

Communications Policy

Policy Objective

To guide the communication undertaken by Council Members, Committee Members and Employees.

Policy Scope

This Policy applies to all current Council Members, Committee Members and Employees.

The policy covers;

1. Communications initiated or responded to by the Town of Bassendean with its community, and
2. Council members when making comment either in their Town of Bassendean role or in a personal capacity.

Policy Statement

Communications between Council Members, Town staff and the community is essential, but needs to be undertaken in a manner that provides consistent, accurate, reliable information that meets legislative responsibilities. This Policy seeks to ensure that all communication meets those standards.

1. Media Liaison

- 1.1 The Mayor and/or the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will discuss matters of interest with media representatives unless disclosure of certain information contravenes the Town of Bassendean's (the "Town") obligations of confidentiality or privacy, duty of care, or could infringe other laws or regulations that govern its operation.
- 1.2 Media statements are to maximise the opportunity to present a positive image of the Town.
- 1.3 All media statements will be prepared by the office of the CEO.
 - i. All media statements with quotes attributed to the Mayor will be approved by the Mayor in advance of the statements release.

- ii. Where time permits all media responses that reflect the position of the Town but do not require a quote attributed to the Mayor will be shared with the Mayor in advance of its release.
- 1.4 All media enquiries for an official Town of Bassendean comment, whether made to an individual council member or employee, must be directed to the CEO or a person authorised by the CEO and shared with the Mayor for awareness. Information will be co-ordinated by the CEO to support the Mayor to make an official response on behalf of the Town.
- 1.5 Details of matters that occur as part of the decision-making process which are confidential, are not to be disclosed unless approved by Council.

2. Speaking on behalf of the Town

- 2.1 The Mayor is the official spokesperson on the Town's affairs. If the Mayor is unavailable, the Mayor may authorise the CEO or the Deputy Mayor to act on their behalf.
- 2.2 Council Members and Employees are entitled to enter into public debate in their private capacity and make comment on the Town's affairs, provided they clearly state that their comments reflect their personal views and do not give the impression they are speaking for, or on behalf of, the Town.
- 2.3 A Council Member must ensure that their use of social media and other forms of communication complies with the Town's Social Media Policy, Code of Conduct for Councillors, Committee Members and Candidates, and that any information that they publish is factually correct.
- 2.4 A Council Member must not disparage the character of another Council Member, Committee Member or Employee.
- 2.5 Council Members and Employees have a duty of legal fidelity to act in the best interests of the Council and the Town by not making public statements that are critical of a Council decision, adversely reflect a decision of council or that cause detriment to the integrity of an individual, an employee or the Town.
- 2.6 A Council Member who is approached by the media for a personal statement may request the assistance of the CEO.

3. Council Member's Correspondence

- 3.1 The Town of Bassendean letterhead is to be used for all correspondence generated from the Mayor.
- 3.2 All correspondence (outward or inward) in the custody of a Council Member must be captured in the corporate recordkeeping system in accordance with *State Records Act 2000*, Town of Bassendean *Recordkeeping Plan* and *Freedom of Information Act 1992*.

- 3.3 To ensure accuracy of information and brand compliance, Council Members may share current Town of Bassendean branded content or other current Town content with the approval of the Town. Town content must not be re-created or altered in anyway.

4. Council Member's Access to Information

- 4.1 Access to corporate information by Council Members is managed in accordance with Section 5.92 of the *Local Government Act 1995*.
- 4.2 Council Members are able to access certain documents above and beyond what is available to the general public. This includes the right to inspect any document that deals with Council business. However, this is not without limitation. A Council Member is required to demonstrate to the CEO the relevance of the information to the performance of the Council Member's role. The information, where granted, is not to be used for a Council Member's own interest, be used to cause detriment to the Town or be unconnected with a Council activity (section 5.93).
- 4.3 Should approval be granted, the CEO will determine the manner in which the access is permitted.

5. Communication between Council Members and Town employees when acting in their formal capacity

Council members must adhere to the Town's Communications Agreement.

This Agreement is made in response to Clause 74 of the *Local Government Amendment Bill 2023* which, through the insertion of Section 5.92A into the Act, will require the Town of Bassendean to have a Communication Agreement.

This Agreement formalises the way communication and interaction are to occur between the Town's elected members and the Town's CEO and approved staff.

6. Improper use of information

- 6.1 Council Members and Employees must not make improper use of information that is acquired as a result of the performance of their role under the Act or any other written law. Council Members and Employees who have access to confidential information are to put in place measures to ensure that confidentiality is retained.
- 6.2 Comments which become public and which breach this policy, and/or the Code of Conduct for Council Members, Committee Members, and Candidates, may constitute a minor breach of the *Local Government Act 1995* [refer s.5.105] and may be referred for investigation.

7. Record Keeping

- 7.1 Official communications undertaken on behalf of the Town, including on the Town of Bassendean's social media accounts and third party social media accounts must be created and retained as local government records in accordance with the *State Records Act 2000*. These records are also subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1992*.
- 7.2 Council Member communications that relate to their role as an Elected Member are subject to the requirements of the *State Records Act 2000*. Council Members are responsible for transferring these records to the Town's administration. Council Member records are also subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1992*.

8. Website

The Town of Bassendean will maintain an official website, as the community's on-line resource to access the Town's official communications.

9. Social Media

Council members must adhere to the Town's Social Media Policy.

Social media accounts or unsecured website forums must not be used to transact during meetings in relation to the official business of the Town. [*State Records Act 2000/Local Government Record Keeping Plan, s's 5.23(2) and 5.93 of the Local Government Act 1995*]

10. Public Consultation

Council Members are permitted to promote the participation in a Town-led public consultation process. In doing so, information is to be objective, and not infer a bias or lack of impartiality.

11. Breach

A breach of this policy will be dealt with in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1995* and the Town of Bassendean Code of Conduct for Council Members, Committee Members and Candidates, and the Town of Bassendean's Code of Conduct for Employees.

Document Control box			
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