

HUME CITY COUNCIL

Council Meeting Public Participation Policy

Policy reference No:	POL/414
File No:	HCC15/90
Strategic objective:	SO4.1 A high performing organisation that prioritises continuous improvement, safety and accountability.
Adopted by Council:	14 September 2026
Re-Adopted:	
Date for review:	August 2030
Responsible officer:	Manager Governance and Property
Department:	Governance and Property

Policy Statement

1. Council meetings are the forum through which elected Councillors make decisions in the best interests of the Hume community. These meetings are open to members of the public to attend in person, to watch online and to participate in. This policy supports members of the public in doing this.

Purpose

2. This purpose of this policy is to provide specific information on how to participate in and understand Council meeting processes, including:
 - a) submitting public questions and public comments for Council meetings;
 - b) submitting a petition or joint letter to Council;
 - c) the holding of submission hearings;
 - d) Council meeting livestreaming and recordings.

Scope

3. This policy applies to community facing elements of a Council meeting, and processes associated with Council meetings. The policy should be read in conjunction with Hume City Council's Governance Rules.

Objective

4. The objective of this policy is to provide clear guidance and information that supports members of the public to understand and participate in Council meeting processes.

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Policy Implementation

Public Questions

5 Public Questions may be asked of Council at a Council Meeting.

These questions must be:

- a) submitted to Council in writing, stating the name, address and contact phone number of the person submitting the question;
 - b) lodged prior to 9am on the day of a Council meeting either online or in person at a Council customer service centre; and
 - c) include a verifiable contact email address for the person submitting the question if submitted online.
- 6 No person may submit more than two questions at any one meeting.
- 7 The Chair or a member of Council staff nominated by the Chair may read to those in attendance at the meeting a question which has been submitted
- 8 Notwithstanding clause 7, the Chair may refrain from reading a question or having a question read if the person who submitted the question is not in attendance at the time when the question is due to be read.
- 9 A question may be disallowed by the Chair or the Chief Executive Officer if it is determines that it:
- a) relates to a matter outside the duties, functions and powers of Council;
 - b) is defamatory, indecent, abusive, offensive, irrelevant, trivial or objectionable in language or substance;
 - c) deals with a subject matter already answered;
 - d) is aimed at embarrassing a Councillor or a member of Council staff;
 - e) relates to personnel matters;
 - f) relates to the personal hardship of any resident or ratepayer;
 - g) is repetitive of a question already asked by the person;
 - h) relates to any other matter which Council considers would prejudice Council or any person.
- 10 Any question which has been disallowed by the Chair must be made available to any other Councillor upon request.

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- 11 No discussion may be allowed other than by Councillors for the purposes of clarification.
- 12 Like questions may be grouped together and a single answer provided.
- 13 The Chair may nominate a Councillor or the Chief Executive Officer to respond to a question

Public Comments

- 14 Public Comments are an avenue through which members of the public can make comment, and express their support or disagreement with a report or Notice of Motion before the Council.

These comments must be:

- a) submitted to Council in writing, stating the name, address and contact phone number of the person submitting the comment;
 - b) lodged prior to 12 noon on the day of the Council meeting either online or in person at a Council customer service centre; and
 - c) include a verifiable contact email address for the person submitting the comment if submitted online.
- 15 In-person attendees can also register to speak to an item immediately prior to the Council Meeting.
 - 16 Each speaker or submitter must state or include their name and whether they are speaking in support or against the officer recommendation or notice of motion. The statements are to be strictly limited to the officer recommendation or notice of motion before them.
 - 17 Each speaker is to confine themselves to 3 (three) minutes each. Comments submitted in writing are to be of a length that will take not more than 3 (three) minutes to be read out.
 - 18 The Chair or a member of Council staff nominated by the Chair may read Public Comments which have been submitted in accordance with this Rule where the person who submitted the Public Comment is not in attendance.
 - 19 There is no right of reply or discussion allowed, and no questions can be directed to the Officers, Councillors or visitors in the gallery. The only statements that can be made are either directly related to supporting or opposing the officer's recommendation or notice of motion.

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20 A Public Comment may be disallowed by the Chair if the Chair determines that it:

- a) relates to a matter outside the duties, functions and powers of Council;
- b) is defamatory, indecent, abusive, offensive, irrelevant, trivial or objectionable in language or substance;
- c) is aimed at embarrassing a Councillor or a member of Council staff;
- d) relates to personnel matters;
- e) relates to the personal hardship of any resident or ratepayer;
- f) is repetitive of statements or points already made;
- g) is repetitive of any comments made at a Submission Hearing on the matter;
- h) relates to any other matter which Council considers would prejudice Council or any person.

