



**GEORGES
RIVER
COUNCIL**

**COUNCILLOR AND STAFF
INTERACTION POLICY**

POLICY ADMINISTRATION

Dates	Policy approved at the Meeting of Council on: 4 September 2017 Policy is due for review June 2019
Approved by	Council Meeting on 4 September 2017
Policy Owner	Executive Manager, Office of the General Manager
Related Documents	Georges River Council's Code of Conduct Georges River Council's Code of Meeting Practice Georges River Council's Terms of Reference for Committees Georges River Council's Enforcement Policy
References & Legislation	Local Government Act 1993 Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994 Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988
Document Identifier	Policy #: <i>Allocated by Governance once policy is approved (includes the version number)</i> Doc #: D17/80398
Breaches of Policy	Breaches of any policy will be dealt with and responded to in accordance with adopted codes and/or relevant legislation.
Record Keeping	All documents and information obtained in relation to the implementation of this policy will be kept in accordance with the NSW State Records Act 1998, Georges River Council's Corporate Records Policy and adopted internal procedures.

1. PURPOSE

Georges River Council supports Councillors' requirement to access Council information and staff in order to exercise their civic duties under the Local Government Act, 1993 (The Act). Interactions between Councillors and staff are necessary to facilitate strong governance, best practice policies and decisions and to provide customer-focused service delivery.

The Georges River Council *Councillor and Staff Interaction Policy* provides a structure for how Councillors interact with authorised staff and supports the professional working relationship with the Executive Team.

The Georges River Council *Councillor and Staff Interaction Policy* aims to facilitate a progressive and productive working relationship between Councillors and Council staff.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to Councillors and Council employees, including contract and casual employees engaged by Council. This Policy is an enforceable component of the Georges River Council Code of Conduct.

3. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Term	Meaning
<i>Authorised staff</i>	Staff nominated by the General Manager who can interact with or provide advice to Councillors.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

Effective governance and customer-focused service delivery require a productive and professional working relationship between the elected members and the organisation. Effective governance also requires clear and effective communication protocols for Councillors and senior staff which provide for courteous and respectful communication.

The Local Government Act defines the roles and responsibilities of the Mayor and Councillors, and specifies that the General Manager is to direct staff in the performance of their duties. Interactions between Councillors and staff are necessary to facilitate well-informed decisions and the provision of Council services.

In accordance with Council's Code of Conduct, Councillors and staff are expected to conduct their interactions with each other with respect, professionalism, objectivity, honesty and to a high standard of ethical behaviour. This Policy supplements the Code of Conduct and nominates those Council staff (Sections 6--9) that Councillors may access to exercise their civic leadership and represent the views of the community. This Policy should be read and applied in conjunction with Council's Code of Meeting Practice, which supports the effective running of Council Meetings.

While this Policy, and the Code of Conduct, governs the interactions between Councillors and staff, it does not prevent Councillors and staff from communicating generally. From time to time, Councillors and staff may be present at social and community events. In such situations, both parties should refrain from discussing matters relating to council business.

a. Access to staff by Members of Parliament

Please note that only members of the Executive Team are authorised to advise and interact with State and Federal Members of Parliament, as outlined in Section 9 below.

b. Access to staff other than the General Manager by Councillors

All access to staff by Councillors, other than the General Manager, is to be authorised by the General Manager.

Only those staff authorised by the General Manager (Section 6) can provide advice to Councillors within the limits of their delegated responsibilities. Only those staff authorised by the General Manager may be contacted for a Public Interest Disclosure (Section 7), in accordance with Section 4A of the Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994 or a Code of Conduct matter (Section 8), in accordance with Section 440 of the Local Government Act.

The General Manager may amend these lists of nominated officers from time to time to reflect changes to positions. Further, the General Manager may nominate officers to interact with Councillors on a specific issue and temporary basis, as required.

