

COUNCILLOR AND STAFF INTERACTION POLICY

POLICY ADMINISTRATION

Dates	Policy approved 06/04/2021 This policy is effective upon its approval Policy is due for review September 2022
Approved by	Executive Team on 6 April 2021 (Version 3)
Policy Owner	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 #: Pol-030.03 Doc #: D17/138096
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.

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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. 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 (NSW)*. Interactions between Councillors and staff are necessary to facilitate strong governance, best practice policies and decisions and to provide customer-focused service delivery.
- 1.2. 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.
- 1.3. 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

- 2.1. 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

- 4.1. 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.
- 4.2. The *Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)* 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.
- 4.3. 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 14-17) 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 Conduct and Code of Meeting Practice.

- 4.4. 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.

5. ACCESS TO STAFF BY MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

- 5.1. Only members of the Executive Team are authorised to advise and interact with State and Federal Members of Parliament, as outlined in Section 17 of this Policy.

6. ACCESS TO STAFF OTHER THAN THE GENERAL MANAGER BY COUNCILLORS

- 6.1. All access to staff by Councillors, other than the General Manager, is to be authorised by the General Manager.
- 6.2. Only those staff authorised by the General Manager (Section 14) 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 15), in accordance with Section 4A of the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994* or a Code of Conduct matter (Section 16), in accordance with Section 440 of the *Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)*.
- 6.3. The General Manager may amend the 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.
- 6.4. 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.

7. COUNCILLOR AND COUNCIL STAFF INTERACTION

- 7.1. Councillors should be aware that under Section 7.2 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.
- 7.2. 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.
- 7.3. 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.

8. COUNCILLOR AND COUNCIL STAFF INTERACTION IN MEETINGS

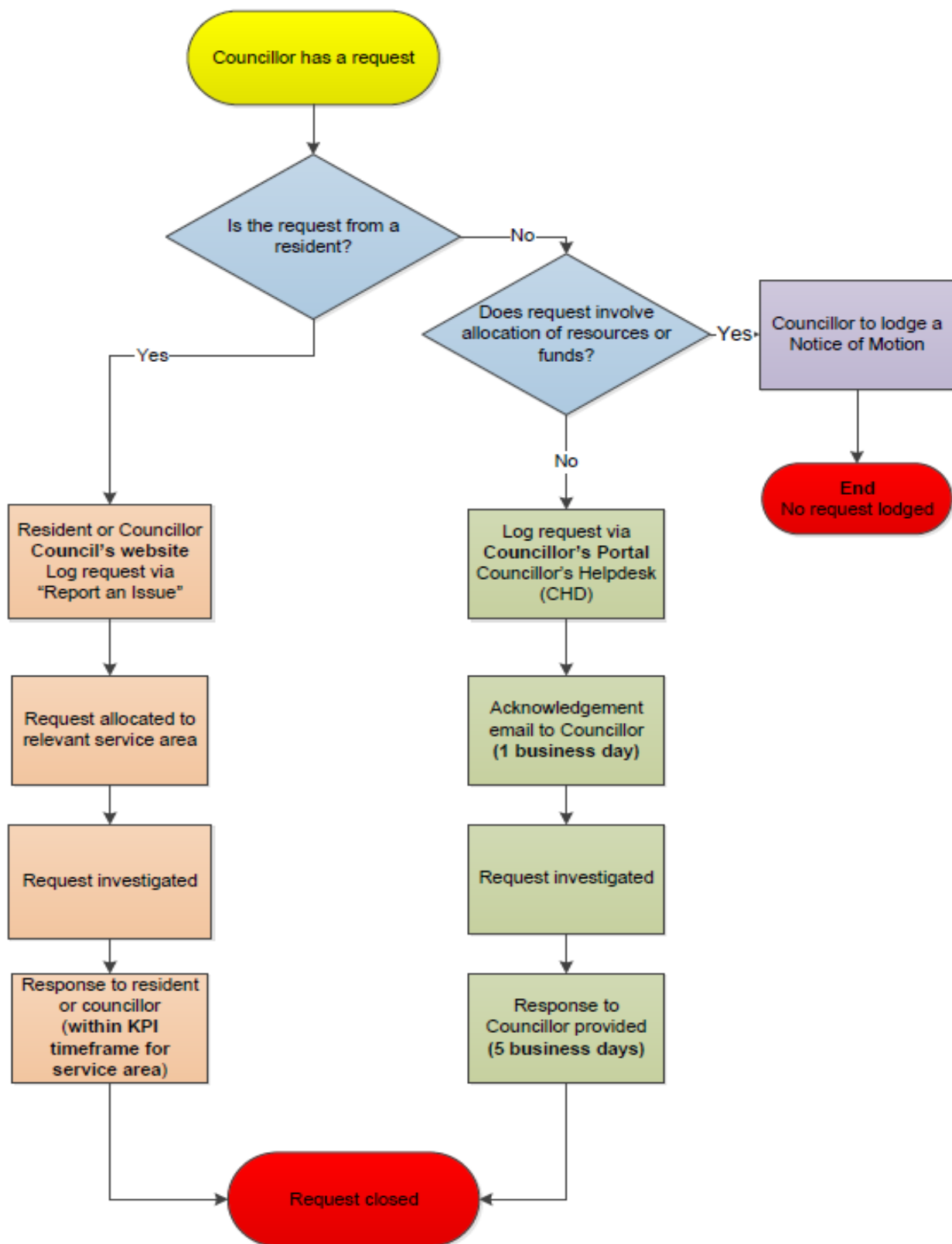
- 8.1. To ensure the effective running of Council Meetings, Standing Committees, Advisory Committees and other meetings and events of Council, Councillors and Council staff should abide by the Georges River Council Code of Conduct and Code of Meeting Practice.
- 8.2. Within the context of Council Meetings and in accordance with Section 249 (1)(b) of the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2005*, 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*).
- 8.3. 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.

