



# Policy & Guidelines for Informal Workshops

January 2026

## DOCUMENT AUTHORISATION

<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:</b>		GENERAL MANAGER			
<b>REVIEWED BY:</b>		LET			
<b>REVIEW DUE DATE:</b>		January 2030			
<b>VERSION NUMBER:</b>		1			
<b>DOCUMENT TITLE:</b>		Policy & Guidelines for Informal Workshops			
<b>VERSIONS:</b>	<b>DATE:</b>	<b>RESOLUTION NO:</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION OF AMENDMENTS:</b>	<b>AUTHOR/ EDITOR:</b>	<b>APPROVED / ADOPTED BY:</b>
1	25/02/2026	35/26	New Policy	General Manager	Council



Signed: General Manager

4-3-26  
Date

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure that the primacy of the official monthly Ordinary Council Meeting is preserved as a decision-making forum.
- Ensure that the Leadership Executive Team and interested Councillors have an opportunity, from time to time, to seek viewpoints within a more informal and interactive forum with regards to the development of key strategic documents for Council.
- Ensure that the Leadership Executive Team and interested Councillors have an opportunity, from time to time, to seek viewpoints within a more informal and interactive forum regarding subject matters that are substantial and complex in nature.
- Ensure that the Leadership Executive Team and interested Councillors have an opportunity, from time to time, to seek viewpoints within a more informal and interactive forum with regards to contentious matters that are also substantial and complex in nature.

## APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to:

- The Leadership Executive Team (LET).
- Councillors interested in attending Informal Workshops.
- Other Council Managers and Staff who may be requested by the General Manager to be present at the Informal Workshop.

Informal Workshops do not constitute meetings of Council or committees of Council of which all members are Councillors, therefore, Sections 9,10, 10D and 11 of the *Local Government Act 1993* do not apply.

## OUTCOMES

This Policy Document and Guidelines have been developed to:

- Provide for clear guidelines as to when the Leadership Executive Team and interested Councillors would meet for the purposes of having an Informal Workshop, in order for them to seek points of view related to the development of key strategic documents for Council, as well as pertaining to matters that are substantial and complex or contentious, but also substantial and complex, in nature.
  - Provide for consistency in the approach to determine whether the holding of a particular Informal Workshop is appropriate.
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## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The General Manager, in consultation with other Leadership Executive Team members, will schedule Informal Workshops as required. This does not prevent the Mayor to request the General Manager to include an item on the Agenda of an upcoming Informal Workshop.

Councillors are invited to attend Informal Workshops, however, they are under no obligation to attend.

## **DEFINITIONS**

- **Key Strategic Documents:** Formal written plans that outline the most important, long-term goals of the Tenterfield Shire Council, and the means intended to achieve them, e.g. the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework suite of documents and other associated Strategic and/or Master Plans.
- **Substantial Matters:** Subjects or situations (including affairs, topics, or concerns) that are of a nature that are material, real or actual, of ample or considerable amount, or of substantial importance or much consequence.
- **Complex Matters:** Subjects or situations (including affairs, topics, or concerns) that are made up of many interrelated parts, that are intricate or involved, and that are difficult to understand, analyse, or resolve.
- **Contentious Matters:** Subjects or situations (including affairs, topics, or concerns) that refer to issues or subjects that are likely to cause disagreement, dispute, or controversy.

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

All approvals for Informal Workshops to be held will be determined by the General Manager, or in his/her absence, the Acting General Manager.

## **GUIDELINES FOR COUNCILLOR INFORMATION SESSIONS**

Council will consider the following guidelines to assist Council in determining whether it would be desirable for an Informal Workshop to be held:

### **Acknowledgement of Broad Governance Principles Applicable to Local Government**

- Council acknowledges that it speaks by resolution and that the official Ordinary Council Meeting is the means by which Councillors should receive, consider and debate Council business.
  - Council acknowledges and supports the principle that Council related business should be dealt with in an open and transparent manner as described in Chapter 4, Part 1 of the *Local Government Act 1993* (the Act) and that members of the public should have access to Council's discussions, deliberations and debate, except in those instances where the Act (Sections 10A to 10D) makes provision for items to be
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considered in Closed Council.

