

Strathbogie Shire Councillors

10 Point Plan

Strategic Practice Guidelines

Internal Working Document

Municipal Monitor 10 Point Plan

In 2022 Municipal Monitor Janet Dore worked with Strathbogie Shire Council to provide invaluable learnings and support. Ms Dore provided a 10 Point Plan to ensure Council's commitment to good governance and learning continued. The following is the Councillors response and commitment to this plan.

1. Understand the role of a Councillor (Local Gov. Act and Code of Conduct)

- Commit to a strategic agenda for Councillor Only Time.
This may include:
Councillors sharing the job of leading monthly discussions on a section of the act, learnings from shared observations of other councils and the sharing of resources and deliberate training experiences described below.
- Seek and participate in a mentorship program with experienced Councillors.
- Observe other Council Meetings. Group and/or in-person attendance of up to four meetings each year. Can be completed online. Critical issues to be shared with learnings. Examining both rural and metro-looking at opportunities for mutual learning and possible future commercial collaboration.
- Listen to the VLGA podcast which is also a useful learning tool.

2. Understand the role of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

- Attend the New-Councillor induction session on the role of CEO by expert presenters, Maddocks.
- Attend a debrief with CEO following this session.
- Develop a learning experience dealing with a case study examining the division of responsibilities between council and the executive in order to ground learning under the expert tuition from Maddocks

3. Understand the Governance Rules

- On a monthly basis look at a specific governance issue arising from the past month's briefings and council meetings. Dig deep, seek support from the executive as to what the best practice is. Arrange every two months expert speakers on Local Government Governance issues. These presentations to include topics like:
 - a. Meeting procedure and motions
 - b. The role of councillors and the executive i.e., strategy vs operations
 - c. Developing strategic plans and measuring success
 - d. Conflicts of interest
 - e. The Code of Conduct/Mutual Respect Charter and the tension between debate and misconduct
 - f. CEO remuneration and performance policy and how to do manage it
 - g. Dealing with complex planning issues

- h. Freedom of Information requests (s125)
- i. The making of local laws
- j. What is legal and what is not? The role of the councillor and the extent of their duties and powers

4. Read agendas and briefing materials

- Allocate 10 minutes at the end of each meeting to examine the SOI and our compliance with the 10 point plan. Discuss and learn how to heal any breach. Set aside 30 minutes after a public council meeting for a cup of tea to enhance collegiality, facilitate discussion, aide our ability to dealing with issues and enable healing.
- Allocate two hours during the weekend to reading papers and conduct research.
- Be available to attend a Monday group meeting (in-person or online) – to discuss briefing materials.
- Any questions for clarification ought to be provided to the CEO in advance of Tuesday briefings to ensure that officers can provide the best possible information.
- Be across key issues in the community and be prepared and able to respond in line with Council decisions using publicly available information provided through Project Alerts and the eBulletin. If in doubt councillors should seek clarification from Mayor, CEO or relevant Director.
- Distinguish between anecdotal ratepayer feedback and evidence. Consider how to act on both?

5. Respect each other and staff

- Providing questions and motions in advance (see above), to help officers understand the information we are seeking and ensure motions and evidence collection does not become a weapon, rather a fact finding exercise.
- Seek to understand both sides of any issue, before making a judgement.
- Commit to Tuesday lunches with Councillors and the Executive Leadership Team.
- Politely call out poor behaviour as it's occurring. Identify how each individual prefers to be reminded and make a commitment to reflect on behaviour when called upon.
- Model the Code of Conduct and Mutual Respect Charter.

6. Avoid last minute input

- If it is known or capable of being known beforehand then share it. Do not use information to ambush
- By committing to the sharing of information relationships will improve.
- Develop proposed alternative or amended motions with Officers and share these with fellow Councillors at the Monday meeting. Remember objective evidence is king! If there is not time to collect it, it will be impressionistic, and we will fail in our duty to act in the best interests of the community as a whole.

7. Maintain strategic outlook

- Proactively input into Council Plan and Budget Updates, which focus on our priorities under the Local Government Act. Priorities must be identified around evidence. The debate should not be around what the individual wants, but what is right and legal based on correct and reliable evidence.
- Bring strategic community issues to Councillor-Only Time, then work with ELT to determine how best to respond. Community issues are not to be used to attack

others-they are issues where the correct answer must be adduced from the law and the best evidence and then communicated back to the community member or group in a respectful and reasoned way. Not following or shortcutting this process causes harm in the community and internal distrust between councillors and the executive.

8. Understand Council policies

- Have our own updated copies of policy on our laptops or a hard copy and be familiar with them.
- Commit to a strategic agenda for Councillor Only Time. This includes: specialist training, lead mentoring, reviewing operations of other councils and podcasts. This may also include Councillors sharing the job of leading a monthly discussion on a Council policy. Deliberately select a policy, read it alongside the Code of Conduct and Mutual Respect Charter and identify what is the best behaviour to be leading and driving policy within council.

9. Keep out of operational issues

- Carry and provide 'log an issue' cards (digital or hard copy) for the community to lodge their requests via the 'Submit a Request' button on www.strathbogie.vic.gov.au
- Commit to a strategic agenda for Councillor Only Time. This includes: Determining if community issues are strategic or operational.
- Share any issues with ELT and invite their feedback before taking action.

10. Work together

- Commit to twice yearly Councillor team building exercises. These should be used as opportunities to celebrate success and learning
- Invite ELT as appropriate.
- We are here for our community. Together means not just as a group and with the ELT, but also ensuring our decision making looks at the needs of the community as a whole. Check on any actual and unconscious bias. We represent the community as a whole in decision making and behaviour.

Signed and Dated by Strathbogie Shire Councillors

Cr Laura Binks, Mayor

Date

Cr Paul Murray, Deputy Mayor

Date



Cr Reg Dickinson

Date

Cr Sally Hayes-Burke

Date

Cr Chris Raeburn

Date

Cr Robin Weatherald

Date