

6.4 Councillor Professional Development Policy

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Executive Leader: Mans Bassi, Chief Operating Officer

Executive Summary

1. *The Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) requires councillors to undertake an induction program and ongoing professional development throughout their term.
2. Recognising the increasing complexity of local government and the diverse expectations of constituents, the Councillor Professional Development Policy (the Policy) has been developed to provide a strategic framework that ensures that councillors are equipped with relevant knowledge, skills, and reasonable support necessary to perform their roles effectively and make informed decisions on behalf of the community.

Recommendation from management

3. That Council resolve to adopt the Councillor Professional Development Policy (Attachment 1 of the report from management).

Purpose

4. The purpose of the Councillor Professional Development Policy (the Policy) is to ensure that councillors have skills, knowledge and support required to effectively carry out their roles and responsibilities. The key objectives include:
 - 4.1 Empowering councillors in making informed decisions, engaging with communities, and effectively overseeing services.
 - 4.2 Ensuring new and returning councillors receive purpose designed Councillor Induction and have access to ongoing professional development opportunities throughout the Council term.
 - 4.3 Promoting good governance, encouraging high ethical standards, transparency, and accountability.
 - 4.4 Enabling councillors to effectively advocate for their constituents and provide leadership on local matters.

Background

5. Councillors play a vital role in shaping the strategic direction of Council, representing the interests of their communities, and ensuring that local services are delivered efficiently and fairly. As local government demands evolve, driven by legislative changes, financial constraints and increasing public expectations, it is crucial that councillors are adequately prepared and supported in their roles.
6. Historically, councillor professional development has varied in consistency and scope, however, there is increasing recognition across the local government sector of the need for a more structured and proactive approach to councillor training and development.
7. The *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) now requires councillors to undertake an induction program and ongoing professional development throughout their term. The purpose of developing this Policy is to ensure councillors and the Chief Executive Officer can meet their legislative obligations in a structured and fair manner.

Key considerations

8. A purpose designed induction program is essential for new councillors to understand Council's operations, governance frameworks, legal and financial responsibilities, and community engagement practices.
9. In accordance with the Act, ongoing professional development must continue every calendar year after the Induction Program. The Annual Training Program (as discussed in section 5.3 of the Policy) for the remainder of 2025, will be developed and circulated to councillors by the Executive Officer Councillor Liaison by 30 September 2025.
10. Professional development should be politically neutral, professionally delivered, and support the overall good governance of Council.
11. A realistic and sustainable budget must be allocated to deliver the Policy, recognising the long-term value of investing in councillors' knowledge and skills.

Legal

12. Section 32 of the Act requires each councillor complete Councillor induction training. Section 33A(1) of the Act requires every councillor '*complete professional development training annually to ensure that the Councillor understands their role and responsibilities*'.
13. The Policy ensures all councillors have equal access to professional development opportunities.

Finance

14. Each councillor is entitled to an annual professional development allocation as determined in the Council's annual budget process.
15. In the first year of a Council term, costs associated with all training and development should be absorbed as part of an induction period budget and do not form part of quarterly expense reports.

Conflict of interest

16. No member of Council staff, or other person engaged under a contract, involved in advising on or preparing this report has declared a material or general conflict of interest in relation to the matter of the report.

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities

17. The recommendation contained in this report is compatible with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* as it does not raise any human rights issues.

Health and Safety

18. In developing this proposal, no Occupational Health and Safety issues or opportunities have been identified.

Consultation

19. A formal community consultation process is not required prior to Council adopting this Policy.

Relevance to Council Plan and Council Policies

20. City of Melbourne Council Expenses Policy 2020 governs how Council funds can be used by councillors for various activities, including professional development.
21. City of Melbourne Procurement Policy governs the purchasing of goods and services, ensuring that procurement processes are fair, competitive, and compliant with legal and ethical standards.

