

Policy

Councillor and Staff Interaction

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Councillor and Staff Interaction

Preface from Model Policy

Positive working relationships between councillors and staff: a council's key asset

Positive, professional working relationships between councillors and staff are a key element of any council's success. If relationships between councillors and staff are functioning effectively, the council is more likely to perform effectively. If these relationships break down, it can lead to dysfunction, create a potential corruption risk¹, and ultimately the council's performance will suffer.

A good relationship between councillors and staff is based, in large part, on both having a mutual understanding and respect for each other's roles and responsibilities. These are defined in the *Local Government Act 1993* (the LGA) and the *Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW* (the Model Code of Conduct).

In broad terms, a councillor's role is a strategic one. As members of the governing body, councillors are responsible not only for representing the community, but also for setting the strategic direction of the council and keeping its performance under review. A comprehensive outline of the role of a councillor is provided in Part 4 of this Policy.

The role of council staff, under the leadership of the general manager, is to carry out the day-to-day operations of the council and to implement the decisions, plans, programs and policies adopted by the governing body.

Access to information: the key to the relationship

Councillors need access to information about the council's strategic position and performance to perform their civic functions effectively. The general manager and staff are responsible for providing councillors with this information to facilitate the decision-making process.

Given councillors' role in setting the council's strategic direction and keeping its performance under review, councillors are entitled to request information about a range of issues.

However, in requesting information, councillors should not be seeking to interrogate the minutiae of the council's operations or to direct or influence staff in the performance of their duties. Councillors should also recognise that a council's resources are finite, and they need to be mindful of the impact of their requests.

Above all, interactions between councillors and staff should be positive, respectful and professional.

¹ As highlighted by the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption's Operation Dasha <https://www.icac.nsw.gov.au>

Official capacity versus private capacity

It is also inevitable that councillors and council staff will engage with their council in their private capacity. This can be for something as simple as borrowing a book from a council library, to more complex matters, such as submitting a development application.

In these circumstances, it is vital that councillors and council staff do not seek to use, or appear to use, their position within council to obtain a private benefit. To do so could be seen as an attempt to exert pressure on councillors and/or council staff with a view to obtaining preferential treatment. Such conduct has the potential to undermine both the integrity of a council's decision-making processes, as well as the community's confidence in council, and so must be avoided.

The development and intent of this policy

This Model Councillor and Staff Interaction Policy has been developed by the Office of Local Government (OLG) in consultation with councils. It is applicable to councils, county councils and joint organisations.

It provides an exemplar approach, incorporating examples of best practice from a diverse range of NSW councils. At its core, the policy has three main goals:

- to establish a framework by which councillors can access the information they need to perform their civic functions,
- to promote positive and respectful interactions between councillors and staff, and
- to advise where concerns can be directed if there is a breakdown in the relationship between councillors and staff.

Adoption

While not mandatory, the Model Councillor and Staff Interaction Policy reflects best practice and all councils, county councils and joint organisations are encouraged to adopt it. In doing so, they are free to adapt the policy to suit their local circumstances and operating environments or to supplement it with their own provisions.

Enforcement

Clause 3.1(b) of the Model Code of Conduct provides that council officials must not conduct themselves in a manner that is contrary to a council's policies. If adopted by a council, a breach of the policy may also constitute a breach of council's code of conduct.

Concerns or complaints about the administration of a council's councillor request system should be raised with the general manager (or the mayor in the case of a complaint about the general manager). If the matter cannot be resolved locally, councillors may raise their concerns with OLG.

Model Councillor and Staff Interaction Policy

Part 1 – Introduction

- 1.1 *The Councillor and Staff Interaction Policy* (the Policy) provides a framework for councillors when exercising their civic functions by specifically addressing their ability to interact with, and receive advice from, authorised staff.
- 1.2 The Policy complements and should be read in conjunction with Tweed Shire Council's *Code of Conduct for Staff and Code of Conduct for Councillors* (the Code of Conduct).
- 1.3 The aim of the Policy is to facilitate a positive working relationship between councillors, as the community's elected representatives, and staff, who are employed to administer the operations of the Council. The Policy provides direction on interactions between councillors and staff to assist both parties in carrying out their day-to-day duties professionally, ethically and respectfully.
- 1.4 It is important to have an effective working relationship that recognises the important but differing contribution both parties bring to their complementary roles.

Part 2 – Application

- 2.1 This Policy applies to all councillors and council staff.
- 2.2 This Policy applies to all interactions between councillors and staff, whether face-to-face, online (including social media and virtual meeting platforms), by phone, text message or in writing.
- 2.3 This Policy applies whenever interactions between councillors and staff occur, including inside or outside of work hours, and at both council and non-council venues and events.
- 2.4 This Policy does not confer any delegated authority upon any person. All delegations to staff are made by the General Manager.
- 2.5 The Code of Conduct provides that council officials must not conduct themselves in a manner that is contrary to the Council's policies. A breach of this Policy will be a breach of the Code of Conduct.

