

AMENDED ITEM

24 August 2011
To the Ordinary Meeting

Director's Report
Corporate Services Department

7.13 Options for Informing Councillors

TRIM REFERENCE: F2004/06496 - D02691618

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SUMMARY

Reporting options for engaging Councillors in respect of matters currently scheduled as Councillor Briefings.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council note the report on Options for Informing Councillors on business matters.

BACKGROUND

Council has recently raised concern regarding the backlog of matters scheduled for Councillor Briefings. To this end Council resolved in part the following:

- "2 That Council schedule an additional briefing session after inspections on an ongoing basis subject to Councillor attendance.*
- 3 That Council report on flexible options for informing Councillors on business matters e.g. online data, after hours briefings and voice conferences."*

Purpose of Briefings

Briefings serve one or more of the following purposes:

- A detailed presentation of complex issues
- Staff seeking feedback
- Offers a less structured environment to foster free flowing collegiate discussion
- Information and/or explanation regarding current issues or actions taken by staff
- Seeking a collective view on direction where several options exist
- Opportunity for Councillors to question staff on matters that are unclear
- Opportunity for Councillors to put forward ideas and or community views

Types of matters that are considered at briefings are:

- Matters scheduled to be considered by Council at Ordinary meetings
- WSC Strategic Planning processes
- Grant opportunities
- Presentations by other Government or private organisations

How the Briefing List is Compiled

Briefings may be listed by:

- resolution of Council
- the General Manager
- the General Manager upon request of a Director

The briefing list is dynamic, with new briefing requests arising throughout the year with constant deferrals and deletions compounding the difficulty for ensuring Councillors are sufficiently brief on matter to be brought forward for their decisions.

Many briefings are also “date sensitive” in that they are often tied to process milestones (eg strategic planning process) or emerging issues.

The General Manger and the Mayor manage the list.

Scheduling of Briefings

Briefings are currently held on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month with the exception of school holiday dates (ie on Ordinary meeting days). Briefings commence at 12:00pm and conclude at 3:30pm.

Depending on the content, a briefing may be scheduled for 30 minutes or one hour. On average, each briefing session contains 1 x 1 hour briefing and 5 x 30 minute briefings. (6 briefings)

Council recently resolved to conduct an additional briefing session after Inspections. These sessions will be held on the first Wednesday of the month generally between 3pm and 6pm. This will enable an additional 1 x 1 hour briefing and 4 x 30 briefings. (5 briefings)

The total outstanding listed briefings as at 11 August, 2011, is 38. On average, 3.4 sessions would be needed to exhaust the current listings.

For the year September 2011 to August 2012 there are 27 scheduled briefing sessions. There are another 4 opportunities to schedule briefings in months where five Wednesdays occur (see calendar attached).

Briefings Listed	Briefings per Session (average)	Briefing Sessions to clear current list	Available briefing sessions for year (Sept 11 – August 12)	Briefings per year (average)
38	11 6 on briefing day 5 on inspection/ briefing day	3.4	27 18 sessions of 6 briefings (108) 9 sessions of 5 briefings (45)	153

CURRENT STATUS

Councillors have indicated that it is increasingly difficult to balance their Council, community, private employment and family life commitments.

The Council has acknowledged the purpose and value of briefings and has indicated concern at the number of briefings outstanding at any one time.

The Council has requested that staff investigate practical options for informing Councillors on matters to be brought before them in Chambers.

THE PROPOSAL

It is proposed to provide the Council with a range of options for engaging councillors in matters currently delivered via the briefing process. The options include technological means and altered briefing days/times.

OPTIONS

A table indicating the options together with an indication of advantages/opportunities and disadvantages/risks is attached.

A description of each option is provided below:

1. **Face to face briefings**
As per current model.
2. **Audio Conferencing – Interactive Real Time**
Use of conference phone call facilities.
3. **Audio Conferencing and Collaboration – Interactive Real Time**
Use of conference phone call with presentation guided by presenter accessible and interactive from Councillor PC's. (eg Go To meeting)
4. **Video Conferencing and Collaboration – Interactive Real Time**
Use of video conferencing and presentation guided by presenter accessible from Councillor PC's. Councillors interact via web cam.
5. **Audio Only – Store and Retrieve**
Pre-recorded audio commentary available via download and disc.
6. **Audio and Presentation – Store and Retrieve**
Pre-recorded audio commentary and powerpoint presentation available via download and disc.
7. **Video and Presentation – Store and Retrieve**
Pre-recorded audio-visual commentary and power point presentation available via download and disc.

8. Additional Face to Face Briefings – Week day evening

Briefings held in evening on a weeknight. One off in addition to Wednesdays or regularly scheduled.