Social and environmental impactsSocial impacts

22. The social impacts could include, but are not limited to:

- 21.1 Improved governance
- 21.2 Leadership development
- 21.3 Equity and inclusion

Environmental impacts

23. No environmental sustainability issues or opportunities are considered relevant to this proposal.

Gender Impact Assessment

24. A Gender Impact Assessment was not required.

Attachment List

1. Councillor Professional Development Policy - 29 July 2025 [6.4.1 - 15 pages]



Councillor Professional Development Policy

Adopted by: Council
Adoption Date: 29 July 2025
Review Date: July 2029

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1. Background

The *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) and the *Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020* (the Regulations) requires Mayors, Deputy Mayors and councillors to complete the following mandatory training:

- **Mayoral Training:** This must be completed by all Mayors, Acting Mayors (appointed for one month or more), and Deputy Mayors within one month of being elected to the role.
- **Councillor Induction Training:** This must be completed by all councillors within four months of taking the oath or affirmation of office.
- **Professional Development Training:** This must be completed by all councillors annually, beginning in the first full calendar year after being elected.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the Councillor Professional Development Policy (the Policy) is to ensure all councillors of Melbourne City Council are provided with appropriate, consistent, and equitable opportunities for ongoing professional development to support them in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities effectively and in accordance with legislative requirements.

3. Scope and application

This Policy applies to all elected councillors of Melbourne City Council.

This Policy only applies to the Chief Executive Officer and Council Staff, where they are specifically required to support the application of this Policy, or in the case of the Chief Executive Officer, to meet their legislative requirements described in the Act and the Regulations.

4. Definitions

Chief Executive Officer means the person appointed by a Council under the Act to be its Chief Executive Officer or any person acting in that position.

Council means Melbourne City Council.

Councillors means elected members of Melbourne City Council including the Lord Mayor and the Deputy Lord Mayor.

Councillor Induction Training means the training specified in section 32 of the Act.

Mandatory training refers to training required by the Act and the Regulations.

Mayoral Training means the training specified in section 27A of the Act.

Professional Development Training means the training specified in section 33A of the Act.

5. Mandatory Training

5.1. Mayoral Training

Requirements

In accordance with the Act:

- The Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor must complete Mayoral Training within one month after their election. Mayoral Training must take place, regardless of whether the person has been re-elected or held office before.
- An Acting Lord Mayor who is appointed for one month or more, must complete Mayoral Training within one month of their appointment. An acting Lord Mayor is not required to undertake Mayoral Training if they have completed it in the preceding 12 months.

The Executive Officer Councillor Liaison will coordinate the delivery of the Mayoral Training within the statutory timeframe. As required by the Regulations, the Mayoral Training will address:

- Roles and responsibilities
- Chairing meetings
- Engagement and advocacy
- Leadership
- Any other matter which the Chief Executive Officer has determined should be addressed. The Chief Executive Officer will advise the councillor(s) in writing of the matters they have determined should be addressed, prior to the training schedule commencing.

Delivery

The Executive Officer Councillor Liaison may deliver the training themselves, organise for one or more Council Officers who have the relevant subject matter expertise to deliver the training, or may engage an external provider.

The delivery method may include:

- Presentations, seminars, conferences, workshops or training events
- Online training modules
- Webinars, videos or podcasts
- Any other method approved in writing by the Chief Executive Officer

Written declaration

Within one week of completing all components of the Mayoral Training, each councillor must make their written declaration before the Chief Executive Officer using Form 1. The Executive Officer Councillor Liaison will facilitate this process.

Withholding allowances

In accordance with the Act, a Lord Mayor, Deputy Lord Mayor or acting Lord Mayor who fails to take the Mayoral Training or make the written declaration, will have their allowance withheld and not provided until after the training is completed and the written declaration is made.

Upon the statutory deadline passing and if the requirements have not been met, the Executive Officer Councillor Liaison shall communicate to the councillor(s) and the Chief Executive Officer, that the allowance will be withheld. Once the requirements of the Act and the Regulations have been met, the Executive Officer Councillor Liaison will advise the councillor(s) and the Chief Executive Officer in writing of when the allowance will be paid and the monetary figure owed.

5.2. Councillor Induction Training**Requirements**

All Councillors elected at a general election or elected to fill an extraordinary vacancy must complete Councillor Induction Training within four months of taking the oath or affirmation of office, as required by the Act.

All councillors must complete Councillor Induction Training, regardless of whether the person has been re-elected or has been a councillor before.

The Chief Executive Officer will coordinate the delivery of the Councillor Induction Program within the required timeframe. In accordance with the Regulations the following matters will be included in the Councillor Induction Program:

- working together in a Council
- decision making, integrity and accountability
- community representation
- strategic planning and financial management
- conduct
- land use planning
- any other matter relating to the role of a Councillor which the Chief Executive Officer has determined should be addressed. This may include but is not limited to:
 - Legislative and policy frameworks and fundamentals
 - Media training
 - Meeting procedure
 - Risk management
 - Fraud and corruption
 - Communication skills
 - Cultural awareness

Delivery

Councillor Induction Training may be delivered by any Council officers with the relevant subject matter expertise, or an external provider.