Part 3 – Policy objectives

3.1 The objectives of the Policy are to:

- a) establish positive, effective and professional working relationships between councillors and staff defined by mutual respect and courtesy
- b) enable councillors and staff to work together appropriately and effectively to support each other in their respective roles
- c) ensure that councillors receive advice in an orderly, courteous and appropriate manner to assist them in the performance of their civic duties
- d) ensure councillors have adequate access to information to exercise their statutory roles
- e) provide direction on, and guide councillor interactions with, staff for both obtaining information and in general situations
- f) maintain transparent decision making and good governance arrangements
- g) ensure the reputation of Council is enhanced by councillors and staff interacting consistently, professionally and positively in their day-to-day duties
- h) provide a clear and consistent framework through which breaches of the Policy will be managed in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

Part 4 – Principles, roles and responsibilities

- 4.1 Several factors contribute to a good relationship between councillors and staff. These include goodwill, understanding of roles, communication, protocols, and a good understanding of legislative requirements.
- 4.2 The Council's governing body and its administration (being staff within the organisation) must have a clear and sophisticated understanding of their different roles, and the fact that these operate within a hierarchy. The administration is accountable to the General Manager, who in turn, is accountable to the Council's governing body.
- 4.3 Section 232 of the *Local Government Act 1993* (the LGA) states that the role of a councillor is as follows:
 - a) to be an active and contributing member of the governing body
 - b) to make considered and well-informed decisions as a member of the governing body
 - c) to participate in the development of the integrated planning and reporting framework

- d) to represent the collective interests of residents, ratepayers and the local community
- e) to facilitate communication between the local community and the governing body
- f) to uphold and represent accurately the policies and decisions of the governing body
- g) to make all reasonable efforts to acquire and maintain the skills necessary to perform the role of a councillor.

4.4 The administration's role is to advise the governing body, implement Council's decisions and to oversee service delivery.

4.5 It is beneficial if the administration recognises the complex political environments in which elected members operate and acknowledge that they work within a system that is based on democratic governance. Councillors similarly need to understand that it is a highly complex task to prepare information and provide quality advice on the very wide range of issues that Council operations cover.

4.6 Council commits to the following principles to guide interactions between councillors and staff:

<u>Principle</u>	<u>Achieved by</u>
Equitable and consistent	Ensuring appropriate, consistent and equitable access to information for all councillors within established service levels
Considerate and respectful	Councillors and staff working supportively together in the interests of the whole community, based on mutual respect and consideration of their respective positions
Ethical, open and transparent	Ensuring that interactions between councillors and staff are ethical, open, transparent, honest and display the highest standards of professional conduct
Fit for purpose	Ensuring that the provision of equipment and information to councillors is done in a way that is suitable, practical and of an appropriate size, scale and cost for a client group of 7 people.
Accountable and measurable	Providing support to councillors in the performance of their role in a way that can be measured, reviewed and improved based on qualitative and quantitative data

- 4.7 Councillors are members of the Council's governing body, which is responsible for directing and controlling the affairs of the Council in accordance with the LGA. Councillors need to accept that:
- a) responses to requests for information from councillors may take time and consultation to prepare and be approved prior to responding
 - b) staff are not accountable to them individually
 - c) they must not direct staff except by giving appropriate direction to the General Manager by way of a council or committee resolution, or by the mayor exercising their functions under section 226 of the LGA
 - d) they must not, in any public or private forum, direct or influence, or attempt to direct or influence, a member of staff in the exercise of their functions
 - e) they must not contact a member of staff on council-related business unless in accordance with this Policy
 - f) they must not use their position to attempt to receive favourable treatment for themselves or others.
- 4.8 The General Manager is responsible for the efficient and effective day-to-day operation of the Council and for ensuring that the lawful decisions of the Council are implemented without undue delay. Council staff need to understand:
- a) they are not accountable to individual councillors and do not take direction from them. They are accountable to the General Manager, who is in turn accountable to the Council's governing body
 - b) they should not provide advice to councillors unless it has been approved by the General Manager or a staff member with a delegation to approve advice to councillors
 - c) they must carry out reasonable and lawful directions given by any person having the authority to give such directions in an efficient and effective manner
 - d) they must ensure that participation in political activities outside the service of the Council does not interfere with the performance of their official duties
 - e) they must provide full and timely information to councillors sufficient to enable them to exercise their civic functions in accordance with this Policy.

