

MEETINGS ADMINISTRATION POLICY

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Owner:	Chief Executive Officer		
Responsible Officer:	Chief Executive Officer		
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Legislation Reference:	Local Government Act 2019 and Katherine Town Council By-laws 1998		

1 PURPOSE

Katherine Town Council is a prescribed Local Government body in accordance with the provisions of the *Local Government Act 2019*. There are a number of core obligations set out by this legislation, as well as the Local Government (General) Regulations 2021 and the Katherine Town Council By-laws 1998 in relation to the conduct of Council meetings.

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear, transparent framework for the effective conduct of business of the Council in Council meetings.

2 SCOPE

This Policy applies to all elected members and Council employees for every Ordinary and Special Council Meeting.

3 DEFINITIONS

Casting vote means a vote that may be exercised by the Mayor/Chairperson in the event of a tied vote, in accordance with Council's Casting Vote Policy.

Chairperson means the Mayor or, if the Mayor is absent for any reason, the Deputy Mayor for Ordinary and Special Council Meetings. In the event that neither the Mayor nor the Deputy Mayor are available to chair the meeting, a Chairperson, for that meeting only, will be from a Councillor who is in attendance.

Councillor means an Elected Member of Katherine Town Council.

Deputation means the process by which individuals and groups may request presentation time at a Council meeting to make a formal address to the Council. Deputations provide an opportunity for members of the public to address Council on a specific issue.

Deputy Mayor means the Deputy Principal Member of the Katherine Town Council.

Mayor means the Principal Member of Katherine Town Council.

Motion means a proposal to be considered by Council at a meeting. It is a request to do something or to express an opinion about something. A motion formally puts the subject of the motion as an item of business for formal consideration for Council.

Motion of dissent means a motion set out in this policy, the purpose of which is to seek to correct what may have been a mistake of fact or interpretation on the part of the Chairperson.

Mover means the person at a meeting who initiates (moves) a motion.

Minutes mean the official record of the business transacted at Council meetings and the decisions made. They are a legal record and a public document.

Notice of motion means to provide advance notice to Councillors of an individual Councillors intention to move a particular motion on a specific matter at an Ordinary Meeting of Council.

Ordinary Meeting of Council means regular Council meetings where council conducts its core business.

Petition means a formal request to lobby a law-making body such as Council. It may request an amendment to general law or the review of an administrative decision. The petition is placed before Council with the object of implementing the particular action or amendment. Petitioning is one of the traditional forms by which people can make requests direct to Council for action.

Point of order means a point made to draw attention to an alleged breach of the Act, Katherine Town Council By-laws 1998, or this policy in relation to the proceedings of a meeting.

Put to the vote means to formally state a question in its final form for the purpose of taking a vote.

Quorum means the minimum number of members needing to be present to constitute a valid meeting (i.e. 50% of attendees plus one).

Resolution means a formal decision by Council that has been passed by a majority of its sitting members. E.g., a motion that has been decided and passed by a majority of Councillors at the meeting.

Second means the person at a meeting who seconds a motion that has been moved.

Special Council Meetings means special Council meetings called on occasion to address an urgent item of business.

4 DETAILS

Council is a representative, decision-making body, that acts in the interests of its constituents and discharges its duties, without fear or favour, as prescribed by the *Local Government Act 2019* and its statutory instruments.

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR ELECTED MEMBERS

Role of elected members

The *Local Government Act 2019* states that the role of a Councillor is to:

- represent the interests of all residents and ratepayers of the Council area (Katherine municipality)
- provide leadership and guidance
- facilitate communication between the members of the Council's constituency and the council
- be properly informed to enable participation in the deliberations of the Council and its community activities

- ensure, as far as practicable, that the Council acts honestly, efficiently, and appropriately in carrying out its statutory responsibilities
- ensure that Council resources are used prudently and solely in the public interest, and
- actively monitor the financial affairs of the Council.

An elected member of the council has no power to direct or control staff of the Council, or to interfere with the management of Council employees.

Elected members are bound by a Code of Conduct, and they have a duty to act, at all times, in what the member genuinely believes to be the best interests of Council's constituency – the Katherine community.