The delivery method may include:

- Presentations, seminars, conferences, workshops or training events
- Online training modules
- Webinars, videos or podcasts
- Any other method approved in writing by the Chief Executive Officer

Leave of absence

If a Councillor is unable to take or complete Councillor Induction Training because of a leave of absence, the Councillor must take or complete the training within one month after returning from leave.

The Executive Officer Councillor Liaison will coordinate the delivery of the Councillor Induction Training within the statutory timeframe.

Written declaration

Within one week of completing all components of the Councillor Induction Training, each councillor must make their written declaration before the Chief Executive Officer using Form 2. The Executive Officer Councillor Liaison will facilitate this process.

Withholding allowances

In accordance with the Act, a councillor who fails to take the Councillor Induction Training or make the written declaration, will have their allowance withheld and not provided until after the training is completed and the written declaration is made.

Upon the statutory deadline passing and if the requirements have not been met, the Executive Officer Councillor Liaison shall communicate to the councillor(s) and the Chief Executive Officer, that the allowance will be withheld. Once the requirements of the Act and the Regulations have been met, the Executive Officer Councillor Liaison will advise the councillor(s) and the Chief Executive Officer in writing of when the allowance will be paid and the monetary figure owed.

5.3. Regular Professional Development Training

Requirements

Councillors elected at a general election or elected to fill an extraordinary vacancy must undertake at Professional Development Training every calendar year after being elected. This is to ensure they understand their roles and responsibilities, support their understanding of emerging issues in local government and enhance their governance capability.

In the year of a general election, training must be completed by 1 September and in any other following year, training must be completed by 31 December.

Annual training must take place, regardless of whether the person has been re-elected or has been a councillor before.

The Executive Officer Councillor Liaison will coordinate the delivery of the Professional Development Training within the required timeframe and will be responsible for developing a program, as per the requirements of the Regulations and the Annual Training Program and Annual Evaluation Program detailed below.

In accordance with the Regulations the following matters will be included in the Professional Development Training:

- working together in a Council
- decision making, integrity and accountability
- community representation
- strategic planning and financial management
- conduct
- land use planning
- any other matter relating to the role of a Councillor which the Chief Executive Officer has determined should be addressed. Options for training could include but are not limited to the following and may be delivered by Council officers with the relevant subject matter expertise, an external provider or a peak body:
 - Councillor Development Program
 - Legislative and policy frameworks and fundamentals
 - Governance training
 - Leadership, ethics, and decision-making
 - Communication skills
 - Cultural awareness

Annual Training Program

Following a general election, by 31 March each year, the Executive Officer Councillor Liaison on behalf of the Chief Executive Officer, will set and provide Councillors with the Annual Training Program for the calendar year, which includes:

- a list of the prescribed matters and any other matter the Chief Executive Officer determines should be addressed that year.
- the details of the training that will be undertaken (including time, date, method of facilitation and the name of the Council Officer or external delivery provider who will be facilitating the training).
- Any other optional training or professional development opportunities which have been identified through the Annual Evaluation Program (as discussed below), by Council resolution or recommended by the Chief Executive Officer.

The Annual Training Program may be altered by the Chief Executive Officer with reasonable notice provided to councillors.

Delivery

The delivery method may include:

- Presentations, seminars, conferences, workshops or training events
- Webinars, videos or podcasts
- Online training modules
- Completion of a recognised qualification
- Any other method approved by the Chief Executive Officer

Leave of absence

If a Councillor is unable to take or complete Professional Development Training because of a leave of absence, the Councillor must take or complete the training within one month after returning from leave.

The Executive Officer Councillor Liaison will coordinate the delivery of the Professional Development Training within the statutory timeframe.

Written declaration

Within one week of completing all components of the Professional Development Training, each councillor must make their written declaration before the Chief Executive Officer using Form 3. The Executive Officer Councillor Liaison will facilitate this process.

Withholding allowances

In accordance with the Act, a councillor who fails to take the Professional Development Training or make the written declaration, will have their allowance withheld and not provided until after the training is completed and the written declaration is made.