Part 5 – The councillor requests system

- 5.1 Councillors have a right to request information provided it is relevant to councillor's exercise of their civic functions. This right does not extend to matters about which a councillor is merely curious.

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- 5.2 Councillors do not have a right to request information about matters that they are prevented from participating in decision-making on because of a conflict of interest, unless the information is otherwise publicly available.
- 5.3 The General Manager may identify Council support staff (the Councillor Support Officer) under this Policy for the management of requests from councillors. The Councillor Support Officer is the Executive Officer. From time to time, the General Manager may allocate other staff via delegation to act as Councillor Support Officer.
- 5.4 Councillors can use the councillor requests system to:
- a) request information or ask questions that relate to the strategic position, performance or operation of the Council
 - b) bring concerns that have been raised by members of the public to the attention of staff. If councillors are contacted by members of the community about operational matters, their first response should be for members of the community to contact Council via email tsc@tweed.nsw.gov.au or Council's Contact Centre. If a member of the public raises a concern that a response has not been provided within Council's Customer Service Standards, they can then escalate through the councillor requests system.
 - c) request ICT or other support from the Council administration
 - d) request that a staff member be present at a meeting (other than a meeting of the council) for the purpose of providing advice to the meeting.
- 5.5 The process for Councillors to follow in relation to Councillor Requests and Customer Service Requests is set out in Attachment A to this Policy.
- 5.6 Councillors must, to the best of their knowledge, be specific about what information they are requesting, and make their requests respectfully. Where a councillor's request lacks specificity, the General Manager or staff member authorised to manage the matter, which may include the Councillor Support Officer, a member of the Executive or the officer assigned to action the request is entitled to ask the councillor to clarify their request and the reason(s) why they are seeking the information.
- 5.7 Each Councillor is limited to 30 Councillor Requests per month. Some discretion to accept additional requests from a Councillor that exceed the monthly limit could be provided where the General Manager or their delegate is satisfied that there are compelling reasons for responding to the request immediately.
- 5.8 Staff must make every reasonable effort to assist councillors with their requests and do so in a respectful manner.
- 5.9 An automatic reply to the Councillor Request Inbox serves as the acknowledgement.
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- 5.10 Responses to Councillor Requests are provided within 10 business days, though complex matters may require a longer timeframe, which will be communicated to councillors via the Councillor Support Officer, a member of the Executive or an officer assigned to action the request. This timeframe may need variation (by way of urgency) where late reports are added to the Council Agenda or where Councillors urgently need information prior to the Council meeting to be fully informed in their decision making. Where a response cannot be provided within that timeframe, the councillor will be advised, and the information will be provided as soon as practicable.
- 5.11 The councillor requests system is managed by the Councillor Support Officer during Council business hours. Councillor Requests may not be monitored outside business hours to comply with Local Government State Award provisions in relation to council staff's right to disconnect.
- If Councillors have an urgent issue outside of business hours, they may contact the Council after hours hotline on 02 6670 2400. Urgent issues include:
 - sewer blockages and overflows
 - serious water supply issues: leaks, no supply, poor quality, unable to turn meter on/off
 - dog attacks
 - pollution
 - any issue that poses risk or immediate threat.
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- 5.12 Requests under clause 5.4 (d) should be made 5 business days before the meeting. The General Manager, or members of staff that are listed at Schedule 1 of this Policy, are responsible for determining:
- a) whether a staff member can attend the meeting; and
 - b) which staff member will attend the meeting.
- If an urgent request for meeting is necessary within less than 5 Business days, the General Manager will use all reasonable efforts to determine whether a staff member can attend and which staff member will attend the meeting.
- Staff members who attend such meetings must be appropriately senior and be subject matter experts on the issues to be discussed at the meeting.
- 5.13 Councillors are required to treat all information provided by staff appropriately and to observe any confidentiality requirements.
- 5.14 Staff will inform councillors of any confidentiality requirements for information they provide so councillors can handle the information appropriately.
- 5.15 Where a councillor is unsure of confidentiality requirements, they should contact the General Manager, or the staff member authorised to manage their request.

