

Policy

Councillor Induction & Professional Development Version 1.0

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Policy Objective

Tweed Shire Council is committed to ensuring that the mayor and councillors have access to training and educational opportunities which will assist them to develop and maintain the skills and knowledge required to effectively perform their civic role and responsibilities under the Local Government Act 1993 ('the Act').

Councillors are individually and collectively accountable to the local community for the performance of the council. Each councillor has a responsibility to make all reasonable efforts to acquire and maintain the skills necessary to perform the role of a councillor.

Scope

This policy applies to the mayor and councillors of Tweed Shire Council.

Policy

Statement of commitment

Tweed Shire Council is committed to implementing appropriate induction and ongoing professional development programs for the mayor and councillors to ensure they fulfil their statutory roles and responsibilities. As part of this program, the general manager or nominee will work with the mayor and each councillor to develop a professional development plan that addresses target skills and knowledge for development as identified by the mayor and councillors and/ or Council.

Induction program

Tweed Shire Council will provide an induction program for new and returning councillors, as well as a supplementary program for the mayor, to ensure they are provided all the information they need to effectively fulfil their roles in the first few months of Council's term, or their term as mayor, and feel confident in their ability to do so. The induction program will cover:

- their roles, responsibilities and formal obligations
- what the council does and how the council operates, including an overview of integrated planning and reporting and land- use planning
- their financial management responsibilities
- the key issues and tasks for the new council
- the legislation, rules, principles and political context under which councils operate
- Council's organisational structure and the roles and responsibilities of staff
- key Council policies and procedures they must comply with
- the role of Council meetings and how to participate effectively in them
- support available to the mayor and councillors and where they can go to get more information or assistance
- how to speak to the media appropriately and effectively, and
- information on the process for electing the mayor (where applicable).

In the case of the mayor, the program will also cover:

- the role and responsibilities of the mayor as leader of the council, including ceremonial functions
- how to chair Council meetings
- the roles and functions of regional and other external bodies Council is a member of
- how to oversee and liaise with the general manager, including understanding recruitment processes and leading performance reviews, as well as the standard contract of employment
- how to lead Council's integrated planning and reporting, and
- how to manage code of conduct complaints about the general manager.

The mayor and councillors must have a working knowledge and understanding of these areas by the end of the induction program.

The induction program will also include activities to help the governing body establish itself as a cohesive and collaborative team focused on a common purpose with shared values and goals. Activities will aim to ensure mayors and councillors, as a governing body, understand the need to:

- build relationships with each other based on trust and mutual respect
- contribute to a positive and ethical culture within the governing body
- encourage and facilitate collaboration with each other
- work towards consensus as members of the governing body for the benefit of the community
- win concessions without damaging relationships within the governing body
- champion and communicate the council's vision and strategic plans as a cohesive team
- respect the diversity of skills and experiences on the governing body, and
- communicate and uphold the decisions of Council in a respectful way, even if their own position was not adopted.

Activities should also help the mayor, as the leader of the governing body, to:

- act as a stabilising influence and show leadership, and
- promote a culture of integrity and accountability within Council and when representing Council in the community and elsewhere.

The mayor and councillors must attend all induction sessions when first elected. Returning councillors (including the mayor) must also attend all induction sessions to ensure the effective and cohesive operation of the governing body.

Tweed Shire Council will evaluate the induction program at the end of each Council term to determine whether it has achieved these outcomes, and to identify and address areas for improvement.

Assessment of skills and knowledge

The minimum skills and knowledge required of councillors to perform their roles and responsibilities effectively are listed at the end of this policy (see Appendix B). Council will periodically review these criteria to ensure they remain current and relevant.

At the beginning of each term of councilors assessment will be made of the skills and knowledge each councillor brings to their role against these minimum requirements to identify any gaps that their professional development plan should address.

To identify suitable professional development opportunities, Council will obtain this information through activities such as self-assessments, questionnaires, councillor feedback, observations during Council meetings and workshops and interviews.

Ongoing professional development program

An individual professional development plan will be developed for the mayor and each councillor. The plans will include:

- the outcome of Council's needs analysis
- the knowledge and skills the councillor or mayor brings to their role
- the development needs of each councillor or mayor and the priority given to each development need
- how the knowledge or skill will be developed (i.e. on-the-job training, mentoring, internal training, external training, briefing session etc.), and
- operational information such as timeframes for development, who is responsible for organising training/development, approval processes and estimated costs.

Training activities may include:

- in-house workshops and briefing sessions conducted by the council with appropriate staff, trainers and guest speakers
- attendance at external training courses and events, for example, seminars, conferences and workshops
- practical on-the-job training
- printed materials such as training booklets
- mentoring and/or
- online training resources.

The professional development plans will be developed in consultation with the mayor, each individual councillor, the governing body as a whole and the general manager.

