

<b>Policy Number:</b>	<b>3.2</b>
<b>Policy Name:</b>	<b>INFORMAL GATHERINGS</b>
<b>Classification:</b>	<b>Public – Council Policy</b>
<b>Adopted:</b>	<b>24 May 2016</b>
<b>Frequency of Review:</b>	<b>12 months following a general election</b>
<b>Last Review:</b>	<b>May 2016</b>
<b>Next Review Due:</b>	<b>May 2019</b>
<b>Responsible Officer(s):</b>	<b>Governance Officer Chief Executive Officer</b>
<b>Policy and Code of Practice Manual File Ref:</b>	<b>CC10/2601</b>
<b>Council File Reference:</b>	<b>CR16/19229</b>
<b>Legislation Authority:</b>	<b>Local Government Act 1999</b>
<b>Related Policies and Codes:</b>	<b>Code 1.1 Code of Practice for Council Meeting Procedures Code 1.2 Code of Practice for Access to Council and Committee Meetings and Council Documents Code 1.3 Code of Practice for Committee Meeting Procedures Code 1.4 Code of Practice for Working Groups</b>
<b>Related Procedures:</b>	<b>Informal Gatherings Procedures</b>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Open and transparent Council meetings underpin representative democracy and ensure public confidence in Council's decision-making processes. Informal gatherings, where appropriate, provide a valuable opportunity to enhance the decision-making processes by providing opportunities for Council Members to become better informed on issues and seek further clarification.
- 1.2 The objective of this Policy is to ensure Council Members have sufficient opportunity to conduct planning sessions, to receive informal briefings, workshops and educational sessions, and convene other informal gatherings without prejudicing the requirements for openness and transparency as required by the *Local Government Act 1999*.

- 1.3 Section 90(8) of the Local Government Act allows informal gatherings to be held provided that the discussion does not lead to a decision, or effectively obtain a decision, on a matter that would ordinarily be dealt with at a Council meeting. This Policy reflects the intention of the legislation for informal gatherings to be used for briefing, planning and educational sessions and is aimed at avoiding any perception that informal gatherings will be used to build consensus for Council agenda items.

## 2. SCOPE

- 2.1 Informal gatherings, briefing sessions, workshops, planning sessions and other discussions captured under this Policy are those gatherings that are arranged by the Council, either by the Chief Executive Officer or by the Elected Council. Section 90(8) of the *Local Government Act* provides a list of non-exclusive examples of informal gatherings, which are:
- a) Planning sessions associated with the development of policies or strategies
  - b) Briefing or training sessions
  - c) Workshops
  - d) Social gatherings to encourage informal communication between members or between members and staff.
- 2.2 Informal gatherings and discussions of these kinds are not for the purpose of debating issues, building consensus positions or otherwise discharging Council's deliberative and decision-making functions.
- 2.3 Informal gatherings of Council Members, or Council Members and Council Staff are, by their nature, a non-compulsory meeting of the Council. All Council Members are encouraged to attend these sessions, particularly those designed to provide history, context or additional information to assist Council Members to carry out their functions.
- 2.4 Both the Chief Executive Officer and the Elected Council are responsible for ensuring informal gatherings and discussions are conducted in accordance with the Local Government Act.

## 3. STATEMENT

Informal gatherings will not be used for the purpose of conducting the general business of the Council or to stifle debate on issues that may subsequently be dealt with by the Council at a formal meeting. However informal gatherings may be used to discuss issues that involve strategy or policy or other matters of Council administration and to brief Council Members on issues relating to their decision-making function.

**4. WORKSHOPS & BRIEFING SESSIONS**

- 4.1 Workshops and briefing sessions that are convened to consider matters that will form part of the Council's meeting agenda will be advertised and open to the public.
- 4.2 A schedule of planned briefing sessions/workshops and the matters to be discussed will be published on the Council's website in the Council Diary.
- 4.3 If a topic falls into a category that would normally be kept confidential if it arose at a Council meeting, the item will be placed last and the gathering will be closed when that item is reached.

**5. TRAINING SESSIONS & SOCIAL GATHERINGS**

- 5.1 Training sessions involving Council Staff and Council Members will not be open to the public. These sessions are purely for professional development.
- 5.2 Social gatherings of Council Staff and/or Council Members to encourage informal communication will not be open to the public. These sessions are important for team building and morale.

**6. OTHER INFORMAL GATHERINGS**

For all other informal gatherings, public access will be determined by the Mayor and/or Chief Executive Officer on a case by case basis. The Council is aware of the need to balance openness and transparency with opportunities for private discussions between Council Members and Council Members and Council Staff.

**7. AGENDAS AND MINUTE TAKING**

Informal gatherings will not involve a formal minute taking process. A report to Council will be provided including information from a briefing session/workshop if and when deemed appropriate by the Mayor and/or Chief Executive Officer.

**8. REVIEW AND EVALUATION**

The Policy will be reviewed after each general election of Council.

The Chief Executive Officer will report to Council on the outcome of the evaluation and if relevant make recommendations for amendments, alteration or substitution of a new Policy.

The Policy will not be altered or substituted so as to affect a process already commenced.

## 9. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information about this Policy can be obtained by:-

Telephone: 8522 9211  
Fax: 8522 9212  
Email: [council@gawler.sa.gov.au](mailto:council@gawler.sa.gov.au)  
Appointment: Town Hall, 89 – 91 Murray Street, Gawler  
Letter: PO Box 130, Gawler SA 5118

## 10. AVAILABILITY OF POLICY

The Policy is available for inspection during ordinary business hours at the Council principal office, Gawler Town Hall or Library Council Offices, 89 – 91 Murray Street, Gawler or is available on the Council website at [www.gawler.sa.gov.au](http://www.gawler.sa.gov.au).

A copy of this Policy will be provided to interested parties upon request, for a fee as contained in the Register of Fees and Charges.