- 5.16 The General Manager may refuse access to information requested by a councillor if:
- a) the information is not necessary for the performance of the councillor's civic functions, or
 - b) if responding to the request would, in the General Manager's opinion, result in an unreasonable diversion of staff time and resources, or
 - c) the councillor has previously declared a conflict of interest in the matter and removed themselves from decision-making on it, or
 - d) the General Manager is prevented by law from disclosing the information.
- 5.17 Where the General Manager refuses to provide information requested by a councillor, they must act reasonably. The General Manager must advise a councillor in writing of their reasons for refusing access to the information requested.
- 5.18 Where a councillor's request for information is refused by the General Manager on the grounds referred to under clause 5.12 (a) or (b), the councillor may instead request the information through a resolution of the council by way of a notice of motion. This clause does not apply where the General Manager refuses a councillor's request for information under clause 5.12 (c) or (d).
- 5.19 Nothing in clauses 5.12, 5.13, and 5.14 prevents a councillor from requesting the information in accordance with the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*.
- 5.20 Where a councillor persistently makes requests for information which, in the General Manager's opinion, result in a significant and unreasonable diversion of staff time and resources the council may, on the advice of the General Manager, resolve to limit the number of requests the councillor may make.
- 5.21 Councillor requests are state records and must be managed in accordance with the *State Records Act 1998*.
- 5.22 A report will be provided annually to Council at the first ordinary Council meeting after the end of financial year regarding the performance and efficiency of the councillor requests system against established key performance indicators.

Part 6 – Access to Council staff

- 6.1 Councillors may directly contact members of staff that are listed in Schedule 1 of this Policy. The General Manager may amend this list at any time and will advise councillors promptly of any changes.
- 6.2 Councillors can contact staff listed in Schedule 1 about matters that relate to the staff member's area of responsibility.

- 6.3 Councillors should as far as practicable, only contact staff during normal business hours.
- 6.4 If councillors would like to contact a member of staff not listed in Schedule 1, they must receive prior permission from the General Manager.
- 6.5 If a councillor is unsure which authorised staff member can help with their enquiry, they can contact the Councillor Support Officer who will provide advice about which authorised staff member to contact.
- 6.6 The General Manager or a member of the Council's executive leadership team may direct any staff member to contact councillors to provide specific information or clarification relating to a specific matter.
- 6.7 A councillor or member of staff must not take advantage of their official position to improperly influence other councillors or members of staff in the performance of their civic or professional duties for the purposes of securing a private benefit for themselves or for another person. Such conduct should be immediately reported to the General Manager or Mayor in the first instance, or alternatively to the Office of Local Government, NSW Ombudsman, or the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption.

Part 7 – Councillor access to council buildings

- 7.1 Councillors are entitled to have access to the council chamber, committee room, mayor's office (subject to availability), councillors' rooms, and public areas of Council's buildings during normal business hours for meetings. Councillors needing access to these facilities at other times must obtain prior approval from the General Manager.
- 7.2 Councillors must not enter staff-only areas of Council buildings without the approval of the General Manager.

Part 8 – Appropriate and inappropriate interactions

- 8.1 Examples of appropriate interactions between councillors and staff include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - a) councillors and council staff are courteous and display a positive and professional attitude towards one another
 - b) council staff ensure that information necessary for councillors to exercise their civic functions is made equally available to all councillors, in accordance with this Policy and any other relevant Council policies
 - c) council staff record the advice they give to councillors in the same way they would if it was provided to members of the public
 - d) council staff, including Council's executive team members, document councillor requests via the councillor requests system

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- e) council meetings and councillor briefings are used to establish positive working relationships and help councillors to gain an understanding of the complex issues related to their civic duties
 - f) councillors and council staff feel supported when seeking and providing clarification about council related business
 - g) councillors forward requests through the councillor requests system and staff respond in accordance with the timeframes stipulated in this Policy.

8.2 Examples of inappropriate interactions between councillors and staff include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a) councillors and council staff conducting themselves in a manner which:
 - i) is contrary to their duties under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* and their responsibilities under any policies or procedures adopted by the Council to ensure workplace health and safety
 - ii) constitutes harassment and/or bullying within the meaning of the Code of Conduct, or is unlawfully discriminatory
- b) councillors approaching staff and staff organisations to discuss individual or operational staff matters (other than matters relating to broader workforce policy such as, but not limited to, organisational restructures or outsourcing decisions), grievances, workplace investigations and disciplinary matters
- c) staff approaching councillors to discuss individual or operational staff matters (other than matters relating to broader workforce policy such as, but not limited to, organisational restructures or outsourcing decisions), grievances, workplace investigations and disciplinary matters
- d) subject to clause 5.12, staff refusing to give information that is available to other councillors to a particular councillor
- e) councillors who have lodged an application with the council, discussing the matter with staff in staff-only areas of the council
- f) councillors being overbearing or threatening to staff
- g) staff being overbearing or threatening to councillors
- h) councillors making personal attacks on staff or engaging in conduct towards staff that would be contrary to the general conduct provisions in Part 3 of the Code of Conduct in public forums including social media
- i) councillors directing or pressuring staff in the performance of their work, or recommendations they should make
- j) staff providing ad hoc advice to councillors without recording or documenting the interaction as they would if the advice was provided to a member of the community

- k) Taking photographs or video recordings interactions with Council officers or employees; when they are engaged in any duties at a workplace (means premises, or any other place, where employees work, or any part of such premises or place (Section 3 of the Workplace Surveillance Act 2005)) unless permission has been granted by the officers or employees and the use expressly defined
- l) Uploading images, video or recordings of council officers or employees to social media sites without seeking written consent from the officer/s or employee/s

8.3 Where a councillor engages in conduct that, in the opinion of the General Manager, puts the health, safety or welfare of staff at risk, the General Manager may restrict the councillor's access to staff.