Tweed Shire Council will evaluate the professional development program at the end of each council term to assess whether it was effective in assisting the mayor and councillors to develop the skills and knowledge listed in Council's needs analysis.

Responsibilities

The mayor and each councillor are responsible for making themselves available to attend any development activities identified in their professional development plan. The mayor and all councillors must make all reasonable endeavours to attend and participate in the induction sessions and professional development activities arranged for them during the term of the council.

The Executive Manager - People, Communication & Governance, assisted by the Manager Corporate Governance and Learning and Development Officer, are responsible for planning, scheduling and facilitating induction and council initiated professional development sessions for the mayor and councillors in consultation with the general manager. Coordination of registrations, booking accommodation and travel for councillor nominated initiatives will be coordinated through the Personal Assistant – Mayor & Councillors.

The General Manager has overall responsibility for Tweed Shire Council's induction and professional development program.

Notification of Induction and Professional Development Activities to the Mayor and Councillors

The Mayor and Councillors will be provided with as much notice as possible for upcoming induction and professional development activities.

Budget

A budget allocation for the term of their council will be provided to support the training and professional development activities undertaken by the mayor and councillors. Expenditure will be monitored and reported to Council quarterly.

Individual Councillor budget allocation is to include funding for both Councillor identified and Council identified professional development initiatives, but does not include:

- funding for attendance of one (1) Councillor as voting delegate at the Australian Local Government Conference;
- up to four (4) Councillors as voting delegates at the NSW Local Government Conference.
- Mayoral attendance at bi-annual Mayoral weekend seminars.

Professional development costs will be exclusive of GST.

Approval of training and/or expenses

The mayor and councillors are encouraged to identify appropriate professional development opportunities, provided it aligns with their professional development plan and is within their overall budget allocation.

Approval of training and payment and reimbursement for expenses relating to a councillor's registration and attendance at training, will be determined in accordance with Tweed Shire Council's *Councillors – Payment of Expenses and Provision of Facilities for Mayor and Councillors Policy*.

Approval is not required for professional development activities with no related costs.

Reporting

The Manager Corporate Governance, with assistance from the Personal Assistant – Mayor and Councillors and Learning and Development Officer, will maintain data pertaining to councillor induction and professional development activities and attendance.

The General Manager of Tweed Shire Council will:

- report to the first Council meeting held after the induction program is delivered the activities offered to the mayor and each councillor as part of the induction program, and whether or not they participated in them
- report to the first Council meeting held after 30 June each year identifying the professional development activities offered to the mayor and each councillor in the year to 30 June and whether or not they participated in them, and
- publish these reports on Council's website.

Related Legislation

Office of Local Government Councillor Induction and Professional Development Guidelines

Compliance

Office of Local Government Councillor Induction and Professional Development Guidelines

Review Period

Within 12 months of a general election.

Useful Links

[Tweed Shire Council website](#)
[Office of Local Government](#)

Appendix A Guiding Principles for Councils

General principles (section 8A (1))

Councils should:

- provide strong and effective representation, leadership, planning and decision-making
- carry out functions in a way that provides the best possible value for residents and ratepayers
- plan strategically, using the integrated planning and reporting framework, for the provision of effective and efficient services and regulation to meet the diverse needs of the local community
- apply the integrated planning and reporting framework in carrying out their functions so as to achieve desired outcomes and continuous improvements
- work cooperatively with other councils and the state government to achieve desired outcomes for the local community
- manage lands and other assets so that current and future local community needs can be met in an affordable way
- work with others to secure appropriate services for local community needs
- act fairly, ethically and without bias in the interests of the local community, and
- be responsible employers and provide a consultative and supportive working environment for staff.

Decision-making principles (section 8A (2))

Councils should:

- recognise diverse local community needs and interests
- consider social justice principles
- consider the long-term and cumulative effects of actions on future generations, and
- consider the principles of ecologically sustainable development
- Council decision-making should be transparent and decision-makers are to be accountable for decisions and omissions.

Community participation principle (section 8A (3))

Councils should actively engage with their local communities, through the use of the integrated planning and reporting framework and other measures.

Principles of sound financial management (section 8B)

Council spending should be responsible and sustainable, aligning general revenue and expenses.

Councils should:

- invest in responsible and sustainable infrastructure for the benefit of the local community
- have effective financial and asset management, including sound policies and processes for:
 - performance management and reporting
 - asset maintenance and enhancement
 - funding decisions, and
 - risk management practices
- have regard to achieving intergenerational equity, including by ensuring that policy decisions are made after considering their financial effects on future generations, and by ensuring that the current generation funds the cost of its services.

