

Effective Council Committee Chairing & Support

Role of the Chair

Chairing is essential for effective meetings. The Chairperson's responsibilities include:

- Directing committee discussions to achieve meeting objectives.
- Ensuring the Committee fulfils its responsibilities regarding agenda items.

Key Duties of the Chairperson

- Be well-briefed on each agenda item.
- Ensure:
 - Decisions are made, recorded, and implemented.
 - Organizational policies are adhered to.
 - Full participation by members.
 - The agenda is followed.
 - Time limits are maintained for the meeting and individual agenda items.

For Council Committees, refer to the *City of Albany Standing Orders Local Law* for meeting procedures (available on the City of Albany website).

Ensuring Effective Committee/Staff Relations

Good relations between the committee and staff or volunteers are critical. Positive relationships foster:

- A shared vision.
- Informed planning.
- Effective delivery of committee objectives.

Role of the Executive Officer

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is the only staff member appointed and tasked by Council. The Committee Executive Officer, as the CEO's representative, supports the Chairperson by:

- Assisting in running effective meetings.
- Advising when City staff can action requests under delegated authority.
- Coordinating the preparation of reports for Council decisions.

Effective Delegation

Council Committees appoint elected members to Chair their meetings. Much operational work is delegated to City staff. To ensure effective delegation:

- **Committee Chairs and Executive Officers should:**
 - Clarify the committee's administrative support structure.
 - Facilitate productive communication and respectful relationships between committee members and staff.
- **Key Point:**
 - Council Committees have no decision-making powers, with the exception of the Audit & Risk Committee.
 - The Chair facilitates recommendations or requests to the responsible officer for action.

Organisational Structure & Accountability

Clear Lines of Responsibility

- Objectives should be clearly communicated in the Committee's Terms of Reference.

Management Structures

- Committees should establish systems and processes to assist in achieving their objectives.
- Assign a dedicated contact person, typically an Executive Director or designated line manager.
- Operate within the City's approved policies and guidelines, which are accessible on the City's website.

Committee & Senior Staff Relations

The most senior staff member (e.g., Executive Director, Manager, or CEO) serves as the key link between the staff team and the committee.

Role of the Committee Chair

- Work effectively with senior staff to ensure collaboration.
- Provide performance feedback to the CEO or, in the case of feedback about the CEO, to Council.

Characteristics of a Good Meeting Secretary (Minute Taker)

The Secretary plays a critical role in ensuring efficient committee operations. Below are the qualities, skills, and knowledge required:

Key Qualities and Skills

- Be methodical, with strong attention to detail.
- Stay well-organized and objective.
- Handle correspondence promptly.
- Accurately record meeting notes.
- Ensure members receive and bring necessary materials to meetings.
- Work closely with the Chairperson.
- Confirm quorum for meetings.
- Understand committee meeting procedures (Standing Orders).

Do's and Don'ts

A Good Secretary Will:

Be organised.
Keep copies of correspondence.
Check quorum is met.
Respect confidentiality.
Work closely with the Chair.
Keep clear records.
Prepare well in advance.
Summarise discussions clearly.

A Good Secretary Will NOT:

Ignore correspondence.
Keep information to themselves.
Be late for meetings.
Discard important papers.
Record trivial discussion details.
Rely on memory.
Organise meetings last minute.
Maintain inaccurate meeting minutes.

This document serves as a guide to ensure Council Committee meetings are conducted effectively, with clear roles, responsibilities, and processes to support successful outcomes.