9. COUNCILLOR PORTAL

- 9.1. The online Councillor Portal provides Councillors with 24/7 access to relevant Georges River Council resources. Councillors are encouraged to utilise this Portal as the first point of reference in fulfilling their civic duties.
- 9.2. Resources available on the Councillor Portal include:
 - Policies and Codes
 - Councillor’s HelpDesk
 - Calendar of Events
 - Councillor Information Bulletin
 - Business Papers

10. COUNCILLOR HELPDESK

- 10.1. 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.
- 10.2. To ensure the timely and accurate completion of requests, Councillors are asked to make all other Councillor requests through the Councillor 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 CHD requests are made directly to Council staff, the staff are directed to refer Councillor’s to the CHD to submit their request or transfer the Councillor to the Executive Services team to assist the Councillor with submission of the CHD request.
- 10.3. These channels are outlined in the flowchart below.



10.4. The CHD allows Councillors to:

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

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

10.6. 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.

10.7. 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.

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

11. 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

12. COUNCILLOR ACCESS TO COUNCIL CIVIC CENTRE OFFICES

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

- Councillor office
- 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

13. COUNCILLOR INFORMATION BULLETIN

13.1. A Councillor Information Bulletin will be published regularly for the information of all Councillors. The Councillor Information Bulletin will include (but will not be limited to):

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

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

14. NOMINATED STAFF AUTHORISED TO INTERACT WITH COUNCILLORS

14.1 OFFICE OF THE GENERAL MANAGER

- General Manager
- Director Legal Services and General Counsel
- Chief Audit Executive
- Manager, Office of the General Manager
- Executive Services Officer
- Research and Projects Officer
- Executive Assistant to the Mayor
- Executive Assistant to the General Manager
- Executive Assistant to Director Legal Services and General Counsel

14.2 ASSETS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- Director Assets and Infrastructure
- Executive Manager Engineering Operations
- Manager Infrastructure
- Manager Project Delivery
- Executive Assistant to the Director Assets and Infrastructure

14.3 COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

- Director Community and Culture
- Manager City Life
- Manager Community and Early Learning Services
- Executive Assistant to the Director Community and Culture
- Business Improvement Officer

14.4 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
- Personal Assistant to Manager Development and Building
- Personal Assistant to Manager Environment, Health and Regulatory Services

14.5 BUSINESS AND CORPORATE SERVICES

- Director Business and Corporate Services
- Chief Financial Officer
- Chief Information Officer
- Manager Governance and Risk Management
- Coordinator Corporate Governance
- Executive Assistant to the Director Business and Corporate Services

14.6 CITY STRATEGY AND INNOVATION

- Director City Strategy and Innovation
- Coordinator Communications and Engagement
- Project Support Officer

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

15.1. 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
- Director Legal Services and General Counsel
- Director Business and Corporate Services
- Manager Governance and Risk Management
- Chief Audit Executive
- Executive Manager Engineering Operations
- Coordinator Fleet and Operational Procurement
- Team Leader Content and Discovery

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

16.1. 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
- Director Legal Services and General Counsel
- Chief Audit Executive
- Manager Governance and Risk Management

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

17.1. 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 and General Counsel
- Director Assets and Infrastructure
- Director Community and Culture
- Director Environment and Planning
- Director Business and Corporate Services
- Director City Strategy and Innovation

- Manager, Office of the General Manager
- Executive Assistant to the General Manager
- Executive Assistant to the Mayor

18. VERSION CONTROL AND CHANGE HISTORY

Version	Amendment Details	Policy Owner	Period Active
1.0	Complete new Georges River Council Councillor and Staff Interaction Policy (Council Resolution CCL196-17)	Executive Manager Office of the General Manager	04/09/2017 – 09/07/2018
1.1	Minor administrative amendments following Council Resolution on Organisation Structure and inclusion of three positions	Executive Manager Office of the General Manager	09/07/2018 – 12/05/2020
2.0	Minor amendments to reflect organisational changes and correct position titles as endorsed by the Executive Team	Manager, Office of the General Manager	12/05/2020 – 06/04/2021
3.0	Minor amendments to reflect organisational changes and correct position titles as endorsed by the Executive Team	Manager, Office of the General Manager	06/04/2021 - ongoing