest motion
- Response:-
  - Initial email determines the response practice. Response to mirror incoming communication unless requested otherwise.
  - If CEO and Directors see it beneficial to include all Council Members in the response (to ensure equity of information), inform the original sender that this is the case, and copy all Council Members in the response.
  - CEO and Directors to use discretion to include all Council Members in the response.

**Phone**

- To relevant Director or CEO (unless Governance or IT)
- Respond to phone message or email as soon as practicable

**Meetings**

- Refer the following page for details

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FOR SERVICE REQUESTS – Use CRM/Admin Email/My Local App in those circumstances
Meetings

Meetings Mayor/ Council Members and Administration

Meetings may happen across a range of topics and issues to ensure community issues are addressed in a timely and efficient manner.

These meetings can occur between the Mayor, Councillors and Directors in order to respond to a wide range of opportunities.

These meetings are to promote the productive working relationship between the Council and Administration.

Types of Meetings Include:-

- Council Agenda Review Meeting
- Mayor and Chief Executive Officer
- Mayor and Council Members, Chief Executive Officer and/or Director/s – on an as needs basis
- Mayor and Executive Assistant
- On an needs basis as determined by the CEO or Directors, opportunity is made for the Mayor to also meet with relevant Managers and Staff on specific projects, events and activities to ensure the operation of the function of Mayoral duties is supported.

Council Information & Workshop Sessions

Refer Guideline and Protocol – Appendix 2
Councillor Information & Workshop Session

Guidelines

The following details provide an overview of the procedures to be observed:

i. Councillor Information & Workshop Sessions will be held on the first and second Tuesday of each month, other than January of each year, between the hours of 6.15pm and 9.30pm (commencing with a light meal for council members and staff from 6pm).

ii. Additional Councillor Information & Workshop Sessions may be held subject to the determination of the CEO.

iii. The Councillor Information & Workshop Sessions for 2019 will be held at the Prospect Petanque Club, 14-32 Buchanan Street, Nailsworth, although the location may vary subject to availability of other Council venues.

iv. The Councillor Information & Workshop Session will be open to the public and media with notice of the session being given on the Council’s website.

v. The Agenda and any associated information will be provided to Councillors by the Friday preceding the Councillor Information & Workshop Session so that Councillors are able to brief themselves on the items thereby allowing the session to focus beyond the basic information.

vi. The purpose of the Sessions is to provide an opportunity for discussion in respect to a wide range of strategic issues across the Council area, as well as those of State and National significance. They are designed to provide an opportunity for staff and presenter(s) to provide information and updates only; no decisions will be made. A confidentiality declaration may be determined by the CEO if necessary in accordance with Council’s Informal Gatherings Policy.

vii. The format for the Councillor Information & Workshop Session may vary on a meeting by meeting basis and could include training, planning, presentations, and discussions.

viii. External parties may make Presentations/deputations to the Councillor Information & Workshop Session, subject to prior agreement by the CEO.

ix. The CEO or proxy will convene and chair the Sessions to ensure the smooth running of the meeting. A proxy will be determined by the CEO on a needs basis.

x. Notes will be made of the general issues and items covered by the Councillor Information & Workshop Session. No decisions can be made, meaning the notes will be quite general in nature. Notes will be distributed to Council Members following the meeting.

xi. Council Members, employees and consultants will be required to disclose any financial and/or conflicts of interest in matters to be discussed. The disclosure of such interest and participation in the Councillor Information & Workshop Session will need to be made as if the matter was considered in accordance with the Local Government Act 1999. A record of the disclosures of interest will be made and maintained by the CEO.
Protocol
The following protocols provide a set of guiding principles that aim to achieve enhanced, meaningful engagement of members and to facilitate an equal and equitable participation of all members.

1. The Chair ensures that every member’s input is heard and not overlooked or lost, and will enforce a limit on a speaker’s time if it is required.

2. Discussion must be focussed on the issues and matters being the subject of discussion. Councillors make a commitment to active listening and disciplined talking, whilst displaying both courtesy and respect to one another.

3. Council Members and staff are to be addressed by their first name and not by their title of office they hold.

4. Problems and solutions expressed by members are a healthy part of the discussion and may lead to positive outcomes, and should not be frowned upon but rather encouraged.

5. The imperatives for a successful conduct of these workshops are that all members need to work together, displaying courtesy and respect to each other.