Submission Hearing

21 The Chief Executive Officer may elect to hold a Submission Hearing to allow people to address Council on a specific matter (such as planning matters or the adoption of key documents) or a Submissions Hearing may be recommended in a Council report.

22 Submissions must be submitted to Council in writing in accordance with the advertisement on the matter.

23 Each speaker or submitter must state or include their name and, where appropriate, whether they are speaking in support or against the matter. The statements are to be strictly limited to the officer recommendation or notice of motion before them.

24 Each speaker is to confine themselves to 3 (three) minutes each. Comments submitted in writing are to be of a length that will take not more than 3 (three) minutes to be read out.

25 No submissions received in writing will be read out during the Submission Hearing if the submitter is not present, but they will be circulated to all Councillors.

26 There is no right of reply or discussion allowed, and no questions can be directed to the Officers, Councillors or visitors in the gallery. The only

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statements that can be made are either directly related to the matter.

- 27 A submission may be disallowed by the Chair if the Chair determines that it:
- a) relates to a matter outside the duties, functions and powers of Council;
 - b) is defamatory, indecent, abusive, offensive, irrelevant, trivial or objectionable in language or substance;
 - c) is aimed at embarrassing a Councillor or a member of Council staff;
 - d) relates to personnel matters;
 - e) relates to the personal hardship of any resident or ratepayer;
 - f) is repetitive of statements or points already made;
 - g) relates to any other matter which Council considers would prejudice Council or any person.
- 28 Hearing meetings are not required to be open to the public or livestreamed but can be at the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer or the Chair.
- 29 Agendas and/or minutes will be created for Submission Hearings if required. This will be determined on a case by case basis.

Petitions and Joint Letters

- 30 Every petition or joint letter presented to Council must be in writing (other than pencil), contain the request of the petitioners or signatories and be signed by at least 12 people.
- 31 Every petition or joint letter must be signed by the persons whose names are appended to it by their names or marks, and, except in cases of incapacity or sickness, by no one else and the address of every petitioner or signatory must be clearly stated.
- 32 Any signature appearing on a page which does not bear the text of the whole of the petition or request may not be considered by Council.
- 33 Every page of a hard copy petition or joint letter must be a single page of paper and not be posted, stapled, pinned or otherwise affixed or attached to any piece of paper other than another page of the petition or joint letter.
- 34 Electronic or online petitions, joint letters, memorials or like applications

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must contain the name and email address of each petitioner or signatory, which details will, for the purposes of a petition or joint letter, qualify as the address and signature of such petitioner or signatory.

- 35 If a petition, joint letter, memorial or other like application relates to an operational matter, Council must refer it to the Chief Executive Officer for consideration.

Council Meeting Livestreaming and Recordings

- 36 Council meetings will be livestreamed on Council's website.
- 37 If a Council meeting is unable to be livestreamed due to a technical issue, the meeting will still proceed.
- 38 A recording of the livestreamed Council meeting will be published on Council's website within 48 hours of the conclusion of the meeting, with recordings only being edited in a limited number of circumstances as defined in this policy.
- 39 Any confidential parts of a Council meeting that are closed to members of the public will not be recorded.
- 40 Audio and video recordings of Council meetings will only be edited before being made available on Council's website to prevent the publishing of material that is offensive, defamatory, breaches copyright or breaches an individual's privacy.
- 41 Audio and video recordings of Council meetings will not be edited:
- a) because a speaker that has been recorded, being either a Councillor, a member of Council staff or a member of the public, regrets their remarks;
 - b) to save embarrassment in regards to comments made and recorded;
 - c) to edit out meeting procedural errors.
- 42 The Manager Governance and Property will approve the final version of the meeting recording that will be made available on Council's website, if the recording has been edited.
- 43 All meeting attendees will be advised, via a notice at the entrance to the Council meeting venue, that the meeting will be recorded and published on Council's website.

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- 44 Meeting attendees who nominate to speak to Council at a meeting will be advised that they will be recorded and included on the meeting recording which will be made available on Council's website.
- 45 A meeting attendee cannot record or take photographs of the Council meeting on their own or any other device, except if they first obtain the consent of the Council.

Definitions and Abbreviations

- 46 Act means the Local Government Act 2020.
- 47 attend, attending and in attendance include attend, attending or in attendance by electronic means.
- 48 Council means Hume City Council.
- 49 Council meeting has the same meaning as in the Act.

Related Documents

- 50 Hume City Council's Governance Rules
- 51 *Local Government Act 2020*

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