Should a Council officer be acting in any of the nominated positions included in this schedule, the person so acting will be a nominated officer unless otherwise determined by the General Manager.

c. Councillor and Council staff interaction

Councillors should be aware that under Section 6.2 of the Georges River Council Code of Conduct, Councillors must not attempt to direct Council staff in the performance of their duties or request that staff undertake work on their behalf.

A Councillor or member of Council staff should not take advantage of their official position to improperly influence other Councillors or members of Council staff in the performance of their civic or professional duties for the purpose of securing private benefit for themselves or for another person.

In circumstances where staff are unsure whether or not they should provide information to, or respond to a request from a Councillor, they should refer the matter to their Director or the General Manager, or request that the Councillor make the request through the General Manager.

d. Councillor and Council staff interaction in Meetings

To ensure the effective running of Council Meetings, Standing Committees, Advisory Committees and other meetings and events of Council, Councillors and Council staff should abide by the Georges River Council Code of Conduct and Code of Meeting Practice.

Within the context of Council Meetings and in accordance with the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005, Section 249 (1)(b), a Councillor may, through the General Manager, put a question to a council staff member. Further, "a Councillor or council

employee to whom a question is put is entitled to be given reasonable notice of the question and, in particular, sufficient notice to enable reference to be made to other persons or to documents.” (Section 249 (2) of the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005).

At Standing Committee and Advisory Committee meetings Councillors may approach designated support staff, as referenced in the relevant Terms of Reference, for advice in relation to activities of that committee.

e. Councillors Portal

The online Councillors Portal provides Councillors with 24/7 access to relevant Georges River Council resources. Councillors are encouraged to utilize this Portal as the first point of reference in fulfilling their civic duties.

Resources available on the Portal include:

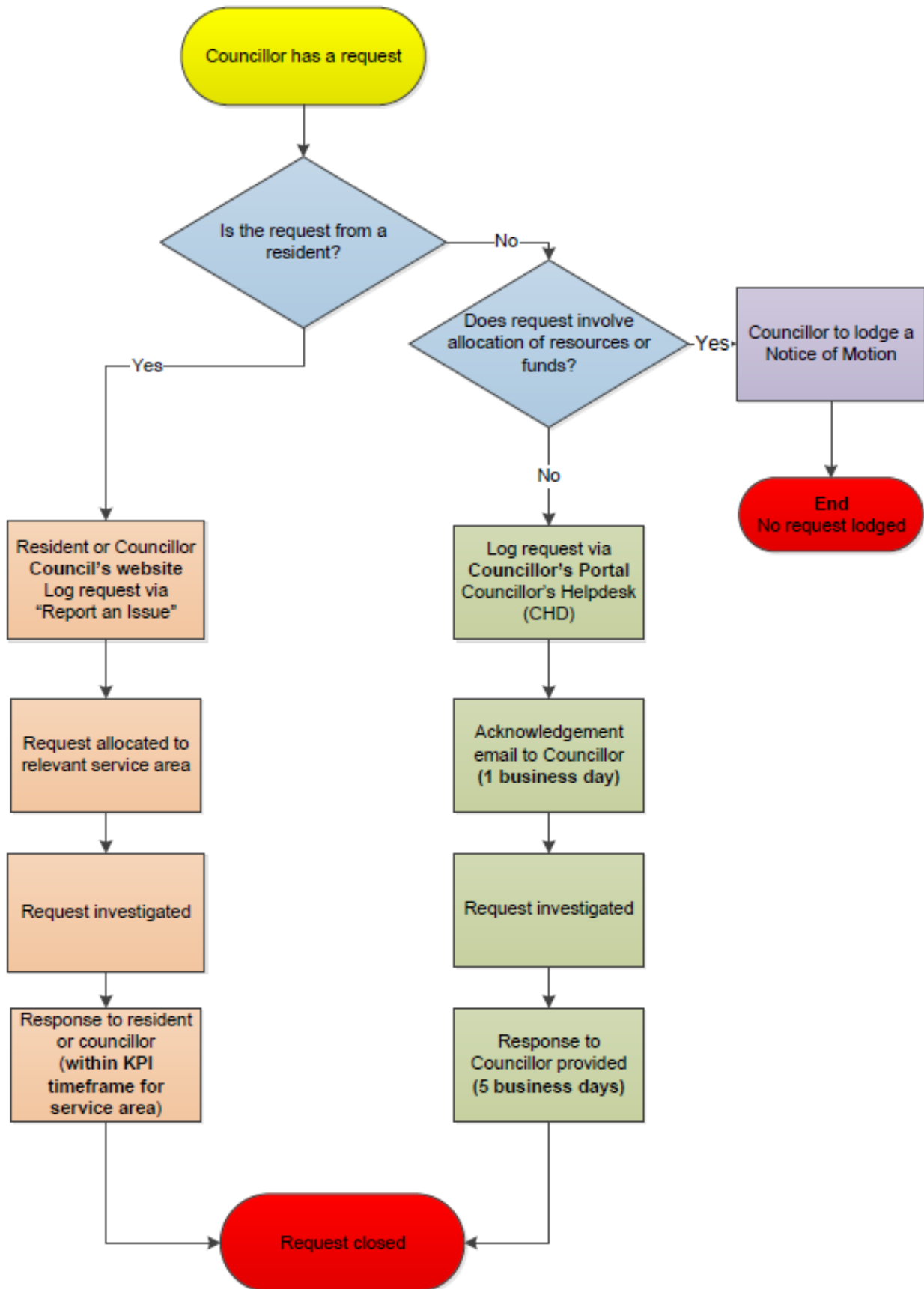
- Policies and Codes
- Councillor’s HelpDesk
- Calendar of Events
- Councillor Information Bulletin