8.4 Any concerns relating to the conduct of staff under this Policy should be raised with the General Manager.

Part 9 – Complaints

9.1 Complaints about a breach of this policy should be made to the General Manager (if the complaint is about a councillor or member of council staff), or the Mayor (if the complaint is about the General Manager).

9.2 Clause 9.1 does not operate to prevent matters being reported to OLG, the NSW Ombudsman, the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption or any other external agency.

Schedule 1 – Authorised staff contacts for councillors (template table)

1. Clause 6.1 of this Policy provides that councillors may directly contact members of staff that are listed below. The General Manager may amend this list at any time.
2. Councillors can contact staff listed below about matters that relate to the staff member's area of responsibility.
3. Councillors should as far as practicable, only contact staff during normal business hours.
4. If councillors would like to contact a member of staff not listed below, they must receive permission from the General Manager or their delegate.
5. If a councillor is unsure which authorised staff member can help with their enquiry, they can contact the Councillor Support Officer who will provide advice about which authorised staff member to contact.
6. In some instances, the General Manager or a member of the Council's executive leadership team may direct a council staff member to contact councillors to provide specific information or clarification relating to a specific matter.
7. Councillors may contact the Councillor Forms email address for the purpose of lodging amendments and requirements associated with meetings under the Code of Meeting Practice.

Authorised staff members Position
General Manager
Director Engineering
Director Sustainable Communities and Environment
Director Planning and Regulation
Director Corporate Services
Executive Officer
Public Officer
PA to the Mayor and Councillors
Manager Destination Communication & Customer Experience

ATTACHMENT A

Councillor Request System Procedure

Part 1 – Introduction

1.1 The Councillor Request System is established by the “*Councillor and Staff Interaction Policy*”. This procedure must be read in conjunction with the Policy.

1.2 This procedure outlines the ways in which Councillors and Council staff are expected to interact via the Councillor Request System.

1.3 It is necessary for Councillors and Council staff to interact so that informed decisions that deliver positive outcomes for the community are achieved. It is important we strike the right balance to ensure positive working relationships and flow of information between the administration and Councillors. This procedure seeks to establish protocols that guide interactions in a positive way to achieve the best outcomes for the Tweed Shire in a cost effective and efficient delivery model commensurate with resources allocated to the system.

1.4 It is important to have an effective and respectful working relationship that recognises the important but differing contribution both parties bring to their complementary roles.

Part 2 – The Councillor Request System

2.1 The Councillor Support Officer identified in the “*Councillor and Staff Interaction Policy*” is responsible for the management of requests from councillors. The General Manager has identified the Executive Officer as being the Councillor Support Officer.

2.2 In accordance with the *Councillor and Staff Interaction Policy*, Councillors use the Councillor Request System by sending an email to the advised email address to:

- a) request information or ask questions that relate to the strategic position, performance or operation of the Council.
- b) bring concerns that have been raised by members of the public to the attention of staff. If Councillors are contacted by members of the public about operational matters, their first response should be for members of the community to contact Council via email at tsc@tweed.nsw.gov.au or Council’s Contact Centre. If a member of the public raises a concern that a response has not been provided within Council’s Customer Services Standards, then they can escalate through the Councillor Request System.
- c) request Information and Communication Technology or other support from the Council administration.
- d) request that a staff member be present at a meeting (other than a meeting of the Council) for the purpose of providing advice to the meeting.

Note management are currently trialling a Service Portal to potentially replace the email system. Any implementation of a Service Portal would be phased and run parallel to the email system to ensure Councillors and staff are given the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the system and seek any necessary training.

To assist Councillors and staff, a flow chart showing the process of the Councillor Request System and how to access information via other formal channels is attached to this document at Appendix 1.

2.3 The following processes apply:

- a. **For Councillor Requests** – Councillors must only lodge Councillor Requests via the advised councillor requests email. Once it is lodged and it is deemed to be a Councillor Request, it will be forwarded to the relevant Director for review and for the Director to provide a response back to the Councillor, with a copy to the Councillor Request system for the administrative purposes. Follow up emails must be sent to Councillor Request for review and distribution in accordance with this clause.

