Department of
**Local Government, Sport
and Cultural Industries**

Local government operational guidelines

Elected member induction

April 2022

1.   Introduction

Local government is involved in a diverse range of issues that have a direct impact on the community and its way of life. This provides elected members with many exciting challenges in effectively dealing with these issues. It is vitally important that newly elected members quickly become aware of the operation of the local government, the current issues and, most importantly, their roles and responsibilities.

Some newly elected members will have prior knowledge of their local government's operations and the relevant legislation under which it works. Others may be new to the role.

A thorough induction program will effectively assist newly elected members to understand their roles and responsibilities as members of council and what is expected of them. This guideline will assist Chief Executive Officers [CEOs] and Mayors/Presidents in the development and delivery of such an induction program.

2.   Developing an induction manual

The 'Induction Checklist' included in this guideline will assist in developing an 'Elected Members Induction Manual'.

The Manual may form the basis of an induction program instituted by the CEO and provides a ready reference for new members.

3.   Determining suitable new member induction procedures

Local governments are free to conduct induction programs that best suit their needs. Adoption of procedures covering issues as set out below, in conjunction with the use of the 'Induction Checklist', will facilitate a thorough induction program.

Timing

The new member induction should take place as soon as possible after the election. The 'declaration ceremony' presents an ideal opportunity to welcome new elected members, to acknowledge the significance of their election to represent the local community and to commence the induction process.

Attendance at the ceremony by the new members' families, existing elected members and their partners, the CEO and senior officers of the local government would be a positive team building exercise. All can establish relationships with those that they will need to work with.

While it would be preferable in the interests of team building to have all newly elected members attend a 'declaration ceremony' together, legally the declaration of office byan elected member can be made before an authorised witness, who can be a JP, or the CEO, at any time within two months after the declaration of the election.

Newly elected members should be made aware that one of their first duties will be to elect the Mayor/President [where not elected by the electors], Deputy Mayor/ President and appointment of members to committees. If your local government does this immediately following the 'declaration ceremony', then newly elected members should be provided with

information on the election process as an initial part of the induction program.

The CEO may formally advise all the candidates for election of the proposed timetable for the 'declaration ceremony' and induction program. Such notice will enable candidates to make their own tentative arrangements subject to their being elected.

Induction is a shared responsibility

Inductions will be more effective and beneficial if considered to be the shared responsibility of the CEO, the Mayor or President and the newly elected members. Ideally, the briefings by the Mayor or President and CEO would cover important local government operational issues such as meeting procedures, council structure, Code of Conduct and the roles and responsibilities of elected members.

Provision should be made in the induction program to enable the Mayor or President the opportunity to brief the newly elected members and provide guidance from the elected members' perspective.

In the time between the 'declaration ceremony' and the first council or committee meetings, new members have a responsibility to prepare

themselves for their new role on council by full and active participation in the induction program. This can be through the study of the resource material provided by the CEO which may include a council agenda, past minutes, current and proposed budget, a briefing on current issues, Standing Orders, the Councillor Code of Conduct, and an Induction Manual.

Local government district tour and briefing

A tour of the district for the new members incorporating an onsite inspection of major works in progress or pending, inspection of council facilities and a briefing by relevant staff on the local government's facilities and services can be a valuable learning experience when incorporated into the induction program.

Induction follow up

A follow-up program should be held between six and nine months after the induction. This follow-up involving the Mayor/ President, new members and the CEO, will help to identify and address any areas where additional support, training or development could be provided to the members. It is also a great opportunity to obtain feedback from the new members with a view to improving the induction program.

4.   Induction Checklist

General information
Declaration of office

- When and where
- Making the declaration of office
- Councillor code of conduct
- Include advice that an offence is committed if the member elected acts as an elected member prior to making the necessary declaration of office

Induction briefings

- Mayor/president
- CEO
- Senior staff on facilities and services
- Others
- Tour of local government facilities

Induction/training courses available

- Universal Elected member development training modules
- Mayors/presidents support program (specifically for newly elected mayors/presidents)
- Other training both in-house and off-site

Importance of honesty and integrity

- Inform elected members that it is always essential that they act with utmost honesty, integrity, transparency and accountability, for their own benefit, their local government and that of the sector
- Disclosure of Interests Affecting Impartiality

Disclosure of financial interest in returns

- Difference between direct, indirect and proximity interests
- Primary and annual returns – when and how
- Include information about the significant penalties for failing to complete returns, providing false information and how to update information

Access to council offices/chambers

- Restrictions on entry and access to council offices or chambers during and after normal working hours
- Keys and key register
- Electronic security systems

Use of council property and equipment

- Councillor code of conduct, policy, and guidelines
- Use of photocopiers, administration services, computers, website, email, social media, stationery, elected member rooms/offices
- Council and members' stationery, (for example, business cards not to be used for electioneering)
- Misuse of local government resources

Parking

- Reserved parking and arrangements for council and committee meetings

Dress standards

- For meetings and functions of council

Seating arrangements

- For council and committee meetings

Gifts

- Gifts, hospitality and memorabilia
- Attendance at events policy

Breaches of the Local Government Act

- Difference between minor and serious breach
- Code of Conduct behavioural complaints (Division 3)
- Code of Conduct Division 4 complaints (LG Standards Panel)
- PSC minor misconduct
- CCC serious misconduct

Media comment

- Under s2.8 of the Local Government Act 1995, the Mayor / President is the official spokesperson
- How this applies to the local government and individual elected members

Elected member fees and expenses

- Local Government Act 1995 section 5.98 - 5.102, and regulations 30–34 AB of the Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996
- How this applies to the local government and individual elected members
- Salaries and Allowances Tribunal determinations

Insurance

- Extent of council insurance policies covering elected members

Defamation and limited privilege protection

- What this means for elected members

Government records

- Effect of State Records Act 2000 on elected members' correspondence and other documents

Publications

- Checklist of publications and documents issued to newly elected members

5. Council organisation

The council

- Constitution of council and how elected. Include explanation of extraordinary elections
- Mayor/president and how elected, and for how long
- Ward representation map (if wards are in place)
- Expectation of members to work for the whole district rather than in isolation (wards)
- Names and contact details of all elected members
- General functions power, s3.1 of the Local Government Act 1995 (the Act).
- Legislative power, s3.5 of the Act
- Executive functions, s3.18 of the Act

Main functions of local government

- Brief outline of services, for example:
  - planning
  - works
  - waste
  - environmental management
  - economic development
  - community development
  - animal control
  - social services
  - sport and recreation

Employees

- Organisational chart
- Names of senior employees
- Names of elected member support employees
- CEO Standards

Relationship between council and CEO

- Roles and functions of the elected members, ss2.7 to 2.10, 5.2 and 5.41 of the Act
- S5.92 access to information – must relate to role
- Councillor Code of Conduct (i.e. Model Code)

Electors

- Names and contact details of principal community groups and elector/ratepayer organisations
- Names and contact details of principal lobby groups in the local community
- Community engagement policy
- Customer Service Charter and complaints policy

6. Meetings

Council meetings

- Number of meetings per month
- Dates and venues for meetings
- Disclosure of Financial Interest and Conflict of Interest requirements
- Participation approvals
- Voting requirements, s5.21 of the Act
- Electronic attendance

Committee meetings

- Committee types (i.e. advisory vs delegated), membership, and functional responsibilities
- Terms of reference
- Dates and venues for meetings

- How and when representation to each committee is determined

Other meetings

- Electors general meeting
- Electors' special meetings
- Council forums / briefing sessions
- WALGA zone meetings / annual conference
- ALGA annual conference

Conduct of meetings

- Standing orders as local laws governing meeting procedures
- How applied at council and committee meetings
- Public question time procedures for council and committee meetings
- Other forms of public participation (e.g. deputations, petitions, public statements)
- Information provided should also include advice on how to propose motions and amendments to motions at council meetings
- Rules of debate

Agendas and minutes

- How and when delivered
- Obligation on members to read and understand
- Process and procedure of compilation

Absence from meetings

- Protocol for taking leave of absence
- Protocol for making an apology for a meeting
- Disqualification for not attending the number of meetings, as specified in the Act, without leave of absence

7.   Council operations

Strategic plan for the district

- Copy to be provided
- How and when reviewed
- Integrated planning and reporting (IPR)

Finance and budgeting

- Progress to date in developing next year's budget
- Advice of any budget meetings or workshops scheduled to be held in the next few months
- How items are listed for budget consideration
- How and when budgeted items are reviewed during each financial year
- Financial reports
- Audit Committee

Council policies

- Explanation of how and when reviewed

- Council delegations to committees or CEO
- Confidential information

Operational policies

- The distinction, if any, made between council policies and operational policies

Requests for works and services

- How requests are lodged by elected members

The council and State Government

- Explanation of the relationship between local and State Government
- Introduction to legislation that affect local government operations

Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries

- Explanation of the roles and responsibilities of the DLGSC
- Contact details
- Local government reform
- Legislative changes
- Guides and tools
- Integrated planning and reporting

Regional Development Commission (outside metropolitan area)

- Explanation of the roles and responsibilities of the Regional Development Commissions
- Contact details of the local Regional Development Commission

The council and the Commonwealth Government

- Explanation of the relationship between local and Commonwealth Government (e.g. FAG grants)

Obtaining information

- Mayor/president for political and elected member issues
- CEO for policy, governance, organisation and employee management and general issues
- Freedom of information legislation
- Access to and limits on inspection of council documents
- Newsletters
- Council's information bulletins
- DLGSC LG Hotline

Networking

- Community organisations
- Other WA local governments and regional local government (if one has been constituted for the area)
- Regional organisations and groups
- Interstate and national contacts
- Conferences and seminars
- List of relevant websites

8.   Your local government

History

- Origins of the local government
- Changes in status
- Changes in boundaries
- Publication details of relevant local history

Size and population

- Overall area
- Length and type of roads
- Area of parks and gardens
- Demographic trends (population trend, age profile for example)

Briefing notes

- Briefing notes on significant issues or projects currently before the council or in progress

Corporate identity

As reflected in:

- Coat of arms
- Emblem
- Motto
- Logo

Significant facilities

- Overview of the significant facilities provided

Significant events

- Citizenship ceremonies dates and venues
- Annual events
- Calendar of upcoming events

Publications

- Local Government Act 1995 and associated regulations
- Strategic plan for the district
- Budget papers (current or future)
- Council's most recent annual report
- Local laws (including standing orders)
- Planning scheme text and maps
- Policy manual
- Register of delegations of power
- Councillor code of conduct
- Minutes of recent council and committee meetings
- Councillor request for works and services (or equivalent)
- Other DLGSC operational guidelines, lg alerts / newsletter
- Local community directory

Related Websites

- WALGA – www.walga.asn.au
- ALGA – www.alga.asn.au
- Local Government Professionals WA - www.lgprofessionalswa.org.au
- Western Australian Electoral Commission – www.waec.wa.gov.au
- Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development - www.agric.wa.gov.au

Contact details

These guidelines are also available on the Department's website at www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au

DLGSC Local Government Hotline

Email: lghotline@dlgsc.wa.gov.au

About the Guideline series

This document and others in the series are intended as a guide to good practice and should not be taken as a compliance requirement. The content is based on Department officer knowledge, understanding, observation of, and appropriate consultation on contemporary good practice in local government. Guidelines may also involve the Department's views on the intent and interpretation of relevant legislation.

All guidelines are subject to review, amendment and re-publishing as required. Therefore, comments on any aspect of the guideline are welcome. Advice of methods of improvement in the area of the guideline topic that can be reported to other local governments will be especially beneficial.

For more information about this and other guidelines, contact the Local Government Support and Engagement Branch at:

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