Upon the statutory deadline passing and if the requirements have not been met, the Executive Officer Councillor Liaison shall communicate to the councillor(s) and the Chief Executive Officer, that the allowance will be withheld. Once the requirements of the Act and the Regulations have been met, the Executive Officer Councillor Liaison will advise the councillor(s) and the Chief Executive Officer in writing of when the allowance will be paid and the monetary figure owed.

Evaluation Program

Following a general election, by 30 September in Calendar Year 2 and Calendar Year 3 of the Council term, all councillors will take part in an Evaluation Program to:

- evaluate their own individual and group performance; and
- proactively identify where focus areas for training and development (outside of the mandatory requirements) may be beneficial.

Councillors will be required to complete a survey or questionnaire. The Chief Executive Officer with the Lord Mayor, will then facilitate and enable an open discussion of the results with all councillors at a Councillor Forum, prior to the Annual Training Schedule being released by 30 March the next year.

The purpose of the survey/questionnaire and discussion is:

- To constructively encourage councillors to self-identify where development actions may be required (either individually or collectively).
- That the facilitated discussion by the Lord Mayor and Chief Executive Officer regarding the identification of focus areas of development, will support the Lord Mayor to deliver on the requirement that they assist councillors to understand their role (section 18(f) of the Act).

The outcome of the survey/questionnaire and discussion, will be taken into consideration by the Executive Officer Councillor Liaison, when devising the Annual Training Program for Calendar Year 3 and Calendar Year 4 of the Council Term.

The Annual Training Program for Calendar Year 2 of the Council Term will be set by the Executive Officer Councillor Liaison (on behalf of the Chief Executive Officer) without the need for councillors to complete a survey or questionnaire, acknowledging Councillor Induction Training would have recently concluded before the Annual Training Program is circulated. It will be at the discretion of the Lord Mayor in their leadership capacity, to request the Chief Executive Officer facilitate a survey or questionnaire and/or discussion with councillors prior to 30 March, to support the administration to prepare the Annual Training Program for Calendar Year 2.

6. Expenses

In the first year of the Council Term, as per the Council Expenses Policy 2020 (Expenses Policy) all costs associated with the training and development needs of Councillors are absorbed as part of an induction period budget and do not form part of the quarterly expenses reports.

In the remaining three years of the Council Term, costs associated with mandatory Mayoral Training for any Acting Lord Mayor, Councillor Induction Training for a councillor elected to fill an extraordinary vacancy, and Regular Professional Development Training for all councillors, will be funded within the annual Council adopted Budget.

In addition to mandatory training, each Councillor is still entitled to an annual professional development allocation as determined by the annual Council adopted Budget. The allocation may only be accessed in accordance with the Expenses Policy (which includes the reimbursement of any other costs associated with this type of professional development) and approved by the Chief Executive Officer or their delegate using Form 4. Reporting of these expenses will continue to be undertaken in accordance with the Expenses Policy.

7. Responsibilities

7.1. Councillors

Participation by councillors in Mayoral Training, Councillor Induction Training and Professional Development Training is mandatory, in order for Councillors to satisfy the requirements of the Act.

Councillors have ultimate accountability and responsibility to meet the legislative requirements of their role. Every effort shall be made by councillors to participate in the training programs within the time frames and requirements specified by the Act and the Regulations. This includes making the required declarations in accordance with the Policy.

Councillors must notify the Chief Executive Officer without delay if they are unable to participate in any component of the mandatory training. The Chief Executive Officer in partnership with the Executive Officer Councillor Liaison will to the extent practicable, make alternative arrangements to enable the training program to be completed (for example, by arranging a make-up training session to be offered to that councillor).

7.2. Chief Executive Officer

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for:

- Ensuring mandatory training is available to be taken by councillors within the periods described by the Act.
- Withholding the payment of allowances for councillors who do not complete mandatory training or make the required written declaration.

- Upon the completion of any outstanding training program and the making of the declaration, resuming the payment of allowances (including the payment of any amounts withheld).
- Facilitating the discussion component of the Evaluation Program with the Lord Mayor.
- Any other matters prescribed by the Act or Regulations which are the responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer.

7.3. Executive Officer Councillor Liaison

In addition to the matters described in the Policy, the Executive Officer Councillor Liaison is responsible for:

- Facilitating and maintaining records of the written declarations.
- Supporting the Chief Executive Officer and Lord Mayor to facilitate the Evaluation Program.
- Ensuring this Policy is reviewed by Council at a minimum every four years.

8. References

8.1. Related Documents

Model Councillor Code of Conduct

Council Expenses Policy 2020

Privacy and Data Protection Policy

Public Transparency Policy

8.2. Related Legislation

Local Government Act 2020

Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020

Public Records Act 2023

Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014

Gender Equality Act 2020



Form 1

Declaration - Completion of Mayoral Training

In accordance with section 27A(6) of the *Local Government Act 2020* and Regulation 4A of the *Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020*, there are prescribed components of Mayoral Training that Mayors, Deputy Mayors and Acting Mayors are required to undertake. This includes any other matters relating to the role of a Mayor which the Council's Chief Executive Officer has determined should be addressed.

This form is a declaration by the <Lord Mayor/Deputy Lord Mayor/Acting Lord Mayor> of completion of the components listed below in accordance with section 27A(4) and section 32(3) of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Mayoral Training	Date Completed
Roles and responsibilities	
Chairing meetings	
Engagement and advocacy	
Leadership	
List any other matter which the Chief Executive Officer has determined should be addressed	

<Lord Mayor/Deputy Lord Mayor/Acting Lord Mayor> Declaration

I, <Lord Mayor/Deputy Lord Mayor/Acting Lord Mayor>, _____ of Melbourne City Council, declare that I have completed all the above training components of the Mayoral Training.

..... [Signature] [Date]

CEO Declaration

I, _____, Chief Executive Officer of Melbourne City Council sign this document in the presence of the person making the declaration:

..... [Signature] [Date]



Form 2

Declaration - Completion of Councillor Induction Training

In accordance with section 32(5) of the *Local Government Act 2020* and Regulation 6 of the *Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020* there are prescribed components of Councillor Induction Training that Councillors are required to undertake. This includes any other matters relating to the role of a Councillor which the Council’s Chief Executive Officer has determined should be addressed.

This form is a declaration by Councillors of completion of the components listed below in accordance with section 32(3) of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Councillor Induction Training	Date Completed
Working together in a Council	
Decision making, integrity and accountability	
Community representation	
Strategic planning and financial management	
Conduct	
Land use planning	
List any other matter which the Chief Executive Officer has determined should be addressed	

Councillor Declaration

I, Councillor _____ of Melbourne City Council, declare that I have completed all the above training components of the Councillor Induction Training.

.....
 [Signature] [Date]

CEO Declaration

I, _____, Chief Executive Officer of Melbourne City Council sign this document in the presence of the person making the declaration:

.....
 [Signature] [Date]



Form 3

Declaration - Completion of Professional Development Training

In accordance with section 33A(3) of the *Local Government Act 2020* and Regulation 6A of the *Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020* there are prescribed components of Professional Development Training that Councillors are required to undertake. This includes any other matters relating to the role of a Councillor which the Council's Chief Executive Officer has determined should be addressed.

This form is a declaration by Councillors of completion of the components listed below in accordance with section 33A(4) of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Professional Development Training	Date Completed
Working together in a Council	
Decision making, integrity and accountability	
Community representation	
Strategic planning and financial management	
Conduct	
Land use planning	
List any other matter which the Chief Executive Officer has determined should be addressed and attach a copy of the Annual Training Program	

Councillor Declaration

I, Councillor _____ of Melbourne City Council, declare that I have completed all the above training components of the Professional Development Training.

.....
 [Signature] [Date]

CEO Declaration

I, _____, Chief Executive Officer of Melbourne City Council sign this document in the presence of the person making the declaration:

.....
 [Signature] [Date]



Form 4

APPLICATION FORM: COUNCILLOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Section A – to be completed by Councillor:	
Full Name:	
Type of Professional Development (Attach any supporting material)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Conference/Seminar	<input type="checkbox"/> Event
<input type="checkbox"/> Formal Study	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
Professional Development Activity	
Details of Professional Development Activity:	
Date: DD / MM / YYYY	Cost: \$
Location:	
How will participation at this professional development benefit to your role as Councillor?	
Section B – to be completed by Executive Officer Councillor Liaison	
Councillor Professional Development Allocation Available:	\$
Date submitted to OCEO for approval:	DD / MM / YYYY
Section C – to be completed by OCEO	
Approved:	Yes / No
Signature of CEO:	