Each Councillor is limited to 30 Councillor Requests per month. Some discretion to accept additional requests from a Councillor that exceed the monthly limit could be provided where the General Manager or their delegate is satisfied that there are compelling reasons for responding to the request immediately.

- b. **For Customer Service Requests** – Customer Service Requests placed by Councillors will be treated in the same way as all public CSR’s. The customer will be

informed on how to lodge a CSR in the future. Councillors must only lodge customer service requests via tsc@tweed.nsw.gov.au or through the Report a Problem service on Council's website. Where a councillor seeks advice on a customer service request, they will be advised that the matter is a customer service request and is being actioned in accordance with Council's Customer Service Standards.

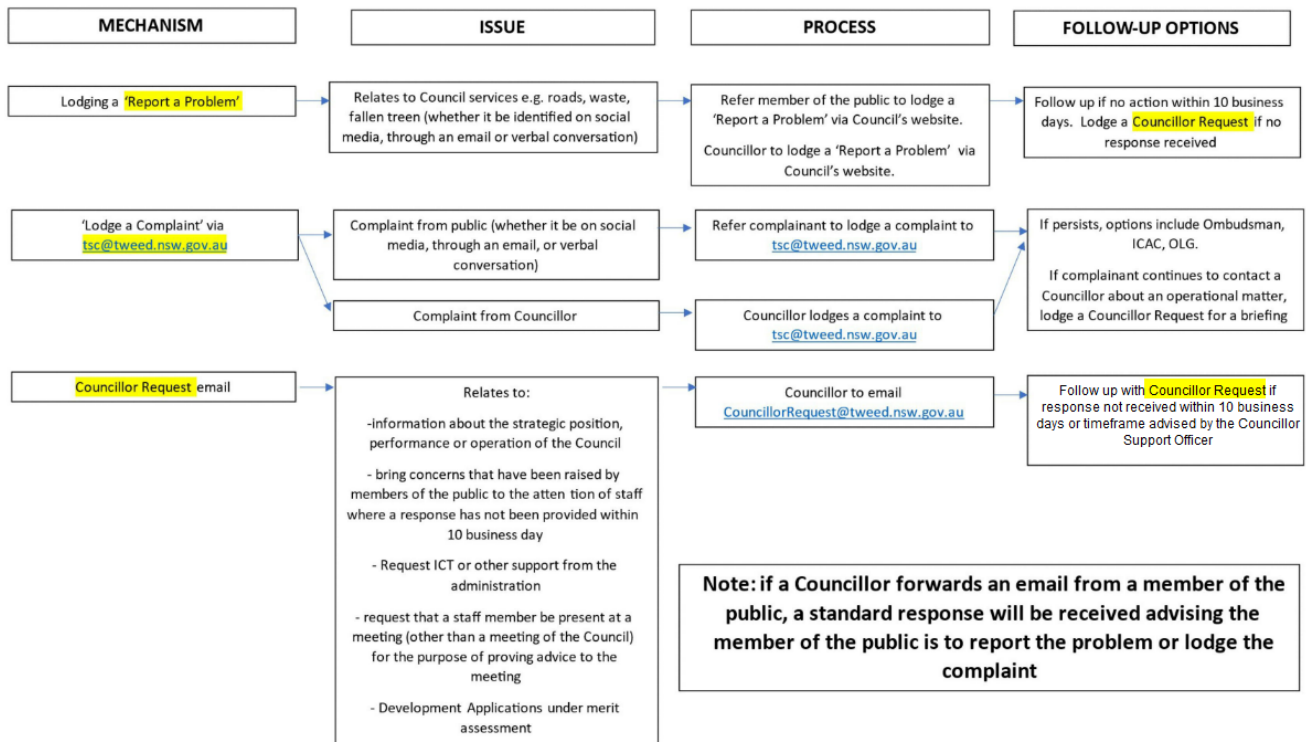
Councillors should note that where a customer service request is lodged by them or on behalf of a community member, it will not give this request priority over the standard way of prioritising customer requests.

- c. **For Council Meetings** – Councillors may contact the Councillor forms email address for the purpose of requirements associated with meetings under the Code of Meeting Practice.

2.8 If the request is not a Councillor Request, the Councillor Support Officer via the councillor request email may provide a standard response to the Councillor, some examples of the standard responses are set out in the table at Appendix 2. Standard responses may be created or amended from time to time at the discretion of the General Manager.

2.9 Where a standard response is sent to a Councillor in accordance with this procedure, members of the Executive Leadership Team may not be copied into emails as standard practice. The Councillor Support Officer may exercise discretion to copy members of the Executive Leadership Team or other staff.

