



NORTHERN MIDLANDS COUNCIL

POLICY MANUAL

ELECTED MEMBERS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Originated Date:	Adopted 21 January 2019 - Min. No 009/19
Amended Date/s:	Reviewed 14 December 2020 – Min. No. 423/20 Amended 18 September 2023 – Min. No. 23/0330
Applicable Legislation:	<i>Local Government Act 1993</i>
Objective	Council is committed to providing training and development activities for its elected members and defines this responsibility in this Policy.
Administration:	Governance
Review Cycle/Date:	2027 within 6 months after each Council election

1. OBJECTIVE

In order to meet the obligations of their Oath of Office, taken upon election, Councillors are to engage in ongoing professional development in order to maintain and improve their skills and effectiveness.

Council will develop and adopt a Professional Development Plan so as to ensure that activities available to all Council Members contribute to the achievement of the strategic and good governance objectives of Council.

Particular emphasis will be given in the Professional Development Plan of new Members joining Council following an election.

2. SCOPE

In considering professional development requirements, it should be noted that as decision and policy makers, Councillors are not expected, or required to hold specialist technical knowledge regarding Council activities, as the provision of qualified advice is the responsibility of the General Manager, in accordance with section 65 of the *Local Government Act 1993*.

Council recognises that some of the training needs of elected members will be specific to their roles and functions such as:

- Role and function of elected members
- Relationship between elected members, the General Manager and employees
- Meeting Procedures
- Conflict of Interest
- Code of Conduct
- Media Training

Other training issues will emerge that are directly related to specific service areas and other community issues and address environmental, social, cultural, community and economic challenges facing the community.

It is recognised that a range of delivery methods will be required to support the training needs of Council Members, including;

- Seminars and informal (briefing) sessions conducted by Council with appropriate guest speakers and trainers;
- Attendance at seminars and conferences offered by organisations such as the Local Government Association of Tasmania, Australian Local Government Association, Local Government Managers Association and other private providers that provide an opportunity for elected members and employees from within and outside of Tasmania;
- Purchase of training booklets and discussion papers that could be distributed to elected members for information;
- On-line training delivery, including through Department of Premier and Cabinet;
- "In house" sessions with key internal/ external speakers



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3. FRAMEWORK

This policy provides the framework for the delivery and management of Council participation in professional development activities which are provided by the Council via the following framework:

3.1 POST-ELECTION INDUCTION PROGRAM

Following their election Councillors will be supported in their roles through access to a comprehensive induction program which will be offered as soon as possible after the induction of a new Council, and normally occur during the first months of office.

An effective induction program provides the opportunity for Councillors to become familiar with the structure of the organisation and how it interacts with its community and assists the newly elected Council build effective working relationships.

Induction programs are normally delivered in-house by Council, local government related entities such as the Local Government Association of Tasmania, Local Government Office; or subject matter specialists such as the Integrity Commission.

Topics include, but are not limited to the following issues:

- (i) Organisational structure and operations; including the structure and cycle of Council business delivery, meeting procedures and the role of Chairperson;
- (ii) Roles and responsibilities of the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors of the Council, including Code of Conduct, conflict of interest, ethical decision making and building effective working relationships;
- (iii) The Council's role as the planning authority;
- (iv) Community engagement;
- (v) Strategic business planning including annual plans, policy development, delegations, strategic plan, financial management plans, budgetary framework and asset management;
- (vi) Briefings on specific issues affecting the Northern Midlands Council at the time.

3.2 ONGOING IN-HOUSE TRAINING & AWARENESS ACTIVITIES

The legislative provisions of the Local Government Act 1993 provide the formal framework for the presentation and discussion of the business of Council, via an approved schedule of meetings.

In addition to the formal legislative structure which governs the flow of Council business through meetings of the Council and its appointed committees, there is a need for Councillors to be aware of a wide range of issues relating to their roles as elected representatives of Council.

Matters may include legislative updates, Council specific projects and inter-government matters, as well as refresher training and awareness on issues including WH&S responsibilities, ethical decision making and Code of Conduct.

Information on such matters will be presented to Councillors as the need arises, using the most appropriate forums, including training sessions, briefings, presentations and workshops.

3.3 OTHER ELECTIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

In keeping with the Oath of Office, ongoing professional development will involve participation by Councillors in training and development activities to improve their knowledge, competence and effectiveness.

Activities may be provided through a number of avenues which suit individual needs, including:

- formal study;
- workshops; briefings, seminars and business forums;
- peer programs;



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- local government sector activities; and
- conferences.

All professional development activities must be conducted within Australia.

It is the responsibility of the Mayor to oversee the performance of the Councillors in accordance with section 27 of the Local Government Act 1993.

Accordingly the Mayor* will approve an annual professional development plan for the Council, having discussed individual needs with Councillors, in accordance with the policy guidelines.

*In all instances involving elective professional development planning for the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor will act in lieu of the Mayor.

In support of individual planning, Councillors may access a training needs facilitator should they so wish, in accordance with the policy guidelines.

In determining individual requirements for professional development, the Mayor will be mindful of the available budget; equity of expenditure and distribution of activities; and any other issues considered to be relevant at the time.

The Mayor will inform the Council of the annual professional development plan, for noting purposes only, together with any approved variations as they occur.

Councillors will be required to report to the Council on their professional development training and development activities, in accordance with the policy.

The total cost of Councillor participation in professional development activities will be attributed to individual Councillors under this specific category.

4. FUNDING

An annual budget allocation will be provided to support the training and development activities undertaken by Council, and progress against expenditure of the budget allocation will be reported on an annual basis.

Council will determine the size of its annual budget allocation at budget time, which may change annually, depending on the nature of issues for which training and development activities may be required to be offered. For example, when a new Council is elected there may be specific issues and costs required to be incorporated.

The General Manager has delegated authority to approve training courses that are within the budget, any expenditure in excess of the budget must be approved by the Council.

5. ATTENDANCE AT TRAINING PROGRAMS/ACTIVITIES

Following attendance at an external training program or activity, individual Council Members are required to prepare a report outlining the nature of the training program/ activity and the benefits gained through attendance along with feedback on ideas to enhance the program/ activity.

Such reports are not required for 'in house' training programs or activities.

6. PAYMENTS/REIMBURSEMENTS

Where approval has been granted by Council for attendance at a training program/ activity an elected member may seek reimbursement of expenses in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Local Government Act and Regulations using the Council Member Reimbursement form attached to Council Policy - Councillor Allowances, Travelling and Other Expenses.



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7. ANNUAL REPORTING

Council's Annual Report will include a reference regarding the operation of this Policy, the nature of Professional Development activities attended by elected members and expenditure allocated and used for training of Council Members.

8. STATEMENT OF ADOPTION AND REVIEW

This Policy was adopted by Council at its meeting held on 21 January 2019 (Min. No 009/19) and will be reviewed within 6 months of each council election

9. OTHER RELEVANT POLICIES/PROCEDURES

- Councillors Allowances, Travelling & Other Expenses
- Meeting Procedures
- Information & Communication Technology Recourses and Electronic Communication Acceptable Use Policy
- Privacy Policy Statement
- Code of Conduct for Elected Members
- Recording of Meetings Policy
- Live Streaming of Council Meetings.