

Effective Council Committee Chairing & Support Information Sheet

Role of the Chair

- Chairing is a key factor in the effectiveness of meetings.
- The role of the Chairperson is to direct committee discussion, ensuring that the objectives of the meeting can be met, and that the Committee effectively fulfils its responsibility in consideration of the items on the agenda. This involves ensuring that you are well briefed about each agenda item and that:
 - decisions are taken, recorded and carried out;
 - the organisation policies are applied;
 - there is full participation;
 - the agenda is followed; and
 - there are time limits for the meeting as a whole and for agenda items.
- For Council Committees the suggested format for the meeting procedure is detailed in the City of Albany's Standing Orders Local Law, available from the City of Albany's website.

Ensuring effective committee/staff relations

- Good relations between the committee and paid staff and/or volunteers are vital. Good relations promote a shared vision, informed planning and effective delivery of the committee's objectives.

The Executive Officer

- The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is the only staff member that is appointed by Council and can be tasked by Council.
- The Committee Executive Officer is the CEO's representative.
- The Committee Executive Officer's role is to support the Chairperson run meetings effectively and advise the Chair if a City Officer can effect an action request under delegated authority or if an Officer's Report is required to be prepared on behalf of the Committee for a decision of Council.

Effective delegation

- Council Committees appoint elected members of Council to Chair committees of council. Therefore, the Committee Chair represents the Committee.
- Much of the day-to-day work is delegated to City staff, whether paid or voluntary. For this reason and in order to develop good committee/staff relations, Committee Chairs and Executive Officers should ensure that the:
 - Members of the committee understand the committee administration support structure; and
 - Established good committee and staff relations.
- Council has not delegated any decision making powers to committees.
- The Committee Chair does not have delegated power, however is the governance check to ensure that committee recommendations and/or requests are referred to the appropriate person with delegated authority or onto Council for decision.

Appropriate organisational structure and clear lines of responsibility

- Even in small groups, this means having a clear map of accountability.
- The objective of the committee should be clearly communicated in the Committee's Terms of Reference.

Good management structures

- The committee should ensure that there are appropriate systems and structures in place to assist staff and committee members achieve the objectives defined in the terms of reference.
- The most common way to help committee members is to appoint a dedicated contact person.
- This is normally an Executive Director or designated line manager.
- The committee should operate within the policies and guidelines to safeguard the interests of the City.
- City policies can be sourced on the City's website.

Good management committee & senior staff relations

- The most senior staff member (i.e. the Executive Director, Manager or CEO) is the key link between the staff team and the committee.
- The committee must be able to work with the senior staff member effectively.
- This role is often specifically assigned to the Committee Chairperson.
- The management committee is also responsible for providing performance feedback to the Chief Executive Officer or Council in the case of the Chief Executive Officer.
- The Committee, and in particular the Chairperson, should strive to develop a good working relationship with the senior staff member, with mutual agreement on the division of roles and responsibilities.

Characteristics of a good secretary (Minute Taker)

- The role of Secretary is key to the efficient functioning of the Committee.
- Below are some of the qualities, skills and knowledge which should be demonstrated by those carrying out this role.

Quality, skills & knowledge

- A good Committee Secretary will:
 - be methodical, with a good eye for detail;
 - be well organised, with an orderly mind;
 - bring objectivity to the proceedings;
 - deal promptly with correspondence;
 - be able to take accurate notes of meetings;
 - make sure members receive all the necessary material;
 - bring the necessary material to the meeting;
 - work well with the Chairperson;
 - ensure quorum is met for meetings; and
 - have knowledge or experience of committee meeting procedures (Standing Orders).

Do's and Don'ts

A good Secretary will:	A good Secretary will NOT:
Be organised.	Ignore correspondence.
Keep copies of all correspondence.	Keep information to her/himself.
Check quorum is met for meetings.	Be late for meetings.
Respect confidentiality.	Throw away important papers.
Work closely with the Chairperson.	Write down trivial details of all discussions at every meeting.
Make it easy for others to take over by keeping clear records.	Rely on his/her memory.
Prepare for meetings well in advance.	Repeat private conversations.
Summarise discussions effectively.	Organise meetings at the last minute.
Keep people informed.	Ensure inaccurate minutes of meetings are kept.