

## OPEN COMMITTEE MEETINGS

### 1. Objectives

Increase the opportunity for consultation between Council and the community of the Town of Cottesloe.

### 2. Principles

An individual, group or business has a right to represent their own case for consideration prior to a decision of Council being made. The open committee system provides recognition of this.

### 3. Issues

Open committee systems raise a number of issues, some of which are clear advantages and others which may be disadvantages.

#### 3.1 Advantages

- The decision-making process is transparent.
- Interested parties may comment or raise objections to matters being dealt with by Council.
- Council is more informed in that both sides of an argument may be forcefully and clearly put.

#### 3.2 Disadvantages

- Meetings may take longer.
- Staff reports may be subject to public criticism.
- Planning for public attendance will increase administrative support requirements.

#### 3.3 Requirement for Confidentiality

There are occasions when Council is required for reasons of confidentiality, legality and good practice to hold discussions in confidence. An example of this may be the discussion of minimum acceptable terms of settlement for a dispute or a matter of industrial relations. For this reason, it is important that Committees retain the right to close meetings to the public and for specific papers to be marked as 'confidential' and therefore not available for general circulation.

#### 3.4 Accessibility to information

For an open committee system to be genuinely open, access to committee papers will be necessary for members of the public, other than those identified as being confidential in nature.

#### 3.5 Protocols

Establishing clear procedures and protocols for open committee meetings is clearly important to ensure that good order is maintained during committee meetings, as is the case in Full Council. Such protocols need to be cognisant of the due process of Council, relevant legislation, including Council's Standing Orders and the need to complete debate on the full agenda of committee within a reasonable time frame.

This policy must be read in conjunction with Councils *Standing Orders Local Law 2012*.

#### **4. Policy**

The Town of Cottesloe recognises the importance of full consultation and open debate with the residents and ratepayers in determining the Council position on matters for consideration and resolution.

In order to encourage such debate, the Town of Cottesloe welcomes the participation of interested residents in the Committee system, such participation to be limited to Council's three standing committees, currently identified as:

- Works and Corporate Services
- Development Services
- Strategic Planning

The Town of Cottesloe acknowledges that there are occasions when the nature of a committee's debate may require confidentiality and reserves the right, through the Chair of each Committee, to close a meeting to the public and determine whether debate on an identified item on any standing committee agenda will be conducted as a confidential item.

Copies of committee agenda papers will be available for members of the public in the committee room scheduled for each committee meeting. Reports and papers identified by the Chief Executive Officer as being of a confidential nature will be circulated to Councillors only and excluded from public agendas. Agendas are available to interested residents on the Friday preceding the committee meeting at the Grove Library and posted on the Council's website.

Protocols for the conduct of open committee meetings form an appendix to this policy.

#### **5. Related Documents**

Appendix One – 'Public Attendance at Ordinary Meeting of Committee and Council' is attached and forms part of this policy.

*Standing Orders Local Law 2012* (Town of Cottesloe)  
*Local Government Act 1995*

Adopted	June 1996
Reviewed	24 June 2013
Expected date of review	

## OPEN COMMITTEE MEETINGS – APPENDIX ONE

### PUBLIC ATTENDANCE AT ORDINARY MEETINGS OF COMMITTEE AND COUNCIL PROTOCOLS

Members of the public may address Committees through two avenues:

- deputation by prearrangement through the Chief Executive Officer; and
- through public attendance at committee and council meetings.

The following protocols provide guidelines for public participation in the three standing committees of the Town of Cottesloe.

1. Before the meeting starts members of the public wishing to ask a question or make a statement should complete the form called 'Public Statement Time' or 'Public Question Time'. The Chairperson will determine the order of the questions and statements.
2. When invited to speak you must speak through the Chair and will be allowed a maximum of three (3) minutes which may be extended on the approval of the Chairperson. You will not be permitted to debate the issue with members of the Committee or any other members of the public and will only be permitted to speak further if a member of the Committee wishes to clarify a point with you which he/she must also do through the Chair.
3. If a number of people wish to speak on a particular issue, the Chair may determine or ask any particular interest groups present to determine spokespeople to present particular points of view. The Chair's decision on this will not be debated.
4. Members of the public must leave the room if it is determined to treat any matter as a confidential item or if due to disorder or other matter the Chair determines to adjourn the meeting.
5. In the case of questions on specific issues where the Committee believes it has inadequate information to effectively respond, the question may be taken on notice and a written response forwarded at a later date under the hand of the Chief Executive Officer.