- Council acknowledges and supports the principle that members of the public should have an opportunity to formally address Council before monthly Council Meetings, and Council will continue to provide for an opportunity to community members to address Council regarding Council related business before the actual monthly Council Meeting starts.
- Council acknowledges and supports the principle that staff members are employed as professional specialists and as such enjoy independence in terms of Section 352 of the *Local Government Act 1993* and are therefore not subject to direction by the Council or by a Councillor as to the content of any advice or recommendation made by staff members.
- Council also acknowledges that the above paragraph does not prevent the Council or the Mayor from directing the General Manager to provide the Council with advice or a recommendation about a particular matter as part of its official Council Meeting Business Paper.

### **Particular Guidelines for Councillor Information Sessions**

Given the increasing volume and complexity of material necessary to consider by Councillors, Council finds it necessary to, from time to time, implement a mechanism of Informal Workshops to assist the Leadership Executive Team and interested Councillors in seeking views about matters which are strategic, substantial and complex, or contentious but also substantial and complex in nature – within a more informal and interactive forum. These Informal Workshops will, however, only be held under the following conditions:

- Where the particular subject matter to be dealt with at the Informal Workshop is dealing with the development of key strategic documents; such as the initial presentation of the Integrated Planning & Reporting suite of documents, or annual Operational Plans and Budgets, or other significant project Master Plans. This, however, implies that there will be substantial further public consultation before Council would be able to finalise its position on these types of matters.
  - Where the particular subject matter to be dealt with at the Informal Workshop is of a substantial and complex nature and where it would assist the Leadership Executive Team and interested Councillors to seek viewpoints, such as draft annual Budgets and Operational Plans.
  - Where the particular subject matter to be dealt with at the Informal Workshop is of a contentious nature, but is also substantial and complex in nature, to assist the Leadership Executive Team and interested elected representatives to seek different points of view – such as development applications that meet the definition requirements.
  - Informal Workshops have, as a focus, the seeking of viewpoints in a more informal and interactive forum. Staff will not make formal recommendations and interested Councillors attending the Informal Workshop, will not attempt to influence or provide directions to the General Manager or other staff.
  - Informal Workshops are not designed, or allowed, to become a substitute for open debate in the official monthly Ordinary Council Meeting or any Extraordinary Council Meeting.
  - Informal Workshops are not designed, or used by, or allowed to be used by any Councillor, to reach a pre-determined position on issues that will later be presented
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to, and be voted on, at an Ordinary or Extraordinary Council Meeting. No agreement will therefore be sought from any interested and attending Councillor during the course of an Informal Workshop.

- Informal Workshops are not used, or allowed to be used, as an avenue to influence staff or attempt to influence staff or to give direction to staff or to attempt to give direction to staff as to what the contents of their reports or recommendations to Council should be. No agreement will therefore be sought by attending Councillors from any staff member during the course of the Informal Workshop.
- Notice of Informal Workshops to the Leadership Executive Team and Councillors is given at least three (3) days in advance by the General Manager's Office - preferably by way of electronic communication – clearly indicating the subject matter or matters that viewpoints are sought to be obtained about.
- Councillors are under no obligation to attend Informal Workshops.
- Informal Workshops are chaired by the General Manager or in his/her absence another member of the Leadership Executive Team. This arrangement will assist in placing Informal Workshops in their proper perspective, that is, a forum for seeking viewpoints, and avoid the appearance of a formal Council Meeting which carries the associated risk of de facto decision-making.
- Informal Workshops will be conducted in an informal and interactive manner, but with the necessary acknowledgement and respect shown to the Chair by all participants present.

## **COUNCIL'S VALUES**

- Integrity
- Community Focus
- Accountability
- Respect
- Excellence

## **LEGISLATION AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

### **Relevant Legislation, Regulations and Industry Standards include:**

- *Local Government Act 1993* (Chapter 3; Chapter 4 Part 1; Chapter 9 Part 2 Divisions 1, 2 and 3; Chapter 11 Part 5 (particularly Section 352); Chapter 12 Part 2 Division 1 (particularly Section 360(1); and Chapter 12 Part 2 Division 2.)
- *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021* (Part 10).

### **Relevant Council Policies and Procedures include:**

- Council's Code of Meeting Practice.
  - Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors.
  - Council's Code of Conduct for Staff.
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## **VARIATION AND REVIEW**

The Policy & Guidelines for Informal Workshops will be reviewed every four (4) years, or earlier if deemed necessary, to ensure that it meets the requirements of legislation and the needs of Council. The term of the Policy does not expire on the review date, but will continue in force until superseded, rescinded or varied either by legislation or a new resolution of Council.

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