Integrated planning and reporting principles (section 8C)

Councils should:

- identify and prioritise key local community needs and aspirations and consider regional priorities
- identify strategic goals to meet those needs and aspirations
- develop activities, and prioritise actions, to work towards the strategic goals
- ensure that the strategic goals, and the activities developed to work towards them, may be achieved within council resources
- regularly review and evaluate progress towards achieving strategic goals
- maintain an integrated approach to planning, delivering, monitoring and reporting on strategic goals
- collaborate with others to maximise the achievement of strategic goals
- manage risks to the local community or area or to the council effectively and proactively, and
- make appropriate evidence-based adaptations to meet changing needs and circumstances.

Appendix B: Roles and Responsibilities Under the Act and Regulations

Governing body of a council (section 223)

The mayor and councillors collectively comprise the governing bodies of councils. The role of the governing body is to:

- direct and control the affairs of the council in consultation with the general manager
- provide effective civic leadership to the local community
- ensure as far as possible the financial sustainability of the council
- ensure as far as possible that the council acts in accordance with the principles prescribed under the Act and the council's plans, programs, strategies and policies
- develop and endorse the community strategic plan, delivery program and other strategic plans, programs, strategies and policies
- determine and adopt a rating and revenue policy and operational plans that support the optimal allocation of the council's resources to implement the council's strategic plans and for the benefit of the local area
- keep the performance of the council under review, including service delivery
- make decisions necessary for the proper exercise of the council's regulatory functions
- determine the process for the appointment of the general manager and for monitoring their performance
- determine the senior staff positions within the organisation structure of the council
- consult regularly with community organisations and other key stakeholders and keep them informed of the council's decisions and activities, and
- ensure that the council acts honestly, efficiently and appropriately.

The governing body is to consult with the general manager in directing and controlling the affairs of the council.

The Mayor (section 226)

The mayor is often considered the voice of the council and the leader of the community. While the mayor has the same roles and responsibilities as councillors, the mayor is essentially the "first among equals" and is expected to exercise a leadership role within a council. This leadership role is reflected in the mayor's extra responsibilities.

The role of the mayor is to:

- be the leader of the council and a leader in the local community
- advance community cohesion and promote civic awareness
- be the principal member and spokesperson of the governing body, including representing the views of the council in regard to its local priorities
- exercise, in cases of necessity, the policy-making functions of the governing body of the council between meetings of the council
- preside at meetings of the council and ensure that meetings of the council are conducted efficiently, effectively and in accordance with the Act

- ensure the timely development and adoption of the council's strategic plans, programs and policies
- promote the effective and consistent implementation of the council's strategic plans, programs and policies
- promote partnerships between the council and key stakeholders
- advise, consult with and provide strategic direction to the general manager in relation to the implementation of the council's strategic plans and policies
- in conjunction with the general manager, ensure adequate opportunities and mechanisms for engagement between the council and the local community
- carry out the civic and ceremonial functions of the mayoral office
- represent the council on regional organisations and at inter-governmental forums at the regional, state and commonwealth levels
- in consultation with the councillors, lead performance appraisals of the general manager, and
- exercise any other functions of the council that the council determines.

Individual councillors (section 232)

Councillors are individually and collectively accountable to the local community for the performance of the council. Each councillor has a responsibility to:

- be an active and contributing member of the governing body
- make considered and well informed decisions as a member of the governing body
- participate in the development of the council's integrated planning and reporting framework
- represent the collective interests of residents, ratepayers and the local community
- facilitate communication between the local community and the governing body
- uphold and represent accurately the policies and decisions of the governing body, and
- make all reasonable efforts to acquire and maintain the skills necessary to perform the role of a councillor.

Proposed Amendments to the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005

Councillor Induction and Professional Development Programs

- The general manager is to ensure an induction program is delivered for newly elected and returning councillors and a specialised supplementary induction program for the mayor within six months of their election.
- The general manager is to ensure an ongoing professional development program is delivered for the mayor and each councillor over the term of the council for the purposes of assisting them to acquire and maintain the knowledge and skills necessary to perform their roles.

- The content of the ongoing professional development program to be delivered to the mayor and councillors is to be determined in consultation with the mayor and each councillor and is to have regard to the specific knowledge and skills required by the mayor, each individual councillor and the governing body as a whole to perform their roles.
- Mayors and councillors must make all reasonable efforts to participate in the activities offered to them as part of an induction or ongoing professional development program.
- The general manager is to report to the first council meeting held following the completion of the delivery of the induction program identifying the activities offered to the mayor and each councillor as part of the induction program, and whether or not the mayor and each councillor participated in the activities offered to them.
- The general manager is to report to the first council meeting held following 30 June in each year identifying the ongoing professional development activities offered to the mayor and each councillor in the year to 30 June as part of the professional development program, and whether or not the mayor and each councillor participated in the activities offered to them under the program.
- The general manager is to ensure these reports are published on the council's website.
- The Chief Executive of the Office of Local Government may, at the request of a general manager, exempt the council from the requirement to publish details of induction and ongoing professional development activities offered to the mayor or an individual councillor where he or she is satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances.