APPENDIX 1 – FLOWCHART FOR COUNCILLORS ACCESSING INFORMATION



APPENDIX 2 – STANDARD RESPONSES

Type of request	Standard response	Suggested response to Community Member
Publicly available information	Dear Councillor [X], you can find this information here [insert link to publicly available information].	Dear Community Member, you can find this information here [insert link to publicly available information].
Customer Service Request	<p>Dear Councillor</p> <p>Your email has been determined to be a Customer Service Request in line with clause 5.4(b) of the Councillor and Staff Interaction Policy.</p> <p>To assist, attached is a suggested template for you to consider sending to the enquiring community member.</p>	<p><i>Dear Community Member,</i></p> <p><i>Thank you for your enquiry regarding a matter that is a customer service request for Tweed Shire Council.</i></p> <p><i>As it relates to a council service, the quickest way of reporting your matter for Council to action is to:</i></p> <p><i>Report a Problem Online: You can use the Report a Problem function on Council's website. These are easy to use and can be accessed from any device connected to the internet, including your phone.</i></p> <p><i>Call: You can call Council on 02 6670 2400 and one of the Customer Service team will assist you. Please note this number automatically transfers to Council's After Hours Service outside of business hours.</i></p> <p><i>Email: You can email your enquiry to tsc@tweed.nsw.gov.au and it will be lodged as a Customer Service Request and allocated to the appropriate service to action.</i></p> <p><i>LiveChat: You can chat live online with our Customer Service Team during business hours.</i></p> <p><i>Useful Council links:</i> <i>Contact Us</i> <i>Service Experience Standards</i> <i>Online Services</i></p> <p><i>If you have not received an acknowledgement or response to your request within 10 Business Days and Council cannot provide you an update upon further enquiry, please contact me again.</i></p> <p><i>Kind regards</i> <i>Councillor Name</i></p>

Type of request	Standard response	Suggested response to Community Member
Complaints	<p>Dear Councillor</p> <p>As the issue raised appears to be a complaint, please ask the community member to redirect their complaint in accordance with Council's Compliments and Complaint Handling Policy, via email to tsc@tweed.nsw.gov.au, attention to the General Manager for processing. To assist, attached is a suggested template for you to consider sending to the enquiring community member.</p>	<p><i>Dear Community Member,</i></p> <p><i>Thank you for your enquiry regarding a complaint regarding Tweed Shire Council.</i></p> <p><i>As it relates to a complaint, in accordance with Council's Compliments and Complaint Handling Policy, these must be sent via email to tsc@tweed.nsw.gov.au attention to the General Manager for processing.</i></p> <p><i>For more information about how Council manages complaints please visit Complaints Tweed Shire Council (nsw.gov.au)</i></p> <p><i>Kind regards</i> <i>Councillor Name</i></p>
Matters on exhibition	<p>Dear Councillor</p> <p>As this enquiry relates to a matter currently on public exhibition, please redirect the community member to lodge their feedback via Your Say Tweed.</p> <p>To assist, attached is a suggested template for you to consider sending to the enquiring community member.</p>	<p><i>Dear Community Member,</i></p> <p><i>Thank you for your enquiry regarding a matter that is currently On Exhibition or seeking feedback and input from the Tweed community.</i></p> <p><i>As your enquiry relates to a matter on public exhibition and to ensure your views are officially captured, please use the submission options available for the project of interest on Your Say Tweed.</i></p> <p><i>Alternatively, you can email your submission directly to tsc@tweed.nsw.gov.au and it will be allocated to the relevant Council officer.</i></p> <p><i>For more information about how Council engages with the community, visit Community engagement Tweed Shire Council (nsw.gov.au).</i></p> <p><i>Kind regards</i> <i>Councillor Name</i></p>

Type of request	Standard response	Suggested response to Community Member
<p>Operational matters (enquiry from a member of the public to a Councillor)</p>	<p>Dear Councillor</p> <p>The member of the public has raised operational concerns.</p> <p>To assist, attached is a suggested template for you to consider sending to the enquiring community member.</p>	<p><i>Dear Community member,</i></p> <p><i>Thank you for your enquiry regarding a matter that is a customer service request for Tweed Shire Council.</i></p> <p><i>As it relates to a council service, the quickest way of reporting your matter for Council to action is to:</i></p> <p><i>Report a Problem Online: You can use the Report a Problem function on Council's website. These are easy to use and can be accessed from any device connected to the internet, including your phone.</i></p> <p><i>Call: You can call Council on 02 6670 2400 and one of the Customer Service team will assist you. Please note this number automatically transfers to Council's After Hours Service outside of business hours.</i></p> <p><i>Email: You can email your enquiry to tsc@tweed.nsw.gov.au and it will be lodged as a Customer Service Request and allocated to the appropriate service to action.</i></p> <p><i>LiveChat: You can chat live online with our Customer Service Team during business hours.</i></p> <p><i>Useful Council links:</i> <i>Contact Us</i> <i>Service Experience Standards</i> <i>Online Services</i></p> <p><i>If you have not received an acknowledgement or response to your request within 10 Business Days and Council cannot provide you an update upon further enquiry, please contact me.</i></p>
<p>Development Applications under merit assessment</p>	<p><i>Dear Councillor</i></p> <p>As this enquiry relates to a development assessment that is under current merit assessment, please ask the community member to</p>	<p><i>Dear Community Member,</i></p> <p><i>Thank you for your enquiry regarding a DA that is still under current Merit Assessment.</i></p>

Type of request	Standard response	Suggested response to Community Member
	<p>redirect their email for formal capture.</p> <p>To assist, attached is a suggested template for you to consider sending to the enquiring community member.</p>	<p><i>As your enquiry relates to a DA matter that is still under merit assessment and to ensure your views are officially captured, please e-mail your comments directly to tsc@tweed.nsw.gov.au and it will be allocated to the relevant Council assessment officer.</i></p> <p><i>Alternatively, you may wish to monitor the status of this DA via Council's DA Tracker.</i></p> <p><i>Kind regards</i> <i>Councillor Name</i></p>
<p>General enquiries (enquiry from a member of the public to a Councillor)</p>	<p>Dear Councillor</p> <p>As this is a general enquiry from a member of the public, please redirect them to tsc@tweed.nsw.gov.au.</p>	<p><i>Dear Community Member</i></p> <p><i>As you have raised a general enquiry, the quickest way for you to receive a response is to lodge your enquiry at tsc@tweed.nsw.gov.au.</i></p> <p><i>If you have not received an acknowledgement or response to your request within 10 Business Days and Council cannot provide you an update upon further enquiry, please contact me again.</i></p>
<p>Legal matters</p>	<p>Dear Councillor</p> <p>As the community member has raised an ongoing legal matter, please ask them to direct their enquiry to tsc@tweed.nsw.gov.au</p> <p>To assist, attached is a suggested template for you to consider sending to the enquiring community member.</p>	<p><i>Dear Community Member,</i></p> <p><i>Thank you for your enquiry regarding a current ongoing legal matter.</i></p> <p><i>As your enquiry relates to an ongoing legal matter and to ensure your views are officially captured, please e-mail your comments directly to tsc@tweed.nsw.gov.au and it will be allocated to the relevant Council officer for consideration.</i></p> <p><i>Kind regards</i> <i>Councillor Name</i></p>
<p>Request for access to council information</p>	<p>Dear Councillor</p> <p>The community member has requested council information. The process for requesting information is through an access to information request.</p>	<p><i>Dear Community Member,</i></p> <p><i>Thank you for your enquiry requesting information from Council. Access to Information is governed by the Government Information Public Access Act 2009.</i></p> <p><i>To advance your enquiry, please complete an access to information request form available</i></p>

Type of request	Standard response	Suggested response to Community Member
	<p>To assist, attached is a suggested template for you to consider sending to the enquiring community member.</p>	<p><i>on Council's website:</i> https://www.tweed.nsw.gov.au/council/customer-service/access-to-information</p> <p><i>Kind regards</i> <i>Councillor Name</i></p>
<p>Canvassing</p>	<p>Dear Councillor</p> <p>The community member has raised matters regarding a tender.</p> <p>Please be reminded that canvassing or lobbying Councillors or Council staff in relation to any aspect of the tender is prohibited under Council's Business Ethics Policy. The RFO document also includes a standard condition advising that the canvassing of councillors may result in the disqualification of a bidders offer submission.</p> <p>To assist, attached is a suggested template for you to consider sending to the enquiring community member.</p>	<p><i>Dear Community Member</i></p> <p><i>For enquiries related to this tender, I refer you to the Request for Offer (RFO) documentation which lists the appropriate Council contact for this tender. Please be reminded that canvassing or lobbying Councillors or Council staff in relation to any aspect of the tender is prohibited under Council's Business Ethics Policy. The RFO document also includes a standard condition advising that the canvassing of councillors may result in the disqualification of a bidders offer submission.</i></p> <p><i>Please note that where Council suspects on reasonable grounds that deliberate or intentional wrongdoing involving (or affecting) a NSW public official, public authority in NSW or NSW public official functions has occurred, the General Manager has a legislative duty to report this conduct to the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption.</i></p>

Version control

Version #	Summary of changes made	Date changes made
1.0	New Policy based on OLG Model Councillor Staff Interaction Policy	15 September 2022
1.1	Amendments to Councillor Request System Process	16 May 2024