



Meet your Ward Councillor Protocol

(A5440413)

1. Purpose

The purpose of this protocol is to provide guidance when holding *Meet your Ward Councillor* meetings and to ensure the risks to health and safety of Councillors and council staff are managed in accordance with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020* and *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*.

2. Scope

This protocol applies to all Councillors wishing to hold a *Meet your Ward Councillor* meeting with members of the community from their local Ward on specific ward or municipal issues.

All *Meet your Ward Councillor* meetings will be resourced by the relevant Council officer/s and Manager/Director/CEO. Meetings will be held in the Councillors Meeting Room at Council's Civic Centre, at 30 Davey Street, Frankston, or at a designated Community Centre, as specified under Section 9 – Locations, and will be subject to associated costs for the hire of the venue room.

Meet your Ward Councillor meetings are not decision-making forums but serve as an opportunity for the community to meet with their Ward Councillors to discuss specific ward or municipal issues.

This protocol does not apply to informal Ward meetings initiated by the Councillor with members of the community from their local Ward on specific ward or municipal issues. These informal meetings are not to use Council resources – such as staff attendance, promotions, social media posts, and council equipment, like A-frames. Councillors may provide details of their scheduled informal meetings in their respective Councillor's Column, in the quarterly publication of Frankston City News.

In circumstances where Councillors would like to meet with members of the community on a council matter, which is within the functions and duties of their role as a Councillor, they can arrange a meeting at the Civic Centre via the Councillors Office, and this is outside the scope of this Protocol.

3. Background

Council recognises the importance of Ward Councillors directly engaging with members of the community in their local ward throughout the Council term.

In 2020 the Local Government Act 2020 was released which introduced single Councillor ward structures, to be rolled out across Victoria in stages (2020, and 2024). In October 2024, the single Councillor Ward structure came into effect for Frankston City Council. There are nine Councillors, each elected into one of nine Wards: Ballam Ward, Centenary Park Ward, Derinya Ward, Elizabeth Murdoch Ward, Kananook Ward, Lyrebird Ward, Pines Ward, Wilton Ward and Yamala Ward.

In 2023, following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, community disruptions to Council Meetings and Council run events were experienced with a heightened risk to health and safety to Councillors, council staff and the community. These led to increased measures being put in place to minimise risks to health and safety in the workplace.

Following this, Local Government Victoria introduced reforms to the *Local Government Act 2020*, which have strengthened the requirements for managing risks to health and safety and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*.

As a result of these changes, a review of the approach to Ward meetings in a single Councillor Ward structure was required. *Meet your Ward Councillor* meetings are scheduled on a quarterly basis and provide structure for Councillors to meet with members of the community on topics relevant to their Ward. The meetings are to be held at the Frankston Civic Centre during regular business hours. They provide an opportunity for local residents to raise topics and ask questions of their local Ward Councillor.

Meet Your Ward Councillor meetings may be requested by members of the community, via the form on Council's website.

4. Risks to Health and Safety

Councils have primary obligations, as an employer, under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (OHS Act) to provide a safe workplace. Secondary obligations are owed by CEOs, as persons who manage and control workplaces and because of their status as 'officers' of Councils.

In order to discharge their obligations under the OHS Act, CEOs must implement measures to minimise any risks to health (includes psychological health) and safety that may arise at Council premises. This includes risks that relate to inappropriate behaviour by Councillors.

The Model Councillor Code of Conduct requires Councillors to take reasonable care to protect the health and safety of others by adhering to these measures implemented by CEOs

As outlined in Section 2. Behaviours, paragraph 2 in the Model Councillor Code of Conduct:

- *A Councillor, as an individual at the workplace, must take reasonable care for their own health and safety and take reasonable care that their acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of other persons by:*
 - a) *Adhering to applicable systems and policies put in place by the Chief Executive Officer to manage risks to health and safety in the workplace; and*
 - b) *Complying, so far as the Councillor is reasonably able, with any reasonable instruction that is given by the Chief Executive Officer to manage risks to health and safety.*

To manage the new single Councillor Ward structure, the *Meet your Ward Councillor* meetings are conducted in a controlled setting to mitigate the safety risks to Councillors and Council staff when interacting with members of the community.

Should Councillors choose to initiate their own interaction with members of the community, such as an open invitation to attend catch ups at cafes and community centres or listening posts in public places, they do so at their own discretion. There are potential disruption risks that may pose a risk to health and safety. As a result, council resources – such as staff attendance, promotions, social media posts, and council equipment, like A-frames, will not be used to support such interactions. However, Councillors may provide details of their informal meetings in their respective Councillor's Column, in the quarterly publication of Frankston City News.