9. Additional Face to Face Briefings – Weekend

Briefings held on one day of the weekend. One off in addition to Wednesdays or regularly scheduled.

Supplementary Option

Voting on specific questions, requests managed by Outlook.

Combined Options

The attached table indicates the options, cost impact and advantages and disadvantages of each option. It demonstrates the difficulty in providing a solution that will meet the collective needs of the Councillors.

Councillors may wish to combine some of the options to improve the current status.

STRATEGIC LINKS

The briefing environment is an important part of the WSC strategic planning process. In these sessions Councillors have the chance to contribute ideas and feedback from the community, agree on priorities and direction.

Budget Impact

Several of the options provided indicate a budget impact. If Council were of a mind to choose an option with a budgetary impact it would need to manage the impact through the quarterly review process.

CONSULTATION

Nil

GOVERNANCE AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

WSC has a protocol for managing confidential information distributed and discussed during briefings. Any amendment to the current briefing process would require consideration of how confidential information is managed.

MATERIAL RISKS AND ISSUES

Nil

CONCLUSION

Councillors have indicated that it is increasingly difficult to balance their Council, community, private employment and family life commitments.

The Council has acknowledged the purpose and value of briefings and has raised concern regarding the backlog of matters scheduled for Councillor Briefings.

This report responds to Council's request for flexible options for engaging Councillors.

ATTACHMENTS

- | | | |
|---|--|-----------|
| 1 | 2011_yearly_calendar_sep_2011 - Aug 2012 | D02732673 |
| 2 | Options for Engagement of Councillors | D02732675 |

2011-2012 Calendar

Briefing Days	
Inspections and Briefing Day	
School Holidays	
5 Wednesday Months	

September 2011

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

October 2011

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

November 2011

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

December 2011

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

January 2012

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

February 2012

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29			

March 2012

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

April 2012

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

May 2012

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

June 2012

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

July 2012

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

August 2012

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Options for Engagement of Councillors

Option	Methodology	Technology	Cost Impact (estimate)	Advantage/Opportunity	Disadvantage/Risk
1	Scheduled briefing face to face held at WSC (current method)	NA			
2	Interactive Real Time	Audio Conferencing	\$12,500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce Councillor travel time • Real time interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitable times for all Councillors to participate • More formal protocols required to manage discussion • Lack of visual content may limit message • No Visual interaction between parties • Confidentiality risk increased • Additional cost – staff concierge resource
3	Interactive Real Time	Audio Conferencing + Collaboration	\$14,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce Councillor travel time • Real time interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitable times for all Councillors to participate • More formal protocols required to manage discussion • No Visual interaction between parties • Confidentiality risk increased • Additional cost – staff concierge resource •

Option	Methodology	Technology	Cost Impact (estimate)	Advantage/Opportunity	Disadvantage/Risk
4	Interactive Real Time	Video Conferencing + Collaboration	\$70,000 capital \$40,000 ongoing (estimate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce Councillor travel time • Real time interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitable times for all Councillors to participate • More formal protocols required to manage discussion • No Visual interaction between parties • Confidentiality risk increased
5	Store and Retrieve	Audio Only	Small resource impost in IT, presenter & and Councillor Services staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce Councillor travel time • Access at individual convenience • Multiple access to same content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No interaction with presenter or other Councillors • Lack of visual content may limit message • Confidentiality risk increased
6	Store and Retrieve	Audio + Presentation	Small resource impost in IT, presenter & and Councillor Services staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce Councillor travel time • Access at individual convenience • Multiple access to same content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No interaction with presenter or other Councillors • Confidentiality risk increased
7	Store and Retrieve	Video + Presentation	Medium resource impost in IT, presenter & and Councillor Services staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce Councillor travel time • Access at individual convenience • Multiple access to same content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No interaction with presenter or other Councillors • Confidentiality risk increased

Option	Methodology	Technology	Cost Impact (estimate)	Advantage/Opportunity	Disadvantage/Risk
8	Scheduled briefing face to face held at WSC Additional time scheduled on alternate evening (eg Thursday 5:30 -8:00pm)	NA	\$400	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal additional cost Average additional 6 briefings per session Outside normal working hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase impact on private and family commitments for staff and Councillors
9	Scheduled briefing face to face held at WSC Full day briefings – Weekends Every two months or quarterly	NA	\$1000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal additional cost Average additional 12 briefings per session Outside normal working hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase impact on private and family commitments for staff and Councillors

Supplementary Option

Option	Methodology	Technology	Cost Impact (estimate)	Advantage/Opportunity	Disadvantage/Risk
A	Real or delayed time feedback	Voting Buttons via Outlook	Neutral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback able to be given to specific requests 	