



Planning Interaction Policy

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1 Document Information

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RESPONSIBLE GENERAL MANAGER	General Manager Corporate Services
RESPONSIBLE MANAGER (Policy Owner)	Manager Governance
APPROVED/ADOPTED BY	Council
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VERSION HISTORY	NA

2 Purpose

The purpose of the Planning Interaction Policy (this Policy) is to ensure any interactions or engagement between Councillor/s and permit applicants and lobbyists is appropriately managed to preserve the integrity of both individual Councillors and the Council and to avoid actual or perceived conflicts of interest, misconduct or corrupt behaviour.

3 Definitions

Lobbyist	Any person, company or organisation who is a registered lobbyist maintained by the Victorian Public Sector Commission and conducts lobbying activities on behalf of a third-party client
Permit applicant	Refers to the person who has made or is proposing a planning application, their representative, the owner of the site or any interested party representing the planning application.
Senior Planning Officer	Is a planning officer who is in a Principal Planner position or above (i.e. Team Leader, Manager, General Manager)

4 Scope

This Policy applies to all Councillors when interacting or engaging with permit applicants or lobbyists regarding the discussion of actual or proposed planning matters to be determined by Council.

This Policy applies to all members of council staff when present at a meeting between Councillor/s and permit applicants or lobbyists.

5 Policy Details

This Policy strengthens Council's commitment to the principles of transparency, integrity and accountability.

In their role as participants in Council decision making, Councillors must represent the interests of the community and regular engagement with community members is a vital component of representative democracy. In the context of current or proposed planning matters for development within the municipality, it is important that Councillors have access to information from both permit applicants (which could include community members as well as developers) and objectors (which includes individual members of the community and community groups).

Therefore, this Policy provides a framework within which Councillors may meet and engage with all parties involved in a current or proposed planning matter in a manner that is transparent, in the public interest and open to public scrutiny.

5.1 Meeting Arrangements

5.1.1 Interactions with Permit Applicants

Where a person wishes to discuss a proposed or current permit application with a Councillor or multiple Councillors, the matter is to be diarised by the relevant council officer organising the meeting. Meetings may be in person, virtual or via telephone and is preferable to have a senior planning officer present.

The following information should be included in the diary appointment:

- Name of developer/s attending
- Name/s of Councillor/s attending

- Date, time and location of discussion
- Name of senior council officer attending (if relevant)
- Matters to be discussed

Detailed calendar appointments in Council's diary management system ensures transparency of all interactions.

5.1.2 Interactions with Lobbyists

When meeting with Lobbyists, Councillors should ensure the lobbyist is registered on the Register of Lobbyists maintained by the Victorian Public Sector Commission prior to meeting.

All arrangements for interactions with lobbyists must align with the requirements for interactions with permit applicants in accordance with clause 5.1.1 of this Policy.

It is preferable for a Councillor meet with a lobbyist with a relevant council officer present.

A Councillor must notify the Manager Governance of any interaction with a lobbyist and this must be registered in accordance with clause 5.3 of this Policy.

5.2 Record Keeping

5.2.1 Council Officer in Attendance

Where a Senior Council Officer is in attendance at a meeting between Councillor/s and developers or lobbyists, the senior council officer must complete an Informal Meeting of Councillors Record.

The Informal Meeting of Councillors Record requires the following information to be included:

- Date, time and location of meeting
- Meeting reason
- Attendees
- Summary of Matters Discussed
- Conflict of Interest Disclosures

Once completed, this record should be submitted to the Governance Department for inclusion in the monthly Informal Meeting of Councillors Record Report that is tabled at Council Meetings.

5.2.2 Councillor(s) in Attendance

Where a Council Officer is not present at a meeting with a Councillor, there is no requirement to complete an Informal Meeting of Councillors Record. However, Councillor(s) present at the meeting must notify the Manager Governance of details of the meeting as detailed at 5.2.1 for record keeping purposes.

5.3 Register of Meetings with Lobbyists

Where a Councillor agrees to meet with a registered lobbyist about a current or proposed permit application, this meeting must be captured in Council's Register of Contact with Lobbyists (the Register).

The interaction with lobbyists must be recorded in the Register by the relevant council

officer. The register will be maintained by the Governance department.

The following information must be captured in the register:

- Date, time of contact
- Reason
- Attendees
- Summary of matters discussed

This register will be tabled biennially at a Council Meeting.

5.4 Conflicts of Interest

Councillors are subject to disclosure requirements under the Act and in accordance with the Governance Rules if a general or material conflict of interest exists.

Receiving a gift from a permit applicant or lobbyist above the gift disclosure threshold of \$500 from a permit applicant or lobbyist can result in a material conflict of interest and Councillors should refer to the Act and Council's Councillor Gift and Hospitality Policy to ensure they manage these situations appropriately.

Councillors can seek advice from the Governance Department or the Chief Executive Officer if there is any uncertainty about their engagement with developers and lobbyists.

6 Delegation Authority and Decision Guidelines

NA

6.1 Delegations/Authorisations

NA

6.2 Exemptions

NA

6.3 Human Rights Charter

This policy has been reviewed against and complies with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.

7 Related Documents and Resources

Legislation

- Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)
- Planning and Environment Act 1987 (Vic)

City of Kingston Documents

- Councillor Gift and Hospitality Policy
- Informal Meeting of Councillors Record
- Councillor Code of Conduct
- Application for a Planning Permit Meeting Policy

Resources / External Documents

- Guide to engaging with lobbyists in the Victorian Public Sector
- Register of Lobbyists – Victorian Government