In circumstances where Councillors would like to meet with members of the community on a council matter, which is within the functions and duties of their role as a Councillor, they can arrange a meeting at the Civic Centre via the Councillors Office

5. Data Security Risks

Privacy laws

Council and Councillors have obligations under various privacy laws, particularly the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* and the *Health Records Act 2001*. Councils handle vast amounts of information about individuals, including residents, staff, contractors and Councillors.

As elected officials, Councillors are personally required to comply with privacy laws and may be individually liable for privacy breaches.

Formal steps must be taken to respond to privacy breaches and complaints. Council has a privacy officer to provide privacy advice and manage responses to breaches and complaints, which can escalate to external regulators.

Councillors must be mindful of privacy when interacting with numerous members of the community in a single setting.

Under Freedom of Information, members of the public are entitled to ask for copies of Council records, including emails and Teams chats. There is a formal statutory process to determine what must be released which takes account of personal privacy and other interests.

Victorian Protective Data Security Standards

Council is required to comply with the Victorian Protective Data Security Standards to protect the confidentiality, integrity and availability of Council information, including protecting information from unauthorised access and loss.

Local Government Act

The *Local Government Act 2020* (LGA) classifies certain information as “confidential”. Confidential information includes certain personal, commercial, land use planning, security, law enforcement, legal privileged, and closed Council meeting information. It is an offence

for a Councillor or former Councillor to disclose confidential information. Other laws also include confidentiality requirements for Council.

The public transparency principles in the LGA and the Model Councillor Code of Conduct also refer to Councillors' obligations when managing Council information.

Resident queries

Councillors must ensure they tell residents how their information will be used and shared, for example "I will pass your name, contact details and concerns to Council staff who may contact you directly to follow up the issue."

If the query relates to the responsibilities of another agency or elected representative, Councillors must ask the resident for permission before passing their information on. Alternatively, let them know which agency to contact about the issue.

Permission should also be sought from the resident before sharing their information with other Councillors.

Residents who raise concerns regarding other residents or properties will only be entitled to limited information about the outcome and Council's actions.

Resident queries should be referred to the Council administration only via established processes and information should only be shared with nominated officers.

6. Principles

- a) *Meet your Ward Councillor* meetings are to be held during business hours at Frankston Civic Centre, Councillors Meeting Room or a designated Community Centre (refer to Section 9 – Locations). Meetings may be held virtually, if requested.
- b) The *Meet your Ward Councillor* meetings will be held in 3-4 hourly blocks, once per quarter. Additional blocks may be scheduled at the request of the Mayor or CEO.
- c) The scheduled *Meet you Ward Councillor* meeting times will be advertised on Council's website, allowing for members of the community to request a meeting, via the online *Request to Meet your Ward Councillor* form.
- d) A single *Meet your Ward Councillor* meeting request submission may comprise of no more than 3 people from the community in attendance. The scheduled timeslots to discuss any one topic will be for a duration of no longer than 15mins.
- e) Topics for the *Meet your Ward Councillor* meeting will be triaged – the CEO will assess if it is appropriate for a Councillor to meet, in accordance with the role of a Councillor. If the matter is operational in nature, the CEO may refer the matter to the relevant Manager to resolve.
- f) Any clarification or additional information required for the meeting will be provided to the Councillor by the relevant Director/Manager or Councillors Office, prior to the *Meet your Ward Councillor* meeting.

- g) Meetings must be attended by the relevant Ward Councillor, who will Chair the meeting, Councillors Office representative and the responsible Manager or Director, relevant to the topic to be discussed, or may be attended by the CEO.
- h) Notes and/or actions must be recorded by the Councillors Office representative and entered into the relevant system for follow up.
- i) Notes/actions and outcomes must be reported back to the relevant Councillor and community member (if appropriate).
- j) The Councillor and/or Manager/Director in attendance may end the meeting if the community member is disruptive or displays threatening behaviour.
- k) No meeting is to occur within 6 months in the lead up to a Local Government Election.

