

Community Open Forum Policy



Title: Community Open Forum Policy

Adopted By: COUNCIL

Responsibility: Chief Executive Officer

Next Review Date: Refer' Policy and Procedure Framework

Version	Decision Number	Adoption Date	History
1			ADOPTED/DRAFT
2			
3			
4			

Policy Summary

This policy makes provision for the conduct of Community Open Forums conducted by Katherine Town Council from time to time

Policy Objective

The objective of this Council's Policy/Procedure is to:

- Establish a framework for forums to be conducted within
- Establish guidelines for the conduct of such forums
- Establish and clarify the manner in which any such forums will be managed

Background

The purpose of this Policy/ Procedure is to ensure clarity in both the intent and the operation of a Community Open Forum.

Legislation, Terminology and References

There are no specific legislative requirements for Council to conduct Community Open Forums. Nor does the common law enshrine a right to hold a public meeting. Neither does the Australian Constitution guarantee a right of assembly.

Katherine Town Council By-Laws (By-Law 167) makes provision for public participation at a meeting viz: *“Except when invited to do so by the members at a meeting or in accordance with by-law 144 (Deputations), a member of the public is not to take part, or attempt to take part, in the meeting”*

Operation

Local Government is a largely autonomous body, mainly responsible to residents and ratepayers for the way in which they operate. This includes the running of meetings.

It is an expectation that all Elected Members, staff and community members participating in meetings of Council must act with good intentions and behave to the standard of conduct expected by the community. These standards can be identified as integrity, leadership, selflessness, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and respect. Meetings should operate fairly and these procedures should improve decision-making, not personal or political advantage.

Community Open Forum Structure

A community open forum will be held, unless otherwise determined by the Mayor or Council, immediately prior to each Ordinary Meeting of Council.

All questions to be asked, or statements to be made, at the Community Open Forum shall be submitted in accordance with the attached submission form and procedure, unless otherwise provided in this policy.

A question or statement (in the proper form) will be in the hands of the Chief Executive Officer by 12 noon on the last working day prior to the Ordinary Meeting at which the question or statement is to be presented.

Questions or statements will be forwarded on receipt to the relevant department head for preparation of a response, and returned to the Chief Executive Officer no later than 12 noon on the day of the meeting. Copies of the questions/statements and the proposed response will be delivered to the Mayor prior to commencement of the meeting.

Presenters will be invited to read their question/statement and the Mayor will answer (as appropriate) or may direct the Chief Executive Officer, the relevant manager, or Committee Chairman to answer depending on the nature of the question.

The Chief Executive Officer may refuse to accept a question/statement for the purpose of the Community Open Forum if:

- The question/statement is in the same nature as a matter to be discussed at the meeting that night and in the opinion of the Chief Executive Officer, Council's consideration of the matter may be prejudiced, or
- The presenter (or another person) has submitted the same or a substantially similar question/statement (in meaning or content) to one that has been submitted in the previous three months, or
- The question/statement pertains to a matter prescribed as confidential, or
- The question/statement is in the nature of an administrative query, and the Chief Executive Officer considers it appropriate to respond administratively, or if
- For any reason, the Chief Executive Officer deems the question/statement to be inappropriate.

In instances where the Chief Executive Officer refuses to accept a question/statement for the purpose of a Community Open Forum, the submitter will be advised of the reasons for such action.

All persons submitting a question/statement will be entitled to have one question/statement only dealt with. Additional questions/statements may be permitted but always so as to maintain equality amongst submitters as to the number of questions/statements to be presented where more than one question/statement is put forward.