f. Councillor’s HelpDesk

Service requests on behalf of residents should be submitted as a service request from Council’s website by clicking on the “Report an Issue” quick link on www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au . Such requests might include queries and complaints received from residents.

To ensure the timely and accurate completion of requests, Councillors are asked to make all other Councillor requests through the Councillor’s HelpDesk (CHD). The CHD is accessible through the Councillor Portal. Such requests might include requests for information and/or actions, or requests for updates on Council’s operations. Requests made via other channels such as telephone, email or SMS will be forwarded to the CHD. In the event that HelpDesk requests are made directly to Officers in Council, staff are directed to refer Councillor’s to the Councillor HelpDesk to submit their request or transfer the Councillor to the Executive Services team to assist the Councillor with submission of the HelpDesk request.

These channels are outlined in the flowchart below.



Service and Councillor HelpDesk Workflow

The CHD allows Councillors to:

- Make requests for information and/or actions
- Seek updates on Council's operations

All CHD requests will be acknowledged via email with an initial response to the Councillor within five (5) business days.

Councillors are surveyed annually to measure satisfaction with regard to the CHD, to ensure continuous improvement.

Where a Councillor's request requires the allocation of resources or expenditure of funds, the Councillor may be requested to consider a Notice of Motion.

If a Councillor would like staff to contact and update a resident directly, they should indicate this in their request. When sending a service request to the CHD, Councillors should include sufficient information to enable staff to respond, for example, the name and contact details of a resident, if staff are required to contact them.

Responses to Councillors following CHD requests are for the information of Councillors only and should not be forwarded to other parties.

g. Service standards

Action	Standard
Councillor HelpDesk request - acknowledgement	1 business day
Councillor HelpDesk request - response	5 business days
Councillor requests made through channels other than the Councillor HelpDesk	No service standard applies
Phone calls to Directors and authorised staff – during business hours	Calls returned on the same day
Phone calls to Directors and authorised staff – outside business hours	Where possible calls are returned on the same day. Alternatively, messages left will be replied to on the next business day

h. Councillor access to Council Civic Centre offices

Councillor access to the Georges River Council Civic Centre offices includes:

- Councillor offices
- Councillor's Suite
- Council Chambers
- Office of the Executive Assistant to the Mayor (during office hours)
- Mayor's office (with the consent of the Mayor)
- Public areas

5. COUNCILLOR INFORMATION BULLETIN

A *Councillor Information Bulletin* will be published regularly via e-mail and on the Councillor Portal. This Bulletin will include:

- Civic Events calendar
- Determined Development Applications
- Project updates
- Quarterly reporting on HelpDesk statistics

The Bulletin is a confidential publication for the information of Councillors only and must not be disseminated to other parties.

6. NOMINATED STAFF AUTHORISED TO INTERACT WITH COUNCILLORS

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL MANAGER

General Manager

Director Legal Services – General Counsel

Executive Manager, Office of the General Manager

Executive Manager, Premium Facilities and Properties

Head of Executive Services

Executive Assistant to the Mayor

Executive Assistant to the General Manager

Executive Assistant to General Counsel

Personal Assistant to the Executive Manager, Office of the General Manager

ASSETS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Director Assets and Infrastructure

Executive Manager Engineering Operations

Manager Infrastructure

Manager Project Delivery

Executive Assistant to the Director Assets and Infrastructure

Personal Assistant to the Executive Manager Engineering Operations

COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

Director Community and Culture

Manager Communications and Customer Service

Manager Community and Cultural Development

Coordinator Events

Coordinator Communications

Executive Assistant to the Director Community and Culture

ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING

Director Environment and Planning

Manager Strategic Planning

Manager Development and Building

Manager Environment, Health and Regulatory Services

Executive Assistant to the Director Environment and Planning

BUSINESS AND CORPORATE SERVICES

Director Business and Corporate Services

Chief Financial Officer

Manager Governance and Risk Management

Executive Assistant to the Director Business and Corporate Services

TRANSFORMATION AND CHANGE

7. NOMINATED STAFF AUTHORISED TO INTERACT WITH COUNCILLORS IN RELATION TO PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURES (PIDS)

Only those staff authorised by the General Manager, as listed below, may be contacted for a Public Interest Disclosure in accordance with Section 4A of the Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994:

General Manager

Manager Governance and Risk Management as the designated Complaints Coordinator

Internal Auditor as the designated Public Officer

Executive Manager Engineering Operations

8. NOMINATED STAFF AUTHORISED TO INTERACT WITH COUNCILLORS IN RELATION TO CODE OF CONDUCT REVIEWS

Only those staff authorised by the General Manager, as listed below, may be contacted in relation to a Code of Conduct matter in accordance with Section 440 of the Local Government Act 1993:

General Manager

Manager Governance and Risk Management as the designated Complaints Coordinator

9. NOMINATED STAFF AUTHORISED TO INTERACT WITH STATE AND FEDERAL MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Only members of the Executive Team are authorised by the General Manager to advise and interact with State and Federal Members of Parliament. The Executive Team includes:

General Manager

Director Legal Services – General Counsel

Director Assets and Infrastructure

Director Community and Culture

Director Environment and Planning

Director Business and Corporate Services

Director Transformation and Change

Executive Manager, Office of the General Manager

Executive Assistant to the General Manager

Executive Assistant to the Mayor

Personal Assistant to the Executive Manager, Office of the General Manager

10. VERSION CONTROL AND CHANGE HISTORY

Version	Amendment Details	Policy Owner	Period Active
1.1	Version 1 developed and submitted to the ICAC for review.	Executive Manager Office of the General Manager	14/06/17 – 04/09/17
1.2	Version 1.2 amended following a review by the ICAC	Executive Manager Office of the General Manager	04/09/17 – 04/09/18
1.3	Version 1.3 amended following Council Resolution on Organisation Structure and inclusion of three positions	Executive Manager Office of the General Manager	10/07/18 – 04/09/18