Functions of Council

The functions of Council include:

- planning for the future requirements of Katherine
- provision of services and facilities for the benefits of the Katherine community, its residents and visitors
- making prudent financial decisions
- managing the employment of the Chief Executive Officer
- providing for the interests and wellbeing of individuals in the Katherine community
- carrying out measures to protect the environment from natural and other hazards and to mitigate the effects of such hazards
- planning and developing council facilities in a sustainable way
- promoting Katherine and the Big Rivers region a location for industry and commerce and as an attractive tourist destination, and
- establishing programs to benefit the Katherine community.

Conflicts of interest

A Councillor must avoid any conflict of interest, whether actual or perceived, when undertaking official functions and responsibilities. If a conflict of interest exists, the member must comply with any statutory obligations of disclosure. Refer to the 'Elected Member Code of Conduct' and 'Elected Members Conflicts of Interest policy'.

Gifts and benefits

A Councillor must discharge their duties, responsibilities, and obligations impartially and with integrity including in relation to receiving, accepting and disclosing gifts or benefits. They must not accept a gift or benefit that may be perceived by a reasonable person to improperly influence their performance or decisions. Refer to the 'Gifts and Benefits policy'.

Confidential information

Council is committed to transparent and accountable decision making, to achieve the outcomes of its Strategic Plan and Municipal Plan. However, from time to time, Council will consider confidential and sensitive information which it must treat with care. Council's 'Confidential Information Policy' sets out Council's process to ensure the proper treatment and review of confidential items considered at Council meetings.

Audio or audio-visual conferencing

Where possible, Council is committed to facilitate access and participation in meetings by permitting Councillors to be present and participate remotely by means of audio or audio-visual conferencing systems.

A Councillor may attend any meeting via an audio or audio-visual conferencing system. It is desirable, but not mandatory, that members give at least one (1) days' notice to the Chief Executive Officer that they intend to attend the meeting via the conferencing system. Refer to the 'Attendance at meetings via audio or audio-visual conferencing system Policy'.

Meetings will be recorded to assist with minute taking purposes only. Recording a council meeting for minute-taking purposes is important for:

- Accuracy and completeness - Audio or video recordings ensure that the minutes reflect exactly what was said and decided.
- Transparency and accountability - Recordings provide a verifiable source of truth for the Chair, CEO and minute taker.
- Support for the minute taker - Minute takers can focus on capturing key points rather than trying to write everything down in real time. They can revisit the recording to ensure nothing important was missed.
- Recordings become part of the official record and can be used for future reference, evidence, research, or training.

Media

As outlined in Council's Media Policy, the Mayor is the principal spokesperson for Council. In the absence of the Mayor or at the Mayor's request, the Deputy Mayor or Chief Executive Officer are authorised to make statements on behalf of Council to the media.

Council appointments to advisory and external committees

Council will appoint representatives as required. Appointment to Advisory and External Committees will be reviewed as required and endorsed at an Ordinary Meeting of Council. Refer to the 'Council delegates and representation on external organisations, including community groups Policy'.

ADMINISTRATION OF COUNCIL MEETINGS

Council is accountable to the Katherine community for the decisions it makes, and those decisions must be based on sound, adequate and accurate information. The conduct of effective meetings is an indicator of good governance and how meetings are managed is an important part of achieving this goal. Meeting procedures contribute to good public decision-making and increase Council's transparency and accountability to the Katherine community.

Council's decision-making must be as open and transparent as possible. Council meetings are open to the public and the media, unless the topic is about a matter that may need to be kept confidential. Example of confidential matters include employee, commercial, security or legal matters.

Councillors make decisions by a majority (more than half of those present) vote at each meeting. A quorum (more than half) of the Councillors must be present for a vote to pass (or be carried). Each Councillor, including the Mayor and Deputy Mayor has one vote on decisions made at a Council meeting. Where there is an equal number of votes for and against a motion, the Mayor is required to cast a second 'casting vote' to break the tie.

Members of the public and the media may be present for Council meetings, but they are not permitted to speak unless invited to do so. They may be asked to leave when confidential matters are being discussed.

Meeting times (By-law 138)

From January to November each year, Ordinary Council Meetings will be held at 6.00 pm on the fourth Tuesday of the month.

In December, the Ordinary Council Meeting will be held at 6.00 pm on the second Tuesday.

Meetings are mostly held at the Civic Centre, Stuart Highway, Katherine, or by audio or audio-visual attendance. From time to time, meetings may be held in a different location advised on Council's website.

The dates and times of all Ordinary Meetings of Council for the term of the Council will be determined at the first Ordinary Meeting of the Council after a general election.

Elected Members are expected to attend every Ordinary Meeting of Council and Special Council Meeting. If an Elected Member is absent, without permission of the Council, from two (2) consecutive Ordinary Meetings of Council, then it is considered that the Elected Member ceases to hold office.

Special Meetings of Council are convened for a specific urgent purpose by the Mayor or majority of the Councillors, or by resolution at a Council meeting.

Order of business and business papers (By-laws 139 and 140)

The agenda is a list of items (or the order of business) that Council intends to consider at a meeting, with each agenda item usually supported by a business paper that contains information and recommendations. Councillors use these reports as a source of information and advice to assist their decision making.

Business papers will be available to elected members by close of business on the Wednesday preceding the Ordinary Meeting of Council. They will also be available at the Civic Centre and the Library and posted on Council's website.

The order of business for an Ordinary Meeting of Council is as follows:

1. Acknowledgement of Country
2. Opening Prayer
3. Opening of Meeting
4. Attendance - Present, Apologies and Leave of Absence
5. Declaration of Interest
6. Presentations from External Agencies
7. Confirmation of Previous Minutes
8. Business Arising from Previous Minutes
9. Mayoral Business
10. Correspondence and Documents
11. Petitions (By-law 143) and Deputations (By-law 144)
12. Public Question Time (Matters Referred to the Agenda)
13. Notice of Motion
14. Reports of Officers
15. Reports from Committees
16. Elected Members Activities
17. Late Agenda
18. General Business (By-law 141)
19. Closure of Meeting to Public (if required)
20. Confidential Items
21. Resumption of open meeting
22. Closure of the Meeting

Apologies and leave of absence – this section considers the submissions of Councillors who are not in attendance however they have formally informed the Mayor, or Chief Executive Officer, of their absence, and have given reasons why they cannot attend the meeting.

Council shall decide whether the notification and reasons are acceptable. A motion will be made to either accept the absence, or to have it refused if Council deems the provided notice and reason(s) to be unacceptable. Council will NOT accept the apology, and therefore absence, of Councillors who have not provided a formal notice of absence.

Declaration of interest – this section requires Elected Members to declare any personal or financial conflicts of interest with any agenda item at the meeting, as soon as practicable after a member becomes aware of the conflict of interest.

Confirmation of previous minutes – a motion will be given that the previous minutes are a true and correct record of that meeting and its decisions (resolutions).

Business arising from previous minutes – any business arising out of the last minutes/action list. Business arising will not be discussed until the previous minutes have been confirmed.

Mayoral business – this section provides an opportunity for the Mayor to outline meetings or other functions and events they have been involved in during the previous month.

Correspondence and documents – the Mayor and Council receives important letters and other documents, and these are tabled at an Ordinary Meeting of Council to provide Councillors with this information.

Public Question Time – Katherine residents and ratepayers have the right to ask questions and raise issues with Council. However, Council meetings are an opportunity to observe the Council at work and they are not generally the place for members of the public to debate with Councillors. People who have been invited to make a submission may speak when directed, but there should be no debate between the public and the Council at Council meetings.

If a member of the public wishes to ask a question about an item on the agenda of an Ordinary Meeting of Council, they are required to submit questions online or in person by 10.00 am on the day of the Council meeting. Members of the public will be given the opportunity to ask the question during the Council meeting, but it must relate to a specific agenda item. If they are not in attendance at the meeting, they may also submit a question, however the Mayor will determine whether or not to read and respond to your question. For questions not responded to at the meeting, a response will be provided at a later date.

Notice of Motion – Councillors may give written notice to the Mayor at least seven working days prior to the Council meeting of a motion proposed to be moved at the meeting.

Reports of Officers – this section is where reports from Council officers about Council matters are presented for discussion and resolution.

Reports from Committees – this section is where reports from any Council and external committees are presented for consideration.

Elected Member activities – this section provides an opportunity for Councillors to report back to Council about their meetings and engagements that the individual Councillor attended in the previous month.

General business – this section provides an opportunity for Councillors to provide updates to the community ie. events and speak about issues of a minor nature that do not require a decision of Council. If a General Business item requires reasonable consideration or analysis, Council shall consider deferring it to the next meeting.

Confidential session – if required, the confidential session of an Ordinary Meeting of Council will exclude members of the public and media as it deals with confidential matters. Guests may be invited to the Confidential session by the Chair when required.

Meeting close – confirmation of date and time of the next meeting and the Mayor will formally declare the time the meeting was closed.

Order of business for Special Council Meetings

Business papers will be available to elected members four hours preceding the Special Meeting of Council. They will also be available at the Civic Centre and the Library and posted on Council's website.

The order of business for a Special Meeting of Council is as follows:

1. Acknowledgement of Country

2. Opening Prayer
3. Opening of Meeting
4. Attendance - Present, Apologies and Leave of Absence
5. Declaration of Interest
6. Reports of Officers
7. Closure of meeting to public (if required)
8. Confidential Items
9. Resumption of open meeting
10. Meeting Close.

Notice of Business to be given by member (By-law 141)

Councillors requiring the consideration of a matter must give a signed notice to the Chief Executive Officer or Mayor by close of business on the Monday one week prior to the Ordinary Meeting. That matter will be considered during General Business. The Chief Executive Officer may provide a background report for inclusion with the notice where appropriate.

Petitions (By-law 143)

Councillors may present petitions at an Ordinary Meeting of Council by stating the nature of the petition and reading the petition. Where a Councillor presents a petition to a meeting, no debate on or in relation to it is allowed and the only motion that may be moved is:

- that the petition be received, and consideration stand as an order of the day for the meeting or for a future meeting, OR
- that the petition be received and referred to a committee or Council officer for consideration and a report to the council.

Deputations (By-law 144)

Deputations wishing to attend and be heard at a meeting must give at least seven clear days' notice of their proposed deputation by writing to the Chief Executive Officer.

Council will receive Deputations at a date and time agreed by the Mayor in consultation with the members of the deputation.

Motions (By-laws 145 to 150)

Councillors may give written notice to the Mayor at least seven working days prior to the Council meeting of a motion proposed to be moved at the meeting. Notices of Motion will be listed on the agenda in the order determined by the Mayor. Motions are required to have a mover and a seconder.

The Mayor will read out the agenda item and ask the relevant Councillor to speak on the agenda item. The Councillor will take no more than ten minutes to speak to the matter. A Councillor speaking about a motion must confine their remarks to the matter being considered. The Mayor is responsible for keeping Councillors on time.

If the Councillor who gave notice of the motion is absent from the meeting, the motion may be moved by another Councillor or deferred to the next Ordinary Meeting of Council.

A Councillor, other than the mover of an original motion, has the right to speak once to the motion and any amendment proposed to it. The Mayor has the right to close the debate at any time they deem there has been ample debate.

A Councillor who moves or seconds a motion must not move or second an amendment to the motion.

Process for dealing with a motion and amendments to motions

The Mayor will read the motion and invite Councillors to move the motion. If Councillors are happy with the motion, Councillors will first show their hand and then move the motion. If any Councillor deems the motion requires amendment, then the amendment will be discussed, and the Mayor will invite Councillors to move the amended motion. Once a Councillor moves the motion, the Mayor will invite Councillors to second the motion. Councillors will show their hand and second the motion.

The Mayor shall only allow debate on a motion if it is seconded, requesting initially for a Councillor that may wish to speak against the motion to speak for a maximum of five minutes for, or against the motion. A motion that is not seconded must be recorded in the minutes as having lapsed.

Any amendment to motions must not negate the intent of the original motion. The Mayor shall rule that any proposed amendment that attempts to negate a motion, or replace an amended motion with the original motion, is rejected.

Council may only deal with one (1) amendment to a motion at a time. Once an amendment has been moved, no further amendment can be considered until that amendment is disposed of, either because it lapses, or is seconded and put to the vote. If an amendment to a motion is lost, then further amendments may be considered until a motion is carried (be it the original motion or some variation of it) or all motions are exhausted.

Once all debate on a motion is concluded, but before the motion is put to the vote, the mover of the original motion has a right of reply and may speak of all observations made in reference to the motion.

Once an amendment to a motion is put to the vote and carried, the motion, as amended, then becomes the motion before the meeting. Councillors will then put the original motion or amended motion to the vote.

Points of order

The Mayor may call to order a member at a meeting who is in breach of the Act or this Policy in relation to the proceedings of the meeting.

A Councillor may raise a point of order and must state briefly the nature of the alleged breach. A point of order takes precedence over all other business until determined. The Mayor must rule on a point of order immediately.

Motion of dissent (By-law 151)

A Councillor may, without notice, move a motion of dissent in relation to the Mayor on a point of order.

If a motion of dissent is moved in relation to a point of order, further consideration of the matter will be suspended until after the motion of dissent is put to the vote. If the motion is carried, the matter will proceed as though the ruling had not been made or be restored to the business agenda and dealt with in the normal course of business.

The Mayor may speak to the motion of dissent and cast a deliberative vote for or against.

Procedural motions (By-law 153)

By-law 153 provides for a range of procedural motions, such as adjourning debate on a matter, moving to the next matter on the agenda or adjourning the meeting.

Procedural motions must be moved and seconded in accordance with the By-Laws, depending on the reason for the procedural motion.

Questions and discussion (By-law 154)

During a meeting, Councillors may ask a question for reply by another Councillor or a Council employee. A question raised during a meeting shall be asked categorically and without argument and no discussion is permitted at the meeting in relation to the reply or a refusal to reply.

Councillors will ask the Mayor to direct their question to another Councillor or Council employee, who can refuse to answer the question or take the question on notice and provide a reply at the next Ordinary Meeting of Council.

If a Councillor asks a question, that question is not considered part of the debate of a motion.

Method of Taking the Vote

The Mayor shall, in taking the vote on any motion or amendment, put the question first in the affirmative and then in the negative. The Chair may do so as often as is necessary to determine the majority. Voting shall be by a show of hands except where a Councillor is prevented by physical disability. The names of members voting for or against motions will be recorded in the minutes.

Casting vote

Casting votes will be made in accordance with Council's 'Casting Vote policy'.

Mayor to take precedence (By-law 155)

The Mayor may, at any time during debate of a matter at a meeting, indicate an intention to speak and, on so doing, a member speaking or proposing to speak is to cease speaking and remain silent or refrain from speaking until the Mayor has been heard.

Addressing Council (By-laws 156 and 160)

Councillors may insist that other Councillors address them by their official designation, as Mayor or Councillor, as the case may be. Council employees should be referred to using their official title.

Councillors shall refrain from the use of offensive or inappropriate language, especially in reference to another Councillor. Councillors shall not make imputations of improper motives or personal reflections on Councillors or council employees. A Councillor who considers that another Councillor is out of order may call upon the Mayor to maintain order.

Mayor to maintain order, to decide who can speak first and to have priority when speaking

The Mayor must maintain order, and may, without the intervention of any other Councillors, call any Councillor to order whenever, in their opinion, it is necessary to do so.

If two or more Councillors attempt to speak at the same time, the Mayor must decide which of the Councillors may speak first.

Order and disorder (By-laws 161 to 163)

The Mayor, or a Councillor who considers that another Councillor is out of order, may call upon the Mayor to maintain order.

A Councillor is guilty of an act of disorder if they:

- breach the *Local Government Act 2019* or the Katherine Town Council By-laws 1998
- use language that, according to common usage would be considered disorderly
- uses an expression inconsistent with good order and decorum, or
- says or does anything calculated to bring the Council into contempt.

The Mayor will rule on any question of disorder, and this ruling must be obeyed, unless there is a motion of dissent.

The Mayor may request a Councillor leave for the remainder of a meeting and to apologise, without reservation, to other Councillors present. A Councillor cannot refuse to leave the meeting if requested by the Mayor for an act of disorder.

If the Mayor or a Councillor considers that a matter being considered or discussed at a Council meeting is objectionable, the Mayor may declare a point of order that the matter not be further considered.

Quorum not present (By-law 164)

Where a meeting is postponed, that fact together with the names of the members present at the time is to be recorded in the minutes kept by Council.

Where at a meeting a quorum of members is not present, the Mayor is to suspend the meeting for a period of 30 minutes and, if at the expiration of that period a quorum is not present, the names of the members present at the time are to be recorded in the minutes and the Mayor is to adjourn the meeting to a later time or to another date, as the Mayor thinks fit.

Late Reports

Late reports will only be admitted under exceptional circumstances as approved by the Mayor or Chief Executive Officer. Late reports are to be made available to Councillors and the public as soon as practicable.

Minutes

Unconfirmed minutes of each Ordinary and Special Council Meetings will be available within 10 business days following the meeting. The unconfirmed minutes will be made available at the Civic Centre and on Council's website.

Until minutes are adopted at the following Ordinary Meeting of Council, minutes will be marked as "unconfirmed".

Grounds for closure to public and media to discuss confidential matters

From time to time, an Ordinary Meeting of Council or Special council Meeting may be closed to the public and the media to discuss confidential matters such as:

- those prescribed by Part 3 of the Local Government (General) Regulations as confidential
- employee matters concerning particular individuals
- information about the personal circumstances of any resident or ratepayer
- information that would, if disclosed, confer a commercial advantage on a person with whom the Council is conducting (or proposes to conduct) business
- commercial information of a confidential nature that would if disclosed prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied it; or reveal a trade secret
- information that would, if disclosed, prejudice the maintenance of law
- matters affecting the security of Council, Councillors, Council employees, or Council property
- advice concerning litigation, or advice that would otherwise be privileged from production in legal proceedings on the ground of legal professional privilege.

Councillors must move and second a motion to close part of the meeting to the public to allow confidential matters to be considered and discussed. Once confidential business is completed, a motion to move back to the public meeting should be moved and seconded, and the resolutions of the confidential meeting be made available to the public, in accordance with the Confidential Information Policy.

The grounds on which part of a meeting is closed must be stated in the decision to close that part of the meeting and must be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. The grounds must specify the subject title of the matter that is to be discussed during the closed part of the meeting and the reason why the part of the meeting is being closed.

Resolutions or recommendations made at a closed part of a Council meeting must be made public by the Mayor as soon as practical after the closed part of the meeting has ended. While discussions about confidential matters in the closed part of the meeting will not be made public, the separate nature of a resolution or recommendation allows it to be made public immediately after the closed part of the meeting has ended.

5 ASSOCIATED POLICIES/DOCUMENTS

Casting Vote policy

Council delegates and representation on external organisations, including community groups Policy

Attendance at meetings via audio or audio-visual conferencing system policy

Elected Member Code of Conduct

Elected Members Conflicts of Interest policy

Gifts and Benefits Policy

Confidential Information Policy

Media Policy

Leave of absence form

Conflict of interest form

Resolution register

Conflict of interest register

Customer Service Charter

6 REFERENCES AND RELATED LEGISLATION

Local Government Act 2019

Local Government (General) Regulations 2021

Katherine Town Council By-laws 1998

[Revision History](#)

Version	Approval date	Details of change	Responsible officer
1	24/06/2008	Created	CEO
2	26/10/2010	Revision	CEO
3	30/08/2016	Revision	CEO
4	28/06/2022	Revision for consistency with new Local Government Act, update, and new template	CEO
5	22/03/2023	News Story - Katherine council to trial daytime council meeting » Katherine Town Council (nt.gov.au)	CEO
6	16/09/2025	Revision and policy name change	CEO