



KEMPSEY
Shire Council

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

14th August 2007

GM5

COUNCIL MEETING ARRANGEMENTS

FILE: *

AVB

{Folio No. *}

SUMMARY:

To present a process designed to make Councillors more informed of the issues to be debated at Council meetings.

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DESCRIPTION:

A number of Councils have an informal meeting between Councillors and staff prior to their Council meetings. These meetings allow Councillors to receive additional information that may not be contained in the report, to have an advanced understanding of the reasons for a recommendation or to convey to staff information they may have that the staff member may not be aware of. It is the practice of the current Mayor and of previous Mayors to discuss agenda items with staff so that they are fully aware of the issues to be debated at the Council meeting. Councillors also contact individual staff for additional information. Having an information meeting with all interested Councillors would expand this process.

Two Councils on the Mid North Coast that provide this service are Port Macquarie-Hastings Council and Coffs Harbour City Council. Port Macquarie-Hastings is a formal structure while Coffs Harbour is more informal.

Port Macquarie-Hastings:

- Conduct councillor / staff workshop very 2nd Monday afternoon
- Starts 4.00 pm to whenever (usually 6.00 pm)
- A workshop agenda is prepared but no minutes taken or decisions made
- Is an informal meeting for questions / discussion in relaxed setting
- Councillors and senior staff attend
- Issues on agenda are major items coming up (eg at the next Council meeting which is held on 3rd Monday)
- Advertise the workshop but it is not an open workshop
- At 5.00 pm a segment is allowed for the public to address the workshop if they wish (advertised) and 15 minutes is allowed
- The items the public raise must be community matters, no upcoming development applications – these addresses are to be done at a Council meeting
- Most Councillors regularly attend and support the workshop format

Coffs Harbour City Council:

- Conduct briefing meetings the day before the Council meetings
- Briefing meetings held at 4.00 pm
- Involves question and answer and clarification of agenda items
- Not open to the public
- Councillors and senior staff attend

The advantages of holding an information meeting are:

- Issues can be discussed informally
- Councillors would have a better understanding of the report content
- Less time would be taken at Council meetings
- All Councillors receive the same information
- Allow Councillors to follow-up on issues and information
- Saving in administrative staff time at Council meetings

The disadvantages are:

- Public perception
- Extra meeting for those attending
- All Councillors may not attend
- Could stifle public debate

To hold a formal session such as Port Macquarie-Hastings to me defeats the purpose of informal information sharing. Members of the public should be allowed to attend as observers or allowed to speak by invitation. If an informal meeting is to be held it could be held on the Monday prior to the Council meeting.

REPORT IMPLICATIONS:

- ***Environmental***

Nil

- ***Social***

Nil

- ***Economic (Financial)***

Nil

- ***Policy or Statutory***

Nil

- ***General Manager's Review***

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That Council trial for a three month period holding informal information sessions with staff to discuss Council meeting**

Agenda items.

- 2. That the information sessions be held on the Monday prior to the Council meeting.**
- 3. That the information sessions be open to the public as observers and the public be allowed to speak by invitation.**

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A V Burgess
GENERAL MANAGER