7. Protocol

- 7.1. Councillors Office to schedule the *Meet your Ward Councillor* meetings for the year and publish on Council's website.
- 7.2. *Request to Meet your Ward Councillor* forms are submitted by the community via Council's website and received to the Councillors Office. An acknowledgement is to be sent from the Councillors Office to the submitter.
- 7.3. Councillors Office is to notify the Mayor, Manager/Director/Chief Executive Officer – the CEO is to triage the matter to determine suitability for *Meet your Ward Councillor* meeting
- 7.4. Upon approval, Councillors Office to notify the relevant Ward Councillor of the submitter's request, topic of discussion and schedule the timeslot accordingly.
- 7.5. Relevant Manager/Director to provide the Councillor any background material that may be necessary for the meeting.
- 7.6. During the meeting, the Councillor is to Chair the meeting and relevant Manager/Director to attend and provide advice/input on the topic discussed.
- 7.7. Councillors Office representative to take notes/actions during the meeting.
- 7.8. Following the meeting, Councillors Office representative to add the notes and actions into the relevant system.
- 7.9. Following the meeting, the Manager is to address any actions from the meeting and provide the outcome to the Councillor and community member (if appropriate) and close off in the relevant system.
- 7.10. The meeting is to be logged in the *Meet your Ward Councillor* Meetings Register.
- 7.11. Councillor Office to publish the *Meet your Ward Councillor* Meetings register on Council's website and the Transparency Hub on a quarterly basis.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

Councillors	<p>Responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring the <i>Meet your Ward Councillor</i> meeting aligns with the <i>Meet your Ward Councillor Protocol</i>; • Chairing the <i>Meet your Ward Councillor</i> meeting; • Not committing or making decisions on behalf of Council; • Ensuring behaviours and engagement is in accordance with the Councillor Model Code of Conduct;
Councillors Office	<p>Responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaising with Councillors and the submitter with regards to the arrangements for the <i>Meet your Ward Councillor</i> meeting; • Making necessary bookings and logistics for the <i>Meet your Ward Councillor</i> meeting and publishing the dates of Council's website; • Attending and taking notes and actions from the <i>Meet your Ward Councillor</i> meeting; • Logging the <i>Meet your Ward Councillor</i> meeting notes and actions into the relevant system and recording the details in the <i>Meet your Ward Councillor</i> Meeting Register; • Ensuring the <i>Meet your Ward Councillor</i> Meetings register is published on Council's website and the Transparency Hub on a quarterly basis.
Managers/ Directors	<p>Responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing relevant information to the Councillor prior to the <i>Meet your Ward Councillor</i> meeting, as required; • Attending, participating and providing advice for the duration of the Ward meeting, as required; • Ensuring all actions are followed through, following the meeting; • Reporting back on the outcomes and resolutions of actions to the relevant Councillor and community member.

9. Locations

Frankston Civic Centre: 30 Davey Street, Frankston

***Belvedere Community Centre:** Healthy Futures Hub, 151 East Street, Seaford

Frankston North Community Centre: 26 Mahogany Avenue, Frankston North

Frankston South Community Centre: 55 Towerhill Road Frankston South

Karingal Place: 103 Ashleigh Avenue, Frankston

***Langwarrin Community Centre:** 2 Lang Road, Langwarrin*

***Lyrebird Community Centre:** 203 Lyrebird Drive Carrum Downs*

***Orwil Street Community House:** 16 Orwil Street, Frankston

***Naim Marr Djambana:** 32 Nursery Ave, Frankston

**Venues may incur a cost*

10. Definitions

Term	Definition
<i>Business hours</i>	Means Monday to Friday between the hours of 9.00am – 5.00pm
<i>Local Government Election</i>	means the time in which a new local Government is elected by the community
<i>Virtual Meeting</i>	Means a meeting held solely by electronic means, usually via Teams (preferred) or Zoom (if required)
<i>Ward</i>	Means an electoral district, for administrative and representative purposes, as prescribed by the Victorian Electoral Commission
<i>Ward Councillor</i>	Means a Councillor elected to a specific ward
<i>Ward Meeting</i>	means a meeting relevant to the Councillor and their Ward and involves a member of the community

11. Related Documents

Legislation

- *Local Government Act 2020*
- *Health Records Act 2001*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*
- *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*

Document and resources

- Councillor Model Code of Conduct
- Election Period Policy
- Governance Rules
- Meet your Ward Councillor Meetings Register

Appendix A:

Community Submission Form – Request to Meet your Ward Councillor

Meeting Details

Topic:

Location of issue (if relevant):

Purpose / issue for discussion:

Proposed dates:

Attendees:

Select relevant Ward or Councillor:

Contact Details

Name:

Email:

Contact number:

Organisation (if relevant):

Background information

Does this topic relate to a council report or decision?

Add additional information:

Attach file: