

Meeting Date: Tuesday 25 November 2014
Location: Council Chambers, Level 6, Civic Centre, 1 Devlin Street, Ryde
Time: 7.30pm

ATTACHMENTS FOR COUNCIL MEETING

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ATTACHMENT 2

**CODE OF CONDUCT - POLICY
November 2014**

Scope

This Code of Conduct is made for the purposes of section 440 of the *Local Government Act 1993* ("the Act"). Section 440 of the Act requires every council to adopt a code of conduct that incorporates the provisions of the Model Code.

For the purposes of section 440 of the Act, the City of Ryde Code of Conduct is in three Parts:

- **Part 1: Policy** - defines and describes the purpose of the Code, and the principles and values that are used to interpret the Standards in the Code. This Part does not constitute separate enforceable standards of conduct.
- **Part 2: Standards of Conduct** - set out the conduct obligations required of all council officials. The City of Ryde Charter of Respect is included and exists to strengthen the working relationship between Councillors and Council's Senior Management Team. This Part contains the enforceable Standards of Conduct.
- **Part 3: Complaints Procedure** - contains the methods to make a complaint, and the operating guidelines for the conduct review committee/reviewer. This Part should be used to guide the management of complaints about breaches of the Code.

City of Ryde's Code of Conduct - ~~October 2013~~ **November 2014**, is the Model Code of Conduct and Procedures as issued by the ~~Division~~ **Office** of Local Government in December 2012, with some additions.

The City of Ryde Code of Conduct – ~~October 2013~~ **November 2014**, commences xx xx 2014.

Purpose

The City of Ryde Code of Conduct sets the minimum requirements of conduct for council officials in carrying out their functions. The Code is prescribed by regulation. It is the personal responsibility of Council Officials to comply with the standards in the Code and regularly review their personal circumstances with this in mind.

Council Officials are defined in the Code as including "Councillors, members of staff of council, administrators, council committee members, conduct reviewers and delegates of council".

Failure by a Councillor to comply with the standards of conduct prescribed under this Code constitutes misconduct for the purposes of the Local Government Act 1993. The Act provides for a range of penalties that may be imposed on Councillors for misconduct, including suspension or disqualification from civic office.

Failure by a member of staff to comply with Council's Code of Conduct may give rise to disciplinary action.

Code of Conduct – Policy – Draft November 2014		
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CODE OF CONDUCT - POLICY
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Key Principles and Values

The Code of Conduct is based on a number of key principles and values. They underpin, and thus can inform and guide Council Officers' understanding of the Standards of Conduct.

They may be used as an aid to interpret and apply the Standards of Conduct, but do not themselves constitute separate enforceable standards of conduct.

<p>Integrity You must not place yourself under any financial or other obligation to any individual or organisation that might reasonably be thought to influence you in the performance of your duties.</p>	<p>Accountability You are accountable to the public for your decisions and actions and should consider issues on their merits, taking into account the views of others. <i>This means recording reasons for decisions; submitting to scrutiny; keeping proper records; establishing audit trails.</i></p>
<p>Selflessness You have a duty to make decisions in the public interest. You must not act in order to gain financial or other benefits for yourself, your family, friends or business interests. <i>This means making decisions because they benefit the public, not because they benefit the decision maker.</i></p>	<p>Leadership You have a duty to promote and support the key principles by leadership and example and to maintain and strengthen the public's trust and confidence in the integrity of the council. <i>This means promoting public duty to others in the council and outside, by your own ethical behaviour.</i></p>
<p>Impartiality You should make decisions on merit and in accordance with your statutory obligations when carrying out public business. This includes the making of appointments, awarding of contracts or recommending individuals for rewards or benefits. <i>This means fairness to all; impartial assessment; merit selection in recruitment and in purchase and sale of council's resources; considering only relevant matters.</i></p>	<p>Honesty You have a duty to act honestly. You must declare any private interests relating to your public duties and take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in such a way that protects the public interest. <i>This means obeying the law; following the letter and spirit of policies and procedures; observing the code of conduct; fully disclosing actual or potential conflict of interests and exercising any conferred power strictly for the purpose for which the power was conferred.</i></p>
<p>Openness You have a duty to be as open as possible about your decisions and actions, giving reasons for decisions and restricting information only when the wider public interest clearly demands. <i>This means recording, giving and revealing reasons for decisions; revealing other avenues available to the client or business; when authorised, offering all information; communicating clearly.</i></p>	<p>Respect You must treat others with respect at all times. <i>This means not using derogatory terms towards others, observing the rights of other people, treating people with courtesy and recognising the different roles others play in local government decision-making.</i></p>

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Questions to Guide Council Officials

If you are unsure about the ethical issues around an action or decision you are about to take, you should consider:

- Is the decision or conduct lawful?
- Is the decision or conduct consistent with City of Ryde policy, objectives and Code of Conduct
- Does the decision or conduct reflect City of Ryde Values of *Safety, Teamwork, Ethics and Professionalism*
- What will the outcome be for the employee or councillor, work colleagues, the council, persons with whom you are associated and any other parties?
- Do these outcomes raise a conflict of interest or lead to private gain or loss at public expense?
- Can the decision or conduct be justified in terms of the public interest and would it withstand public scrutiny?

If you are unsure as to whether or not you have a conflict of interests in relation to a matter, you should consider:

- Do you have a personal interest in a matter you are officially involved with?
- Is it likely you could be influenced by a personal interest in carrying out your public duty?
- Would a reasonable person believe you could be so influenced?
- What would be the public perception of whether or not you have a conflict of interests?
- Do your personal interests conflict with your official role?
- What steps do you need to take and that a reasonable person would expect you to take to appropriately manage any conflict of interests?

Seeking advice

You have the right to question any instruction or direction given to you that you think may be unethical or unlawful. If you are uncertain about an action or decision, you may need to seek advice from other people. This may include your supervisor or trusted senior officer, your union representatives, the ~~Division~~ **Office** of Local Government, the NSW Ombudsman's Office, and/or the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

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Review Process and Endorsement

This Policy should be reviewed annually.

Council must, within 12 months after each ordinary election, review its adopted Code of Conduct, and make such adjustments as it considers appropriate.

Attachments

<i>Title</i>	<i>Trim Reference</i>
Code of Conduct – Standards of Conduct – October 2013	D13/51916
Code of Conduct – Complaints Procedure – October 2013	D13/69382

<i>Title</i>	<i>Trim Reference</i>
Code of Conduct – Standards of Conduct – November 2014	D14/110761
Code of Conduct – Complaints Procedure – November 2014	D14/110763

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ATTACHMENT 3

**Draft CODE OF CONDUCT -
STANDARDS OF CONDUCT
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**Draft CODE OF CONDUCT -
STANDARDS OF CONDUCT
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PART 1 INTRODUCTION

The Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW ("the Model Code of Conduct") is made for the purposes of section 440 of the *Local Government Act 1993* ("the Act"). Section 440 of the Act requires every council to adopt a code of conduct that incorporates the provisions of the Model Code. For the purposes of section 440 of the Act, the Model Code of Conduct comprises all parts of this document.

Councillors, administrators, members of staff of council, independent conduct reviewers, members of council committees including the conduct review committee and delegates of the council must comply with the applicable provisions of council's code of conduct in carrying out their functions as council officials. It is the personal responsibility of council officials to comply with the standards in the code and regularly review their personal circumstances with this in mind.

Failure by a councillor to comply with the standards of conduct prescribed under this code constitutes misconduct for the purposes of the Act. The Act provides for a range of penalties that may be imposed on councillors for misconduct, including suspension or disqualification from civic office.

Failure by a member of staff to comply with Council's Code of Conduct may give rise to disciplinary action.

A better conduct guide has also been developed to assist councils to review and enhance their codes of conduct. This guide supports this code and provides further information on the provisions in this code.

PART 2 PURPOSE OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT

The Model Code of Conduct sets the minimum requirements of conduct for council officials in carrying out their functions. The Model Code is prescribed by regulation.

The Model Code of Conduct has been developed to assist council officials to:

- understand the standards of conduct that are expected of them
- enable them to fulfil their statutory duty to act honestly and exercise a reasonable degree of care and diligence (section 439)
- act in a way that enhances public confidence in the integrity of local government.

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PART 3 GENERAL CONDUCT OBLIGATIONS

General conduct

- 3.1 You must not conduct yourself in carrying out your functions in a manner that is likely to bring the council or holders of civic office into disrepute. Specifically, you must not act in a way that:
- contravenes the Act, associated regulations, council's relevant administrative requirements and policies
 - is detrimental to the pursuit of the charter of a council
 - is improper or unethical
 - is an abuse of power or otherwise amounts to misconduct
 - causes, comprises or involves intimidation, harassment or verbal abuse
 - causes, comprises or involves discrimination, disadvantage or adverse treatment in relation to employment
 - causes, comprises or involves prejudice in the provision of a service to the community. (*Schedule 6A*)
- 3.2 You must act lawfully, honestly and exercise a reasonable degree of care and diligence in carrying out your functions under the Act or any other Act. (*Section 439*)
- 3.3 You must treat others with respect at all times.

Fairness and equity

- 3.4 You must consider issues consistently, promptly and fairly. You must deal with matters in accordance with established procedures, in a non-discriminatory manner.
- 3.5 You must take all relevant facts known to you, or that you should be reasonably aware of, into consideration and have regard to the particular merits of each case. You must not take irrelevant matters or circumstances into consideration when making decisions.

Harassment and discrimination

- 3.6 You must not harass, bully, discriminate against, or support others who harass and discriminate against colleagues or members of the public. This includes, but is not limited to harassment and discrimination on the grounds of sex, pregnancy, age, race, responsibilities as a carer, marital status, disability, homosexuality, transgender grounds or if a person has an infectious disease.

Any person who causes, instructs, induces, aids or knowingly permits another person to engage in bullying, harassment or discrimination in the workplace shall be deemed to have committed the act and shall also be treated accordingly. (~~Reference: City of Ryde Anti Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment Policy.~~ **Reference: Prevention of Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment Policy 2013**).

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Development decisions

- 3.7 You must ensure that development decisions are properly made and that parties involved in the development process are dealt with fairly. You must avoid any occasion for suspicion of improper conduct in the development assessment process.
- 3.8 In determining development applications, you must ensure that no action, statement or communication between yourself and applicants or objectors conveys any suggestion of willingness to provide improper concessions or preferential treatment.

Binding caucus votes

- 3.9 You must not participate in binding caucus votes in relation to matters to be considered at a council or committee meeting.
- 3.10 For the purposes of clause 3.9, a binding caucus vote is a process whereby a group of councillors are compelled by a threat of disciplinary or other adverse action to comply with a predetermined position on a matter before the council or committee irrespective of the personal views of individual members of the group on the merits of the matter before the council or committee.
- 3.11 Clause 3.9 does not prohibit councillors from discussing a matter before the council or committee prior to considering the matter in question at a council or committee meeting or from voluntarily holding a shared view with other councillors on the merits of a matter.
- 3.12 Clause 3.9 does not apply to a decision to elect the Mayor or Deputy Mayor or to nominate a person to be a member of a council committee.

Lobbying

- 3.13 If you are being lobbied about the making of a decision you should:
- (a) observe the provisions of the relevant Council policies;
 - (b) be alert to the motives and interests of those who seek to lobby;
 - (c) be aware of which person, organisation or company a lobbyist is representing;
 - (d) avoid saying or doing anything which could be viewed as granting a lobbyist preferential treatment;
 - (e) be alert that Lobbyists may attempt to encourage decision makers to consider matters which are irrelevant to the merits of the decision under consideration;
 - (f) keep records of all meetings with Lobbyists and if possible have another person attend the meetings or take notes;
 - (g) only hold meetings with Lobbyists in appropriate locations, such as the Council offices
 - (h) **include details of these meetings in Council's Lobbyist Contact Register**
(Reference: City of Ryde Ethical Lobbying Policy, **2013**)

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Drugs and Alcohol

- 3.14 The City of Ryde recognises that the use of alcohol and other drugs in the workplace may impact on the effectiveness of Council Officials in the performance of their duties to the health, safety and welfare of themselves and others.
- 3.15 The City of Ryde will not tolerate unsafe and unacceptable behaviour resulting from alcohol or other drug misuse. Council officials should declare any consumption of alcohol, drugs or medications which may impair their ability to safely perform their duties. (Reference: City of Ryde **Alcohol and Other Drugs Procedure**)

Health, Wellbeing and Safety

- 3.16 The City of Ryde is committed to providing a workplace that is safe and without risk to health or the welfare of all employees, contractors and members of the public in our workplaces, and the effective rehabilitation of injured employees.
- 3.17 Council officials should take accountability and responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of other Council officials. (Reference: City of Ryde ~~OHS Policy Statement~~ **Work, Health and Safety Policy 2013**).

Gender Equity

- 3.18 On 21 September 2010, City of Ryde adopted the following Statement for Gender Equity:

"We will work towards increasing the representation of women in local government, both as elected members and senior managers and professionals.

We will undertake ongoing reviews of policies and practices to remove barriers to women's participation and to engender safe, supportive working and decisions-making environments that encourage and value a wide range of views".

Public Comment

- 3.19 The Mayor or General Manager will generally be the spokesperson on Council business or matters before the Council. Only staff with specific delegations are authorised to make public comment about Council business or matters before Council. Any comment is to be made in accordance with Council's associated Policies. (Reference: Council's Media Policy, **July 2014**).

On social media, ie Council's Twitter and Facebook accounts, the Communication and Media Team are generally the spokesperson on all Council business. Other staff can apply to use these sites if a particular project warrants it.

If Council officials make comment on Council business using their personal social media accounts, they are to ensure it is clear that it is a personal opinion not the official position of City of Ryde. (References: Social Media Policy, and Procedure on Representing City of Ryde on Social Media)

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Sponsorship

3.20 Any sponsorship arrangements made must not limit Council's ability to carry out its functions fully and impartially.

All sponsorship arrangements must be made in accordance with Council's Sponsorship Policy 2012.

Public Interest Disclosures

3.21 Council has an adopted Public Interest Disclosures Internal Reporting Policy, December 2013. The handling of public interest disclosures is to be undertaken in accordance with this Policy.

3.22 Council Officials who come forward and report wrongdoing are helping to promote integrity, accountability and good management. Such behaviour is encouraged, which supports the City of Ryde values.

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PART 4 CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

- 4.1 A conflict of interests exists where a reasonable and informed person would perceive that you could be influenced by a private interest when carrying out your public duty.
- 4.2 You must avoid or appropriately manage any conflict of interests. The onus is on you to identify a conflict of interests and take the appropriate action to manage the conflict in favour of your public duty.
- 4.3 Any conflict of interests must be managed to uphold the probity of council decision-making. When considering whether or not you have a conflict of interests, it is always important to think about how others would view your situation.
- 4.4 Private interests can be of two types: pecuniary or non-pecuniary.

What is a pecuniary interest?

- 4.5 A pecuniary interest is an interest that a person has in a matter because of a reasonable likelihood or expectation of appreciable financial gain or loss to the person. (Section 442)
- 4.6 A person will also be taken to have a pecuniary interest in a matter if that person's spouse or de facto partner or a relative of the person or a partner or employer of the person, or a company or other body of which the person, or a nominee, partner or employer of the person is a member, has a pecuniary interest in the matter. (Section 443)
- 4.7 Pecuniary interests are regulated by Chapter 14, Part 2 of the Act. The Act requires that:
- a) councillors and designated persons lodge an initial and an annual written disclosure of interests that could potentially be in conflict with their public or professional duties (Section 449)
 - b) councillors and members of council committees disclose an interest and the nature of that interest at a meeting, leave the meeting and be out of sight of the meeting and not participate in discussions or voting on the matter (Section 451)
 - c) designated persons immediately declare, in writing, any pecuniary interest. (Section 459)
- 4.8 Designated persons are defined at Section 441 of the Act, and include, but are not limited to, the general manager and other senior staff of the council.
- 4.9 Where you are a member of staff of council, other than a designated person (as defined by Section 441), you must disclose in writing to your supervisor or the general manager, the nature of any pecuniary interest you have in a matter you are dealing with as soon as practicable.

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What are non-pecuniary interests?

- 4.10 Non-pecuniary interests are private or personal interests the council official has that do not amount to a pecuniary interest as defined in the Act. These commonly arise out of family, or personal relationships, or involvement in sporting, social or other cultural groups and associations and may include an interest of a financial nature.
- 4.11 The political views of a councillor do not constitute a private interest.

Managing non-pecuniary conflict of interests

- 4.12 Where you have a non-pecuniary interest that conflicts with your public duty, you must disclose the interest fully and in writing, even if the conflict is not significant. You must do this as soon as practicable.
- 4.13 If a disclosure is made at a council or committee meeting, both the disclosure and the nature of the interest must be recorded in the minutes. This disclosure constitutes disclosure in writing for the purposes of clause 4.12.
- 4.14 How you manage a non-pecuniary conflict of interests will depend on whether or not it is significant.
- 4.15 As a general rule, a non-pecuniary conflict of interests will be significant where a matter does not raise a pecuniary interest but it involves:
- a) a relationship between a council official and another person that is particularly close, for example, parent, grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, lineal descendant or adopted child of the person or of the person's spouse, current or former spouse or partner, de facto or other person living in the same household
 - b) other relationships that are particularly close, such as friendships and business relationships. Closeness is defined by the nature of the friendship or business relationship, the frequency of contact and the duration of the friendship or relationship
 - c) an affiliation between the council official and an organisation, sporting body, club, corporation or association that is particularly strong.
- 4.16 If you are a council official, other than a member of staff of council, and you have disclosed that a significant non-pecuniary conflict of interests exists, you must manage it in one of two ways:
- a) remove the source of the conflict, by relinquishing or divesting the interest that creates the conflict, or reallocating the conflicting duties to another council official
 - b) have no involvement in the matter, by absenting yourself from and not taking part in any debate or voting on the issue as if the provisions in section 451(2) of the Act apply
- 4.17 If you determine that a non-pecuniary conflict of interests is less than significant and does not require further action, you must provide an explanation of why you consider that the conflict does not require further action in the circumstances.

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- 4.18 If you are a member of staff of council, the decision on which option should be taken to manage a non-pecuniary conflict of interests must be made in consultation with your manager.
- 4.19 Despite clause 4.16(b), a councillor who has disclosed that a significant non-pecuniary conflict of interests exists may participate in a decision to delegate council's decision-making role to council staff through the general manager, or appoint another person or body to make the decision in accordance with the law. This applies whether or not council would be deprived of a quorum if one or more councillors were to manage their conflict of interests by not voting on a matter in accordance with clause 4.16(b) above.

Reportable political donations

- 4.20 Councillors should note that matters before council involving political or campaign donors may give rise to a non-pecuniary conflict of interests.
- 4.21 Where a councillor has received or knowingly benefitted from a reportable political donation:
- a) made by a major political donor in the previous four years, and
 - b) where the major political donor has a matter before council,
- then the councillor must declare a non-pecuniary conflict of interests, disclose the nature of the interest, and manage the conflict of interests in accordance with clause 4.16(b).
- 4.22 For the purposes of this Part:
- a) a "reportable political donation" is a "reportable political donation" for the purposes of section 86 of the *Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981*,
 - b) a "major political donor" is a "major political donor" for the purposes of section 84 of the *Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981*.
- 4.23 Councillors should note that political donations below \$1,000, or political donations to a registered political party or group by which a councillor is endorsed, may still give rise to a non-pecuniary conflict of interests. Councillors should determine whether or not such conflicts are significant and take the appropriate action to manage them.
- 4.24 If a councillor has received or knowingly benefitted from a reportable political donation of the kind referred to in clause 4.21, that councillor is not prevented from participating in a decision to delegate council's decision-making role to council staff through the general manager or appointing another person or body to make the decision in accordance with the law (see clause 4.19 above).

Loss of quorum as a result of compliance with this Part

- 4.25 Where a majority of councillors are precluded under this Part from consideration of a matter the council or committee must resolve to delegate consideration of the matter in question to another person.

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- 4.26 Where a majority of councillors are precluded under this Part from consideration of a matter and the matter in question concerns the exercise of a function that may not be delegated under section 377 of the Act, the councillors may apply in writing to the Chief Executive to be exempted from complying with a requirement under this Part relating to the management of a non-pecuniary conflict of interests.
- 4.27 The Chief Executive will only exempt a councillor from complying with a requirement under this Part where:
- a) compliance by councillors with a requirement under the Part in relation to a matter will result in the loss of a quorum, and
 - b) the matter relates to the exercise of a function of the council that may not be delegated under section 377 of the Act.
- 4.28 Where the Chief Executive exempts a councillor from complying with a requirement under this Part, the councillor must still disclose any interests they have in the matter the exemption applies to in accordance with the requirements of this Part.
- 4.29 A councillor, who would otherwise be precluded from participating in the consideration of a matter under this Part because they have a non-pecuniary conflict of interests in the matter, is permitted to participate in consideration of the matter, if:
- a) the matter is a proposal relating to
 - i) the making of a principal environmental planning instrument applying to the whole or a significant part of the council's area, or
 - ii) the amendment, alteration or repeal of an environmental planning instrument where the amendment, alteration or repeal applies to the whole or a significant part of the council's area, and
 - b) the councillor declares any interest they have in the matter that would otherwise have precluded their participation in consideration of the matter under this Part.
- Other business or employment
- 4.30 If you are a member of staff of council considering outside employment or contract work that relates to the business of the council or that might conflict with your council duties, you must notify and seek the approval of the general manager in writing. (section 353)
- 4.31 As a member of staff, you must ensure that any outside employment or business you engage in will not:
- a) conflict with your official duties
 - b) involve using confidential information or council resources obtained through your work with the council
 - c) require you to work while on council duty
 - d) discredit or disadvantage the council.

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Personal dealings with council

4.32 You may have reason to deal with your council in your personal capacity (for example, as a ratepayer, recipient of a council service or applicant for a consent granted by council). You must not expect or request preferential treatment in relation to any matter in which you have a private interest because of your position. You must avoid any action that could lead members of the public to believe that you are seeking preferential treatment.

Political support and community participation

4.33 Staff must ensure that any participation in party political activities does not conflict with their primary duty as an employee to serve the Council in a politically neutral manner.

4.44 If employees become aware that a conflict of interest has arisen or might arise due to their participation in party political activities they should inform their Group Manager or the General Manager immediately and take adequate steps to manage that conflict in accordance with the Code.

Council officials and future employment

4.45 Councillors and employees should not use their position to obtain opportunities for future employment.

4.46 You must not allow yourself or your work to be influenced by plans for, or offers of, employment outside Council.

Former Council Officials

4.47 You must be careful in your dealings with former Council officials and make sure that you do not give them, or appear to give them, favourable treatment or access to information.

4.48 Former Council officials must not use, or take advantage of confidential information obtained in the course of the official duties that may lead to gain or profit. At the end of your involvement with Council you must return all Council property, documents or items and not make public or otherwise use any confidential information gained as a consequence of your involvement with Council.

Voluntary Declarations by Council Officials

4.49 Declarations by Councillors or staff are to be made on the specified form.

4.50 Declarations by the Mayor or Councillors are to be signed by the General Manager. Declarations by the General Manager are to be signed by the Mayor. Declarations by staff are to be signed by the General Manager or relevant Group Manager

4.51 All emergent declarations will be held in the Disclosure of Interest Register. This is a public document accessible in accordance with the GI(PA)Act provisions.

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Declarations as part of recruitment or tendering processes

- 4.52 Declarations regarding conflicts of interest will be required to be made by Council Officials participating in a recruitment panel. This is to be undertaken in accordance with the relevant City of Ryde recruitment and selection policies and procedures.
- 4.53 Declarations regarding conflicts of interest will be required to be made by Council Officials participating in procurement processes. This is to be undertaken in accordance with the City of Ryde procurement framework.

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PART 5 PERSONAL BENEFIT

For the purposes of this section, a reference to a gift or benefit does not include a political donation or contribution to an election fund that is subject to the provisions of the relevant election funding legislation. (Reference: City of Ryde Gifts and Benefits Policy, 2013)

Gifts and benefits

5.1 You must avoid situations giving rise to the appearance that a person or body, through the provision of gifts, benefits or hospitality of any kind, is attempting to secure favourable treatment from you or from the council.

5.2 You must take all reasonable steps to ensure that your immediate family members do not receive gifts or benefits that give rise to the appearance of being an attempt to secure favourable treatment. Immediate family members ordinarily include parents, spouses, children and siblings.

Token gifts and benefits

5.3 Generally speaking, token gifts and benefits include:

- a) free or subsidised meals, beverages or refreshments provided in conjunction with:
 - i) the discussion of official business
 - ii) council work related events such as training, education sessions, workshops
 - iii) conferences
 - iv) council functions or events
 - v) social functions organised by groups, such as council committees and community organisations
- b) invitations to and attendance at local social, cultural or sporting events
- c) gifts of single bottles of reasonably priced alcohol to individual council officials at end of year functions, public occasions or in recognition of work done (such as providing a lecture/training session/address)
- d) ties, scarves, coasters, tie pins, diaries, chocolates or flowers
- e) prizes of token value.

Gifts and benefits of value

5.4 Notwithstanding clause 5.3, gifts and benefits that have more than a token value include, but are not limited to, tickets to major sporting events (such as state or international cricket matches or matches in other national sporting codes (including the NRL, AFL, FFA, NBL)), corporate hospitality at a corporate facility at major sporting events, discounted products for personal use, the frequent use of facilities such as gyms, use of holiday homes, free or discounted travel.

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How are offers of gifts and benefits to be dealt with?

- 5.5 You must not:
- a) seek or accept a bribe or other improper inducement
 - b) seek gifts or benefits of any kind
 - c) accept any gift or benefit that may create a sense of obligation on your part or may be perceived to be intended or likely to influence you in carrying out your public duty
 - d) accept any gift or benefit of more than token value
 - e) accept an offer of cash or a cash-like gift, regardless of the amount.
- 5.6 For the purposes of clause 5.5(e), a "cash-like gift" includes but is not limited to gift vouchers, credit cards, debit cards with credit on them, prepayments such as phone or internal credit, memberships or entitlements to discounts.
- 5.7 Where you receive a gift or benefit of more than token value that cannot reasonably be refused or returned, this must be disclosed promptly to your supervisor, the Mayor or the general manager. The recipient, supervisor, Mayor or general manager must ensure that any gifts or benefits of more than token value that are received are recorded in a Gifts Register. The gift or benefit must be surrendered to council, unless the nature of the gift or benefit makes this impractical. This must be done in accordance with City of Ryde's Gifts and Benefits Policy, 2013.
- 5.8 In normal circumstances, all gifts and/or benefits offered to a Council official of the City of Ryde are to be declined in accordance with Council's adopted Gifts and Benefits Policy, 2013 and a form completed. No gift or benefit should be personally retained by a Council official.

Improper and undue influence

- 5.9 You must not use your position to influence other council officials in the performance of their public or professional duties to obtain a private benefit for yourself or for somebody else. A councillor will not be in breach of this clause where they seek to influence other council officials through the appropriate exercise of their representative functions.
- 5.10 You must not take advantage (or seek to take advantage) of your status or position with or of functions you perform for council in order to obtain a private benefit for yourself or for any other person or body.

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PART 6 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COUNCIL OFFICIALS

Obligations of councillors and administrators

- 6.1 Each council is a body politic. The councillors or administrator/s are the governing body of the council. The governing body has the responsibility of directing and controlling the affairs of the council in accordance with the Act and is responsible for policy determinations, for example, those relating to workforce policy.
- 6.2 Councillors or administrators must not:
- a) direct council staff other than by giving appropriate direction to the general manager in the performance of council's functions by way of council or committee resolution, or by the Mayor or administrator exercising their power under section 226 of the Act (section 352)
 - b) in any public or private forum, direct or influence or attempt to direct or influence, any other member of the staff of the council or a delegate of the council in the exercise of the functions of the member or delegate (Schedule 6A of the Act)
 - c) contact a member of the staff of the council on council related business unless in accordance with the policy and procedures governing the interaction of councillors and council staff that have been authorised by the council and the general manager
 - d) contact or issue instructions to any of council's contractors or tenderers, including council's legal advisers, unless by the Mayor or administrator exercising their power under section 226 of the Act. This does not apply to council's external auditors or the Chair of council's audit committee who may be provided with any information by individual councillors reasonably necessary for the external auditor or audit committee to effectively perform their functions.

Councillors or administrators:

- a) can expect all staff to be courteous to councillors at all times.
- b) may mix in the same social circles, or have associations through sporting, business or family interests with staff. General social interaction and conversation in these situations is acceptable
- c) can contact the General Manager regarding Council matters, Group Managers regarding Council matters specific to their area of business or the dedicated Councillor HelpDesk for any issue or request.

Obligations of staff

- 6.3 The general manager is responsible for the efficient and effective operation of the council's organisation and for ensuring the implementation of the decisions of the council without delay.

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- 6.4 Members of staff of council must:
- a) give their attention to the business of council while on duty
 - b) ensure that their work is carried out efficiently, economically and effectively
 - c) carry out lawful directions given by any person having authority to give such directions
 - d) give effect to the lawful decisions, policies, and procedures of the council, whether or not the staff member agrees with or approves of them
 - e) ensure that any participation in political activities outside the service of the council does not conflict with the performance of their official duties.

Obligations during meetings

- 6.5 You must act in accordance with council's Code of Meeting Practice, if council has adopted one, and the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2005* during council and committee meetings.
- 6.6 You must show respect to the chair, other council officials and any members of the public present during council and committee meetings or other formal proceedings of the council.

Inappropriate interactions

- 6.7 You must not engage in any of the following inappropriate interactions:
- a) Councillors and administrators approaching staff and staff organisations to discuss individual or operational staff matters other than broader workforce policy issues.
 - b) Council staff approaching councillors and administrators to discuss individual or operational staff matters other than broader workforce policy issues.
 - c) Council staff refusing to give information that is available to other councillors to a particular councillor.
 - d) Councillors and administrators who have lodged a development application with council, discussing the matter with council staff in staff-only areas of the council.
 - e) Councillors and administrators being overbearing or threatening to council staff.
 - f) Councillors and administrators making personal attacks on council staff in a public forum.
 - g) Councillors and administrators directing or pressuring council staff in the performance of their work, or recommendations they should make.
 - h) Council staff providing ad hoc advice to councillors and administrators without recording or documenting the interaction as they would if the advice was provided to a member of the community.
 - i) Council staff meeting with applicants or objectors alone AND outside office hours to discuss applications or proposals.
 - j) Councillors attending on-site inspection meetings with lawyers and/or consultants engaged by council associated with current or proposed legal proceedings unless permitted to do so by council's general manager or, in the case of the Mayor or administrator, exercising their power under section 226 of the Act.

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City of Ryde Charter of Respect

6.8 This Charter relates to the Code of Conduct. It exists to strengthen the working relationship between Councillors and Council's Senior Management Team. These are the enforceable standards of conduct.

As a Councillor of the City of Ryde, I will:-

- Read reports and maintain confidentiality (as required) when making decisions
- Evaluate and constructively challenge our performance
- Strategically set the City's future direction and set clear priorities
- Professionally deal with staff and create a non threatening culture by;
 1. Debating the issue without denigrating staff (play the ball not the person)
 2. Respecting that staff are bound by Council's policies and procedures
 3. Telling us what is required not how to do it
- Expect responses within realistic timeframes and utilise the helpdesk for my requests
- Commit to representing the aspirations and needs of our Community whilst acting with dignity
- Trust the staff to give their best apolitical advice but feel free to change it.

As a member of the Executive Team of the City of Ryde I will be:-

- Receptive and responsive to Community concerns and Council's decisions
- Ethical and apolitical in carrying out my duties
- Supportive of Councillor requests and requirements
- Professional in managing and optimising Council's resources and knowledge
- Equal in my interactions with and treatment of all Councillors
- Communicating in a frank, honest, clear and consistent way with Councillors and represent their views clearly to staff
- Timely in all of our communications, responses and actions (within our recourse limitations)

NOTE

Receptive – includes using a range of market research and consultative methodologies, analysing the results and being guided by them
 Ethical – includes honest and without prejudice or political bias, fair/impartial/independent
 Professional – includes being efficient, effective, accurate, keeping our expertise up to date, being financially and commercially sound and focussed on reporting against and improving our performance across our key performance indicators.

City of Ryde Guideline on Interaction between Councillors and Staff (November 2014
October 2013)

6.9 This Guideline provides a protocol for Council officials to use to determine the most appropriate method of communication; to clarify obligations and expectations; and to ensure information flows are not interrupted. It is an enforceable part of the Code of Conduct standards.

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PART 7 ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND COUNCIL RESOURCES

Councillor and administrator access to information

- 7.1 The general manager and public officer are responsible for ensuring that members of the public, councillors and administrators can gain access to the documents available under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*.
- 7.2 The general manager must provide councillors and administrators with information sufficient to enable them to carry out their civic office functions.
- 7.3 Members of staff of council must provide full and timely information to councillors and administrators sufficient to enable them to carry out their civic office functions and in accordance with council procedures.
- 7.4 Members of staff of council who provide any information to a particular councillor in the performance of their civic duties must also make it available to any other councillor who requests it and in accordance with council procedures.
- 7.5 Councillors and administrators who have a private (as distinct from civic) interest in a document of council have the same rights of access as any member of the public.

Councillors and administrators to properly examine and consider information

- 7.6 Councillors and administrators must properly examine and consider all the information provided to them relating to matters that they are dealing with to enable them to make a decision on the matter in accordance with council's charter.

Refusal of access to documents

- 7.7 Where the general manager and public officer determine to refuse access to a document sought by a councillor or administrator they must act reasonably. In reaching this decision they must take into account whether or not the document sought is required for the councillor or administrator to perform their civic duty (see clause 7.2). The general manager or public officer must state the reasons for the decision if access is refused.

Use of certain council information

- 7.8 In regard to information obtained in your capacity as a council official, you must:
 - a) only access council information needed for council business
 - b) not use that council information for private purposes
 - c) not seek or obtain, either directly or indirectly, any financial benefit or other improper advantage for yourself, or any other person or body, from any information to which you have by virtue of your office or position with council
 - d) only release council information in accordance with established council policies and procedures and in compliance with relevant legislation.

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Use and security of confidential information

- 7.9 You must maintain the integrity and security of confidential documents or information in your possession, or for which you are responsible.
- 7.10 In addition to your general obligations relating to the use of council information, you must:
- a) protect confidential information
 - b) only release confidential information if you have authority to do so
 - c) only use confidential information for the purpose it is intended to be used
 - d) not use confidential information gained through your official position for the purpose of securing a private benefit for yourself or for any other person
 - e) not use confidential information with the intention to cause harm or detriment to your council or any other person or body
 - f) not disclose any information discussed during a confidential session of a council meeting.

Personal information

- 7.11 When dealing with personal information you must comply with:
- a) *the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*
 - b) *the Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002*
 - c) the Information Protection Principles and Health Privacy Principles
 - d) council's privacy management plan
 - e) the Privacy Code of Practice for Local Government
 - f) *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* and Regulation

Use of council resources

- 7.12 You must use council resources ethically, effectively, efficiently and carefully in the course of your official duties, and must not use them for private purposes (except when supplied as part of a contract of employment) unless this use is lawfully authorised and proper payment is made where appropriate. (Reference: Council's Use of Assets and Facilities Policy, 2007 and the Mobile Telephone Use Policy, 2011).
- 7.13 Union delegates and consultative committee members may have reasonable access to council resources for the purposes of carrying out their industrial responsibilities, including but not limited to:
- a) the representation of members with respect to disciplinary matters
 - b) the representation of employees with respect to grievances and disputes
 - c) functions associated with the role of the local consultative committee.
- 7.14 You must be scrupulous in your use of council property, including intellectual property, official services and facilities, and must not permit their misuse by any other person or body.
- 7.15 You must avoid any action or situation that could create the appearance that council property, official services or public facilities are being improperly used for your benefit or the benefit of any other person or body.

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- 7.16 You must not use council resources, property or facilities for the purpose of assisting your election campaign or the election campaign of others unless the resources, property or facilities are otherwise available for use or hire by the public and any publicly advertised fee is paid for use of the resources, property or facility.
- 7.17 You must not use council letterhead, council crests and other information that could give the appearance it is official council material for:
- a) the purpose of assisting your election campaign or the election campaign of others, or
 - b) for other non-official purposes.
- 7.18 You must not convert any property of the council to your own use unless properly authorised.
- 7.19 You must not use council's computer resources to search for, access, download or communicate any material of an offensive, obscene, pornographic, threatening, abusive or defamatory nature.

Councillor access to council buildings

- 7.20 Councillors and administrators are entitled to have access to the council chamber, committee room, mayor's office (subject to availability), councillors' rooms, and public areas of council's buildings during normal business hours and for meetings. Councillors and administrators needing access to these facilities at other times must obtain authority from the general manager.
- 7.21 Councillors and administrators must not enter staff-only areas of council buildings without the approval of the general manager (or delegate) or as provided in the procedures governing the interaction of councillors and council staff.
- 7.22 Councillors and administrators must ensure that when they are within a staff area they avoid giving rise to the appearance that they may improperly influence council staff decisions.

Information Contact Officers

- 7.23 To ensure that appropriate information access processes are followed, Council has nominated particular officers to the following roles in accordance with the relevant legislation.
- Privacy Contact Officer – General Counsel
Manages Council's obligations under Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998
 - Public Officer – General Counsel
Manages requests from public on affairs of Council, assist with enquiries or requests for access to information.
 - Right to Information – Information Access Officer
Assists with enquiries or requests for access to information, and receives and co-ordinates formal requests for information under Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009.

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PART 8 MAINTAINING THE INTEGRITY OF THIS CODE

8.1 You must not conduct yourself in a manner that is likely to undermine confidence in the integrity of this code or its administration.

Complaints made for an improper purpose

8.2 You must not make a complaint or cause a complaint to be made under this code for an improper purpose.

8.3 For the purposes of clause 8.2, a complaint is made for an improper purpose where it is trivial, frivolous, vexatious or not made in good faith, or where it otherwise lacks merit and has been made substantially for one or more of the following purposes:

- a) to intimidate or harass another council official
- b) to damage another council official's reputation
- c) to obtain a political advantage
- d) to influence a council official in the exercise of their official functions or to prevent or disrupt the exercise of those functions
- e) to influence the council in the exercise of its functions or to prevent or disrupt the exercise of those functions
- f) to avoid disciplinary action under this code
- g) to take reprisal action against a person for making a complaint under this code except as may be otherwise specifically permitted under this code
- h) to take reprisal action against a person for exercising a function prescribed under the procedures for the administration of this code except as may be otherwise specifically permitted under this code
- i) to prevent or disrupt the effective administration of this code.

Detrimental action

8.4 You must not take detrimental action or cause detrimental action to be taken against a person substantially in reprisal for a complaint they have made under this code except as may be otherwise specifically permitted under this code.

8.5 You must not take detrimental action or cause detrimental action to be taken against a person substantially in reprisal for any function they have exercised under this code except as may be otherwise specifically permitted under this code.

8.6 For the purposes of clauses 8.4 and 8.5 detrimental action is an action causing, comprising or involving any of the following:

- a) injury, damage or loss
- b) intimidation or harassment
- c) discrimination, disadvantage or adverse treatment in relation to employment
- d) dismissal from, or prejudice in, employment
- e) disciplinary proceedings.

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Compliance with requirements under this code

- 8.7 You must not engage in conduct that is calculated to impede or disrupt the consideration of a matter under this code.
- 8.8 You must comply with a reasonable and lawful request made by a person exercising a function under this code.
- 8.9 You must comply with a practice ruling made by the ~~Division~~ **Office** of Local Government.
- 8.10 Where you are a councillor or the general manager, you must comply with any council resolution requiring you to take action as a result of a breach of this code.

Disclosure of information about the consideration of a matter under this code

- 8.11 You must report breaches of this code in accordance with the reporting requirements under this code.
- 8.12 You must not make allegations of suspected breaches of this code at council meetings or in other public forums.
- 8.13 You must not disclose information about the consideration of a matter under this code except for the purposes of seeking legal advice unless the disclosure is otherwise permitted under this code.

Complaints alleging a breach of this part

- 8.14 Complaints alleging a breach of this Part (Part 8) by a councillor, the general manager or an administrator are to be made to the ~~Division~~ **Office** of Local Government.
- 8.15 Complaints alleging a breach of this Part by other council officials are to be made to the general manager.

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PART 9 DEFINITIONS

In the Model Code of Conduct the following definitions apply:

the Act	the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i>
act of disorder	see the definition in clause 256 of the <i>Local Government (General) Regulation 2005</i>
administrator	an administrator of a council appointed under the Act other than an administrator appointed under section 66
Chief Executive	Chief Executive of the Division Office of Local Government, Department of Premier and Cabinet
committee	a council committee
conflict of interests	a conflict of interests exists where a reasonable and informed person would perceive that you could be influenced by a private interest when carrying out your public duty
corrupt conduct	is the dishonest or partial exercise of official functions by a public official. For example, this could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the improper use of knowledge, power or position for personal gain or the advantage of others • acting dishonestly or unfairly, or breaching public trust • a member of the public influencing or trying to influence a public official to use their position in a way that is dishonest, biased or breaches public trust.
council committee	a committee established by resolution of council
council committee member	a person other than a councillor or member of staff of a council who is a member of a council committee
council official	includes councillors, members of staff of council, administrators, council committee members, conduct reviewers and delegates of council
councillor	a person elected or appointed to civic office and includes a Mayor
delegate of council	a person (other than a councillor or member of staff of a council) or body, and the individual members of that body, to whom a function of the council is delegated

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designated person	see the definition in section 441 of the Act
election campaign	includes council, State and Federal election campaigns
personal information	information or an opinion about a person whose identity is apparent, or can be ascertained from the information or opinion
the Regulation	the <i>Local Government (General) Regulation 2005</i>

The term "you" used in the Model Code of Conduct refers to council officials.

The phrase "this code" used in the Model Code of Conduct refers also to the procedures for the administration of the Model Code of Conduct prescribed under the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2005*.

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ATTACHMENT 4

**CODE OF CONDUCT -
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**CODE OF CONDUCT -
COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE
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PART 1 INTRODUCTION

These procedures ("the Model Code Procedures") are prescribed for the purposes of the administration of the Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW ("the Model Code"). The Model Code and Model Code Procedures are made under sections 440 and 440AA respectively of the *Local Government Act 1993* ("the Act") and the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2005* ("the Regulation").

Sections 440 and 440AA of the Act require every council to adopt a code of conduct and procedures for the administration of the code of conduct that incorporate the provisions of the Model Code and Model Code Procedures respectively.

In adopting procedures for the administration of their adopted codes of conduct, councils may supplement the Model Code Procedures. However provisions of a council's adopted procedures that are not consistent with those prescribed under the Model Code Procedures will have no effect.

PART 2 DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of the procedures, the following definitions apply:

"the Act"	the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i>
"administrator"	an administrator of a council appointed under the Act other than an administrator appointed under section 66
"code of conduct"	a code of conduct adopted under section 440 of the Act
"code of conduct complaint"	a complaint that alleges conduct on the part of a council official acting in their official capacity that on its face, if proven, would constitute a breach of the standards of conduct prescribed under the council's code of conduct
"complainant"	a person who makes a code of conduct complaint
"complainant councillor"	a councillor who makes a code of conduct complaint

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"complaints coordinator"	a person appointed by the general manager under these procedures as a complaints coordinator
"conduct reviewer"	a person appointed under these procedures to review allegations of breaches of the code of conduct by councillors or the general manager
"council committee"	a committee established by resolution of council
"council committee member"	a person other than a councillor or member of staff of a council who is a member of a council committee
"councillor"	a person elected or appointed to civic office and includes a Mayor
"council official"	includes councillors, members of staff of council, administrators, council committee members, conduct reviewers and delegates of council
"delegate of council"	a person (other than a councillor or member of staff of a council) or body and the individual members of that body to whom a function of the council is delegated
"the Office Division "	the Division Office of Local Government, Department of Premier and Cabinet
OLG DLG	the Division Office of Local Government
"investigator"	a conduct reviewer or conduct review committee
"the Regulation"	the <i>Local Government (General) Regulation 2005</i>
"subject person"	a person whose conduct is the subject of investigation by a conduct reviewer or conduct review committee under these procedures

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PART 3 ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK

The establishment of a panel of conduct reviewers

- 3.1 The council must by resolution establish a panel of conduct reviewers.
- 3.2 The council may by resolution enter into an arrangement with one or more other councils to share a panel of conduct reviewers.

The City of Ryde has entered into such an arrangement with other Councils through the Northern Sydney Region of Councils (NSROC).

- 3.3 The panel of conduct reviewers is to be established following a public expression of interest process.
- 3.4 An expression of interest for members of the council's panel of conduct reviewers must, at a minimum, be advertised locally and in the Sydney metropolitan area.
- 3.5 To be eligible to be a member of a panel of conduct reviewers, a person must, at a minimum, meet the following requirements:
 - a) an understanding of local government, and
 - b) knowledge of investigative processes including but not limited to procedural fairness requirements and the requirements of the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994*, and
 - c) knowledge and experience of one or more of the following:
 - i) investigations, or
 - ii) law, or
 - iii) public administration, or
 - iv) public sector ethics, or
 - v) alternative dispute resolution, and
 - d) meet the eligibility requirements for membership of a panel of conduct reviewers under clause 3.6.
- 3.6 A person is not be eligible to be a member of the panel of conduct reviewers if they are
 - a) a councillor, or
 - b) a nominee for election as a councillor, or
 - c) an administrator, or
 - d) an employee of a council, or
 - e) a member of the Commonwealth Parliament or any State Parliament or Territory Assembly, or

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- f) a nominee for election as a member of the Commonwealth Parliament or any State Parliament or Territory Assembly, or
- g) a person who has a conviction for an indictable offence that is not an expired conviction.
- 3.7 A person is not precluded from being a member of the council's panel of conduct reviewers if they are a member of another council's panel of conduct reviewers.
- 3.8 A panel of conduct reviewers established under this Part is to have a term of up to four years.
- 3.9 The council may terminate the panel of conduct reviewers at any time by resolution.
- 3.10 When the term of the conduct reviewers concludes or is terminated, the council must establish a new panel of conduct reviewers in accordance with the requirements of this Part.
- 3.11 A person who was a member of a previous panel of conduct reviewers established by the council may be a member of subsequent panels of conduct reviewers established by the council.

Where a Council has appointed an incorporated or other entity to its panel of Conduct Reviewers, the Complaints Coordinator must ensure that any person proposed to undertake conduct review work for the council on behalf of the entity also meets the selection and eligibility criteria given above. (OLG Circular 14-09: 9 April 2014: Practice Direction 1 (Revised)).

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The appointment of complaints coordinators

- 3.12 The general manager must appoint a member of staff of the council to act as a complaints coordinator. Where practicable, the complaints coordinator should be a senior and suitably qualified member of staff.
- 3.13 The general manager may appoint other members of staff to act as alternates to the complaints coordinator.
- 3.14 The general manager must not undertake the role of complaints coordinator.
- 3.15 The person appointed as complaints coordinator or alternate complaints coordinator must also be a nominated disclosures coordinator appointed for the purpose of receiving and managing reports of wrongdoing under the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994*.

At City of Ryde the General Manager has appointed the Service Unit Manager – **Governance**, Risk and Audit, as Council's Complaints Coordinator, and the Group Manager Corporate Services as the alternate.

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- 3.16 The role of the complaints coordinator is to:
- a) coordinate the management of complaints made under the council's code of conduct,
 - b) liaise with and provide administrative support to a conduct reviewer or conduct review committee,
 - c) liaise with the Division **Office** of Local Government, and
 - d) arrange the annual reporting of code of conduct complaints statistics.

PART 4 HOW MAY CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS BE MADE?

What is a "code of conduct complaint"?

- 4.1 For the purpose of these procedures, a code of conduct complaint is a complaint that alleges conduct on the part of a council official acting in their official capacity that on its face, if proven, would constitute a breach of the standards of conduct prescribed under the council's code of conduct.
- 4.2 Only code of conduct complaints are to be dealt with under these procedures. Complaints that do not satisfy the definition of a "code of conduct complaint" are to be dealt with under council's routine complaints management processes.

When must a code of conduct complaint be made?

- 4.3 A code of conduct complaint must be made within three months of the alleged conduct occurring or within three months of the complainant becoming aware of the alleged conduct.
- 4.4 A complaint made after 3 months may only be accepted if the general manager, or, in the case of a complaint about the general manager, the Mayor, is satisfied that there are compelling grounds for the matter to be dealt with under the code of conduct.

How may a code of conduct complaint about a council official other than the general manager be made?

- 4.5 All code of conduct complaints other than those relating to the general manager are to be made to the general manager in writing.
- 4.6 Where a code of conduct complaint about a council official other than the general manager cannot be made in writing, the complaint must be confirmed with the complainant in writing as soon as possible after the receipt of the complaint.
- 4.7 In making a code of conduct complaint about a council official other than the general manager, the complainant may nominate whether they want the complaint to be resolved by mediation or by other alternative means.

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4.8 The general manager or, where the complaint is referred to a conduct reviewer, the conduct reviewer, must consider the complainant's preferences in deciding how to deal with the complaint.

4.9 Notwithstanding clauses 4.5 and 4.6, where the general manager becomes aware of a possible breach of the council's code of conduct, he or she may initiate the process for the consideration of the matter under these procedures without a written complaint.

How may a code of conduct complaint about the general manager be made?

4.10 Code of conduct complaints about the general manager are to be made to the Mayor in writing.

4.11 Where a code of conduct complaint about the general manager cannot be made in writing, the complaint must be confirmed with the complainant in writing as soon as possible after the receipt of the complaint.

4.12 In making a code of conduct complaint about the general manager, the complainant may nominate whether they want the complaint to be resolved by mediation or by other alternative means.

4.13 The Mayor or, where the complaint is referred to a conduct reviewer, the conduct reviewer, must consider the complainant's preferences in deciding how to deal with the complaint.

4.14 Notwithstanding clauses 4.10 and 4.11, where the Mayor becomes aware of a possible breach of the council's code of conduct by the general manager, he or she may initiate the process for the consideration of the matter under these procedures without a written complaint.

PART 5 HOW ARE CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS TO BE MANAGED?

How are code of conduct complaints about staff (other than the general manager) to be dealt with?

5.1 The general manager is responsible for making enquiries or causing enquiries to be made into code of conduct complaints about members of staff of council and for determining the outcome of such complaints.

The General Manager must advise all Councillors in writing if a complaint about a senior staff member has been received and, where appropriate, the nature of the complaint. The General Manager is to advise all Councillors of the intended course of action, and subsequently report the complaint handling plan to Council in a confidential Council report.

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- 5.2 Where the general manager decides not to make enquiries into a code of conduct complaint about a member of staff, the general manager must give the complainant reasons in writing for their decision.
- 5.3 Without limiting clause 5.2, the general manager may decide not to enquire into the matter on grounds that the complaint is trivial, frivolous, vexatious or not made in good faith.
- 5.4 Enquiries made into staff conduct that might give rise to disciplinary action must occur in accordance with the relevant industrial instrument or employment contract and make provision for procedural fairness including the right of an employee to be represented by their union.
- 5.5 Sanctions for staff depend on the severity, scale and importance of the breach and must be determined in accordance with any relevant industrial instruments or contracts.

How are code of conduct complaints about delegates of council and council committee members to be dealt with?

- 5.6 The general manager is responsible for making enquiries or causing enquiries to be made into code of conduct complaints about delegates of council and council committee members and for determining the outcome of such complaints.
- 5.7 Where the general manager decides not to make enquiries into a code of conduct complaint about a delegate of council or a council committee member, the general manager must give the complainant reasons in writing for their decision.
- 5.8 Without limiting clause 5.7, the general manager may decide not to enquire into the matter on grounds that the complaint is trivial, frivolous, vexatious or not made in good faith.
- 5.9 Sanctions for delegates of council and/or members of council committees depend on the severity, scale and importance of the breach and may include one or more of the following:
 - a) censure,
 - b) requiring the person to apologise to any person or organisation adversely affected by the breach,
 - c) prosecution for any breach of the law,
 - d) removing or restricting the person's delegation, or
 - e) removing the person from membership of the relevant council committee.

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- 5.10 Prior to imposing a sanction against a delegate of council or a council committee member under clause 5.9, the general manager or any person making enquiries on behalf of the general manager must comply with the requirements of procedural fairness. In particular:
- a) the substance of the allegation (including the relevant provision/s of council's code of conduct that the alleged conduct is in breach of) must be put to the person the subject of the allegation, and
 - b) the person must be given an opportunity to respond to the allegation, and
 - c) the general manager must consider the person's response in deciding whether to impose a sanction under clause 5.9.

How are code of conduct complaints about conduct reviewers to be dealt with?

- 5.11 The general manager must refer all code of conduct complaints about conduct reviewers to the ~~Division~~ **Office** for its consideration.
- 5.12 The general manager must notify the complainant of the referral of their complaint in writing.
- 5.13 The general manager must implement any recommendation made by the ~~Division~~ **Office** as a result of its consideration of a code of conduct complaint about a conduct reviewer.

How are code of conduct complaints about administrators to be dealt with?

- 5.14 The general manager must refer all code of conduct complaints about administrators to the ~~Division~~ **Office** for its consideration.
- 5.15 The general manager must notify the complainant of the referral of their complaint in writing.

How are code of conduct complaints about councillors to be dealt with?

- 5.16 The general manager must refer the following code of conduct complaints about councillors to the ~~Division~~ **Office**:
- a) complaints alleging a breach of the pecuniary interest provisions of the Act,
 - b) complaints alleging a failure to comply with a requirement under the code of conduct to disclose and appropriately manage conflicts of interests arising from reportable political donations (see section 328B),
 - c) complaints alleging a breach of Part 8 of the code of conduct relating to the maintenance of the integrity of the code, and
 - d) complaints that are the subject of a special complaints management arrangement with the ~~Division~~ **Office** under clause 5.40.

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- 5.17 Where the general manager refers a complaint to the ~~Division~~**Office** under clause 5.16, the general manager must notify the complainant of the referral in writing.
- 5.18 Where the general manager considers it to be practicable and appropriate to do so, the general manager may seek to resolve code of conduct complaints about councillors, other than those requiring referral to the ~~Division~~**Office** under clause 5.16, by alternative means such as, but not limited to, explanation, counselling, training, mediation, informal discussion, negotiation or apology instead of referring them to the complaints coordinator under clause 5.20.
- 5.19 Where the general manager resolves a code of conduct complaint under clause 5.18 to the general manager's satisfaction, the general manager must notify the complainant in writing of the steps taken to resolve the complaint and this shall finalise the consideration of the matter under these procedures.
- 5.20 The general manager must refer all code of conduct complaints about councillors other than those referred to the ~~Division~~**Office** under clause 5.16 or resolved under clause 5.18 to the complaints coordinator.

How are code of conduct complaints about the general manager to be dealt with?

- 5.21 The Mayor must refer the following code of conduct complaints about the general manager to the ~~Division~~**Office**:
- a) complaints alleging a breach of the pecuniary interest provisions of the Act,
 - b) complaints alleging a breach of Part 8 of the code of conduct relating to the maintenance of the integrity of the code, and
 - c) complaints the subject of a special complaints management arrangement with the ~~Division~~**Office** under clause 5.40.
- 5.22 Where the Mayor refers a complaint to the ~~Division~~**Office** under clause 5.21, the Mayor must notify the complainant of the referral in writing.
- 5.23 Where the Mayor considers it to be practicable and appropriate to do so, he or she may seek to resolve code of conduct complaints about the general manager, other than those requiring referral to the ~~Division~~**Office** under clause 5.21, by alternative means such as, but not limited to, explanation, counselling, training, mediation, informal discussion, negotiation or apology instead of referring them to the complaints coordinator under clause 5.25.

The Mayor must advise all Councillors in writing that a complaint about the General Manager has been received and, where appropriate, the nature of the complaint. The Mayor is to advise all Councillors of the intended course of action, and subsequently report the complaint handling plan to Council as a confidential Mayoral minute.

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5.24 Where the Mayor resolves a code of conduct complaint under clause 5.23 to the Mayor's satisfaction, the Mayor must notify the complainant in writing of the steps taken to resolve the complaint and this shall finalise the consideration of the matter under these procedures.

5.25 The Mayor must refer all code of conduct complaints about the general manager other than those referred to the ~~Division~~ **Office** under clause 5.21 or resolved under clause 5.23 to the complaints coordinator.

Referral of code of conduct complaints to external agencies

5.26 The general manager, Mayor or a conduct reviewer or conduct review committee may, at any time, refer a code of conduct complaint to an external agency or body such as, but not limited to, the ~~Division~~ **Office**, the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the NSW Ombudsman or the Police for its consideration, where they consider such a referral is warranted.

5.27 Where the general manager, Mayor, conduct reviewer or conduct review committee refers a complaint to an external agency or body under clause 5.26, they must notify the complainant of the referral in writing where it is appropriate for them to do so.

5.28 Referral of a matter to an external agency or body shall finalise consideration of the matter under the code of conduct unless the council is subsequently advised otherwise by the referral agency or body.

Disclosure of the identity of complainants

5.29 In dealing with matters under these procedures, information that identifies or tends to identify complainants is not to be disclosed unless:

- a) the complainant consents in writing to the disclosure, or
- b) it is generally known that the complainant has made the complaint as a result of the complainant having voluntarily identified themselves as the person who made the complaint, or
- c) it is essential, having regard to procedural fairness requirements, that the identifying information be disclosed, or
- d) a conduct reviewer or conduct review committee is of the opinion that disclosure of the information is necessary to investigate the matter effectively, or
- e) it is otherwise in the public interest to do so.

5.30 Clause 5.29 does not apply to code of conduct complaints made by councillors about other councillors or the general manager.

5.31 Where a councillor makes a code of conduct complaint about another councillor or the general manager and the complainant councillor considers that compelling grounds exist that would warrant information that identifies or tends to identify them as the complainant not to be disclosed, they may request in writing that such information not be disclosed.

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- 5.32 A request made by a complainant councillor under clause 5.31 must be made at the time they make a code of conduct complaint and must state the grounds upon which the request is made.
- 5.33 The general manager or Mayor or, where the matter is referred, a conduct reviewer or conduct review committee must consider a request made under clause 5.31 before disclosing information that identifies or tends to identify the complainant councillor but are not obliged to comply with the request.
- 5.34 Where a complainant councillor makes a request under clause 5.31, the general manager or Mayor or, where the matter is referred, a conduct reviewer or conduct review committee shall notify the councillor in writing of their intention to disclose information that identifies or tends to identify them prior to disclosing the information.

Code of conduct complaints made as public interest disclosures

- 5.35 Code of conduct complaints that are made as public interest disclosures under the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994* are to be managed in accordance with the requirements of that Act, the council's internal reporting policy and any guidelines issued by the NSW Ombudsman that relate to the management of public interest disclosures.
- 5.36 For a code of conduct complaint to be dealt with as a public interest disclosure, the complainant must state at the outset and in writing at the time of making the complaint that it is made as a public interest disclosure.
- 5.37 Where a councillor makes a code of conduct complaint about another councillor or the general manager as a public interest disclosure, before the matter may be dealt with under these procedures, the complainant councillor must consent in writing to the disclosure of their identity as the complainant.
- 5.38 Where a complainant councillor declines to consent to the disclosure of their identity as the complainant under clause 5.37, the general manager or the Mayor must refer the complaint to the **Division Office** for consideration. Such a referral must be made under section 26 of the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994*.

Special complaints management arrangements

- 5.39 The general manager may request in writing that the **Division Office** enter into a special complaints management arrangement with the council in relation to code of conduct complaints made by or about a person or persons.
- 5.40 Where the **Division Office** receives a request under clause 5.39, it may agree to enter into a special complaints management arrangement where it is satisfied that the number or nature of code of conduct complaints made by or about a person or persons has:

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- a) imposed an undue and disproportionate cost burden on the council's administration of its code of conduct, or
 - b) impeded or disrupted the effective administration by the council of its code of conduct, or
 - c) impeded or disrupted the effective functioning of the council.
- 5.41 A special complaints management arrangement must be in writing and must specify the following:
- a) the code of conduct complaints the arrangement relates to, and
 - b) the period that the arrangement will be in force.
- 5.42 The ~~Division~~ **Office** may by notice in writing, amend or terminate a special complaints management arrangement at any time.
- 5.43 While a special complaints management arrangement is in force, an officer of the ~~Division~~ **Office** (the assessing ~~Divisional~~ **OLG** Officer) must undertake the preliminary assessment of the code of conduct complaints specified in the arrangement in accordance with the requirements of these procedures except as provided by clause 5.44 below.
- 5.44 Where, following a preliminary assessment, the assessing ~~Divisional~~ **OLG** Officer determines that a code of conduct complaint warrants investigation by a conduct reviewer or a conduct review committee, the assessing ~~Divisional~~ **OLG** Officer shall notify the complaints coordinator in writing of their determination and the reasons for their determination. The complaints coordinator must comply with the recommendation of the assessing ~~Divisional~~ **OLG** Officer.
- 5.45 Prior to the expiry of a special complaints management arrangement, the ~~Division~~ **Office** shall, in consultation with the general manager, review the arrangement to determine whether it should be renewed or amended.
- 5.46 A special complaints management arrangement shall expire on the date specified in the arrangement unless renewed under clause 5.45.

PART 6 PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

Referral of code of conduct complaints to conduct reviewers

- 6.1 The complaints coordinator must refer all code of conduct complaints about councillors or the general manager submitted to the complaints coordinator within 21 days of receipt of a complaint by the general manager or the Mayor.
- 6.2 For the purposes of clause 6.1, the complaints coordinator will refer a complaint to a conduct reviewer selected from:
- a) a panel of conduct reviewers established by the council, or
 - b) a panel of conduct reviewers established by an organisation approved by the Chief Executive of the ~~Division~~ **Office**.

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In accordance with clause 6.2(b), the OLG has approved the Internal Audit Bureau (IAB) as an alternate provider of conduct reviewers. (Office of Local Government Circular 14-02, 4 February 2014)

- 6.3 In selecting a suitable conduct reviewer, the complaints coordinator may have regard to the qualifications and experience of members of the panel of conduct reviewers.

Where a Council has appointed an incorporated or other entity to their panel of Conduct Reviewers, the Complaints Coordinator must ensure that any person proposed to undertake conduct review work for the council on behalf of the entity also meets the selection and eligibility criteria given above. (OLG Circular 14-09: 9 April 2014: Practice Direction 1 (Revised)).

- 6.4 A conduct reviewer must not accept the referral of a code of conduct complaint where:
- a) they have a conflict of interests in relation to the matter referred to them, or
 - b) a reasonable apprehension of bias arises in relation to their consideration of the matter, or
 - c) they or their employer has entered into one or more contracts with the council in the 2 years preceding the referral and they or their employer have received or expect to receive payments under the contract or contracts of a cumulative value that exceeds \$100K, or
 - d) at the time of the referral, they or their employer are the council's legal service providers or are a member of a panel of legal service providers appointed by the council.
- 6.5 For the purposes of clause 6.4(a), a conduct reviewer will have a conflict of interests in a matter where a reasonable and informed person would perceive that they could be influenced by a private interest when carrying out their public duty (see clause 4.1 of the Model Code of Conduct).
- 6.6 For the purposes of clause 6.4(b), a reasonable apprehension of bias arises where a fair-minded observer might reasonably apprehend that the conduct reviewer might not bring an impartial and unprejudiced mind to the matter referred to the conduct reviewer.
- 6.7 Where the complaints coordinator refers a matter to a conduct reviewer, they will provide the conduct reviewer with a copy of the code of conduct complaint and any other information relevant to the matter held by the council.
- 6.8 The complaints coordinator must notify the complainant in writing that the matter has been referred to a conduct reviewer and advise which conduct reviewer the matter has been referred to.

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Preliminary assessment by a conduct reviewer

- 6.9 The conduct reviewer is to undertake a preliminary assessment of a complaint referred to them by the complaints coordinator for the purposes of determining how the complaint is to be managed.
- 6.10 The conduct reviewer may determine to do one or more of the following in relation to a complaint referred to them by the complaints coordinator:
- a) to take no action, or
 - b) to resolve the complaint by alternative and appropriate strategies such as, but not limited to, explanation, counselling, training, mediation, informal discussion, negotiation or apology, or
 - c) to refer the matter back to the general manager or, in the case of a complaint about the general manager, the Mayor, for resolution by alternative and appropriate strategies such as, but not limited to, explanation, counselling, training, mediation, informal discussion, negotiation, or apology, or
 - d) to refer the matter to another agency or body such as, but not limited to, the ICAC, the NSW Ombudsman, the ~~Division~~ **Office** or the Police, or
 - e) to investigate the matter, or
 - f) to recommend that the complaints coordinator convene a conduct review committee to investigate the matter.
- 6.11 In determining how to deal with a matter under clause 6.10, the conduct reviewer must have regard to the complaint assessment criteria prescribed under clause 6.27.
- 6.12 The conduct reviewer may make such enquiries the conduct reviewer considers to be reasonably necessary to determine what option to exercise under clause 6.10.
- 6.13 The conduct reviewer may request the complaints coordinator to provide such additional information the conduct reviewer considers to be reasonably necessary to determine what option to exercise in relation to the matter under clause 6.10. The complaints coordinator will, as far as is reasonably practicable, supply any information requested by the conduct reviewer.
- 6.14 The conduct reviewer must refer to the ~~Division~~ **Office** any complaints referred to him or her that should have been referred to the ~~Division~~ **Office** under clauses 5.16 and 5.21.
- 6.15 The conduct reviewer must determine to take no action on a complaint that is not a code of conduct complaint for the purposes of these procedures.
- 6.16 Where the conduct reviewer completes their preliminary assessment of a complaint by determining to exercise an option under clause 6.10, paragraphs (a), (b) or (c), they must provide the complainant with written notice of their

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determination and provide reasons for it and this will finalise consideration of the matter under these procedures.

- 6.17 Where the conduct reviewer refers a complaint to another agency or body, they must notify the complainant of the referral in writing where it is appropriate for them to do so.
- 6.18 The conduct reviewer may only determine to investigate a matter or to recommend that a conduct review committee be convened to investigate a matter where they are satisfied as to the following:
- a) that the complaint is a "code of conduct complaint" for the purposes of these procedures, and
 - b) that the alleged conduct, on its face, is sufficiently serious to warrant investigation, and
 - c) that the matter is one that could not or should not be resolved by alternative means.
- 6.19 The conduct reviewer may only determine to recommend that a conduct review committee be convened to investigate a matter after consulting with the complaints coordinator and where they are satisfied that it would not be practicable or appropriate for the matter to be investigated by a sole conduct reviewer.
- 6.20 The conduct reviewer must complete their preliminary assessment of the complaint within 28 days of referral of the matter to them by the complaints coordinator.
- 6.21 The conduct reviewer is not obliged to give prior notice to or to consult with any person before making a determination in relation to their preliminary assessment of a complaint except as may be specifically required under these procedures.

Referral back to the general manager or Mayor for resolution

- 6.22 Where the conduct reviewer determines to refer a matter back to the general manager or to the Mayor to be resolved by alternative and appropriate means, they must write to the general manager or, in the case of a complaint about the general manager, to the Mayor, recommending the means by which the complaint may be resolved.
- 6.23 The conduct reviewer must consult with the general manager or Mayor prior to referring a matter back to them under clause 6.22.
- 6.24 The general manager or Mayor may decline to accept the conduct reviewer's recommendation. Where the general manager or Mayor declines to do so, the conduct reviewer may determine to deal with the complaint by other means under clause 6.10.

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- 6.25 Where the conduct reviewer refers a matter back to the general manager or Mayor under clause 6.22, the general manager or, in the case of a complaint about the general manager, the Mayor, is responsible for implementing or overseeing the implementation of the conduct reviewer's recommendation.
- 6.26 Where the conduct reviewer refers a matter back to the general manager or Mayor under clause 6.22, the general manager, or, in the case of a complaint about the general manager, the Mayor, must advise the complainant in writing of the steps taken to implement the conduct reviewer's recommendation once these steps have been completed.

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Complaints assessment criteria

- 6.27 In undertaking the preliminary assessment of a complaint, the conduct reviewer may have regard to the following considerations:
- a) whether the complaint is a "code of conduct complaint",
 - b) whether the complaint is trivial, frivolous, vexatious or not made in good faith,
 - c) whether the complaint discloses prima facie evidence of a breach of the code,
 - d) whether the complaint raises issues that would be more appropriately dealt with by another agency or body,
 - e) whether there is or was an alternative and satisfactory means of redress available to the complainant in relation to the conduct complained of,
 - f) whether the complaint is one that can be resolved by alternative and appropriate strategies such as, but not limited to, explanation, counselling, training, informal discussion, negotiation or apology,
 - g) whether the issue/s giving rise to the complaint have previously been addressed or resolved,
 - h) whether the conduct complained of forms part of a pattern of conduct,
 - i) whether there were mitigating circumstances giving rise to the conduct complained of,
 - j) the seriousness of the alleged conduct,
 - k) the significance of the conduct or the impact of the conduct for the council,
 - l) how much time has passed since the alleged conduct occurred, or
 - m) such other considerations that the conduct reviewer considers may be relevant to the assessment of the complaint.

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PART 7 OPERATIONS OF CONDUCT REVIEW COMMITTEES

- 7.1 Where a conduct reviewer recommends that the complaints coordinator convene a conduct review committee to investigate a matter, the conduct reviewer must notify the complaints coordinator of their recommendation and the reasons for their recommendation in writing.
- 7.2 The complaints coordinator must convene a conduct review committee comprising three conduct reviewers selected from:
- a) a panel of conduct reviewers established by the council, or
 - b) a panel of conduct reviewers established by an organisation approved by the Chief Executive of the *Division Office*.
- 7.3 In selecting suitable conduct reviewers for membership of a conduct review committee convened under clause 7.2, the complaints coordinator may have regard to the following:
- a) the qualifications and experience of members of the panel of conduct reviewers, and
 - b) any recommendation made by the conduct reviewer about the membership of the committee.
- 7.4 The conduct reviewer who made the preliminary assessment of the complaint must not be a member of a conduct review committee convened under clause 7.2.
- 7.5 A member of a panel of conduct reviewers may not be appointed to a conduct review committee where they would otherwise be precluded from accepting a referral of the matter to be considered by the committee under clause 6.4.
- 7.6 Where the complaints coordinator convenes a conduct review committee, they will advise the complainant in writing that the committee has been convened and the membership of the committee.
- 7.7 Where, after a conduct review committee has been convened, a member of the committee becomes unavailable to participate in further consideration of the matter, the complaints coordinator may appoint another person from a panel of conduct reviewers to replace them.
- 7.8 Meetings of a conduct review committee may be conducted in person or by teleconference.
- 7.9 The members of the conduct review committee must elect a chairperson of the committee.
- 7.10 A quorum for a meeting of the conduct review committee is two members.
- 7.11 Business is not to be conducted at any meeting of the conduct review committee unless a quorum is present.

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- 7.12 If a quorum is not present at a meeting of the conduct review committee, it must be adjourned to a time and date that is specified.
- 7.13 Each member of the conduct review committee is entitled to one vote in relation to a matter. In the event of an equality of votes being cast, the chairperson will have a casting vote.
- 7.14 If the vote on a matter is not unanimous, then this should be noted in the report of the conduct review committee in which it makes its determination in relation to the matter.
- 7.15 The chairperson may make a ruling on questions of procedure and the chairperson's ruling is to be final.
- 7.16 The conduct review committee may only conduct business in the absence of the public.
- 7.17 The conduct review committee must maintain proper records of its proceedings.
- 7.18 The complaints coordinator shall undertake the following functions in support of a conduct review committee:
- a) provide procedural advice where required,
 - b) ensure adequate resources are provided including secretarial support,
 - c) attend meetings of the conduct review committee in an advisory capacity, and
 - d) provide advice about council's processes where requested.
- 7.19 The complaints coordinator must not be present at, or in sight of a meeting of, the conduct review committee where it makes its final determination in relation to the matter.
- 7.20 The conduct review committee may adopt procedures governing the conduct of its meetings that supplement these procedures. However any procedures adopted by the committee must not be inconsistent with these procedures.

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PART 8 INVESTIGATIONS

What matters may a conduct reviewer or conduct review committee investigate?

- 8.1 A conduct reviewer or conduct review committee (hereafter referred to as an "investigator") may investigate a code of conduct complaint that has been referred to them by the complaints coordinator and any matters related to or arising from that complaint.
- 8.2 Where an investigator identifies further separate possible breaches of the code of conduct that are not related to or arise from the code of conduct complaint that has been referred to them, they are to report the matters separately in writing to the general manager, or, in the case of alleged conduct on the part of the general manager, to the Mayor.
- 8.3 The general manager or the Mayor is to deal with a matter reported to them by an investigator under clause 8.2 as if it were a new code of conduct complaint in accordance with these procedures.

How are investigations to be commenced?

- 8.4 The investigator must at the outset of their investigation provide a written notice of investigation to the subject person. The notice of investigation must:
 - a) disclose the substance of the allegations against the subject person, and
 - b) advise of the relevant provisions of the code of conduct that apply to the alleged conduct, and
 - c) advise of the process to be followed in investigating the matter, and
 - d) invite the subject person to make a written submission in relation to the matter within 28 days or such other reasonable period specified by the investigator in the notice, and
 - e) provide the subject person the opportunity to address the investigator on the matter within such reasonable time specified in the notice.
- 8.5 The subject person may within 14 days of receipt of the notice of investigation, request in writing that the investigator provide them with such further information they consider necessary to assist them to identify the substance of the allegation against them. An investigator will only be obliged to provide such information that the investigator considers reasonably necessary for the subject person to identify the substance of the allegation against them.
- 8.6 An investigator may at any time prior to issuing a draft report, issue an amended notice of investigation to the subject person in relation to the matter referred to them.

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- 8.7 Where an investigator issues an amended notice of investigation, they will provide the subject person with a further opportunity to make a written submission in response to the amended notice of investigation within 28 days or such other reasonable period specified by the investigator in the amended notice.
- 8.8 The investigator must also, at the outset of their investigation, provide written notice of the investigation to the complainant, the complaints coordinator and the general manager, or in the case of a complaint about the general manager, to the Mayor. The notice must:
- a) advise them of the matter the investigator is investigating, and
 - b) in the case of the notice to the complainant, invite them to make a written submission in relation to the matter within 28 days or such other reasonable period specified by the investigator in the notice.

Written and oral submissions

- 8.9 Where the subject person or the complainant fails to make a written submission in relation to the matter within the period specified by the investigator in their notice of investigation or amended notice of investigation, the investigator may proceed to prepare their draft report without receiving such submissions.
- 8.10 The investigator may accept written submissions received outside the period specified in the notice of investigation or amended notice of investigation.
- 8.11 Prior to preparing a draft report, the investigator must give the subject person an opportunity to address the investigator on the matter being investigated. The subject person may do so in person or by telephone.
- 8.12 Where the subject person fails to accept the opportunity to address the investigator within the period specified by the investigator in the notice of investigation, the investigator may proceed to prepare a draft report without hearing from the subject person.
- 8.13 Where the subject person accepts the opportunity to address the investigator in person, they may have a support person or legal advisor in attendance. The support person or legal advisor will act in an advisory or support role to the subject person only. They must not speak on behalf of the subject person or otherwise interfere with or disrupt proceedings.
- 8.14 The investigator must consider all written and oral submissions made to them in relation to the matter.

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How are investigations to be conducted?

- 8.15 Investigations are to be undertaken without undue delay.
- 8.16 Investigations are to be undertaken in the absence of the public and in confidence.
- 8.17 Investigators must make any such enquiries that may be reasonably necessary to establish the facts of the matter.
- 8.18 Investigators may seek such advice or expert guidance that may be reasonably necessary to assist them with their investigation or the conduct of their investigation.
- 8.19 An investigator may request that the complaints coordinator provide such further information that the investigator considers may be reasonably necessary for them to establish the facts of the matter. The complaints coordinator will, as far as is reasonably practicable, provide the information requested by the investigator.

Referral or resolution of a matter after the commencement of an investigation

- 8.20 At any time after an investigator has issued a notice of investigation and before they have issued a draft report, an investigator may determine to:
 - a) resolve the matter by alternative and appropriate strategies such as, but not limited to, explanation, counselling, training, mediation, informal discussion, negotiation or apology, or
 - b) refer the matter to the general manager, or, in the case of a complaint about the general manager, to the Mayor, for resolution by alternative and appropriate strategies such as, but not limited to, explanation, counselling, training, mediation, informal discussion, negotiation or apology, or
 - c) refer the matter to another agency or body such as, but not limited to, the ICAC, the NSW Ombudsman, the ~~Division~~ **Office** or the Police.
- 8.21 Where an investigator determines to exercise any of the options under clause 8.20 after the commencement of an investigation, they must do so in accordance with the requirements of Part 6 of these procedures relating to the exercise of these options at the preliminary assessment stage.
- 8.22 Where an investigator determines to exercise any of the options under clause 8.20 after the commencement of an investigation, they may by written notice to the subject person, the complainant, the complaints coordinator and the general manager, or in the case of a complaint about the general manager, the Mayor, discontinue their investigation of the matter.
- 8.23 Where the investigator discontinues their investigation of a matter under clause 8.22, this shall finalise the consideration of the matter under these procedures.

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8.24 An investigator is not obliged to give prior notice to or to consult with any person before making a determination to exercise any of the options under clause 8.20 or to discontinue their investigation except as may be specifically required under these procedures.

Draft investigation reports

8.25 When an investigator has completed their enquiries and considered any written or oral submissions made to them in relation to a matter, they must prepare a draft of their proposed report.

8.26 The investigator must provide their draft report to the subject person and invite them to make a written submission in relation to it within 28 days or such other reasonable period specified by the investigator.

8.27 Where the investigator proposes to make adverse comment about any other person (an affected person) in their report, they must also provide the affected person with relevant extracts of their draft report containing such comment and invite the affected person to make a written submission in relation to it within 28 days or such other reasonable period specified by the investigator.

8.28 The investigator must consider written submissions received in relation to the draft report prior to finalising their report in relation to the matter.

8.29 The investigator may, after consideration of all written submissions received in relation to their draft report, make further enquiries into the matter. Where as a result of making further enquiries, the investigator makes any material change to their proposed report that makes new adverse comment about the subject person or an affected person, they must provide the subject person or affected person as the case may be with a further opportunity to make a written submission in relation to the new adverse comment.

8.30 Where the subject person or an affected person fails to make a written submission in relation to the draft report within the period specified by the investigator, the investigator may proceed to prepare and issue their final report without receiving such submissions.

8.31 The investigator may accept written submissions in relation to the draft report received outside the period specified by the investigator at any time prior to issuing their final report.

Final investigation reports

8.32 Where an investigator issues a notice of investigation they must prepare a final report in relation to the matter unless the investigation is discontinued under clause 8.22.

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- 8.33 An investigator must not prepare a final report in relation to the matter at any time before they have finalised their consideration of the matter in accordance with the requirements of these procedures.
- 8.34 The investigator's final report must:
- a) make findings of fact in relation to the matter investigated, and,
 - b) make a determination that the conduct investigated either,
 - i. constitutes a breach of the code of conduct, or
 - ii. does not constitute a breach of the code of conduct, and
 - c) provide reasons for the determination.
- 8.35 Where the investigator determines that the conduct investigated constitutes a breach of the code of conduct, the investigator may make one or more of the following recommendations:
- a) that the council revise any of its policies or procedures,
 - b) that the subject person undertake any training or other education relevant to the conduct giving rise to the breach,
 - c) that the subject person be counselled for their conduct,
 - d) that the subject person apologise to any person or organisation affected by the breach in such a time and form specified by the recommendation,
 - e) that findings of inappropriate conduct be made public,
 - f) in the case of a breach by the general manager, that action be taken under the general manager's contract for the breach,
 - g) in the case of a breach by a councillor, that the councillor be formally censured for the breach under section 440G of the Act,
 - h) in the case of a breach by a councillor, that the council resolves as follows:
 - i. that the councillor be formally censured for the breach under section 440G of the Act, and
 - ii. that the matter be referred to the ~~Division~~ **Office** for further action under the misconduct provisions of the Act.
- 8.36 Where the investigator determines that the conduct investigated does not constitute a breach of the code of conduct, the investigator may make one or more of the following recommendations:
- a) that the council revise any of its policies or procedures,
 - b) that a person or persons undertake any training or other education.

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8.37 In making a recommendation under clause 8.35, the investigator may have regard to the following:

- a) the seriousness of the breach,
- b) whether the breach can be easily remedied or rectified,
- c) whether the subject person has remedied or rectified their conduct,
- d) whether the subject person has expressed contrition,
- e) whether there were any mitigating circumstances,
- f) the age, physical or mental health or special infirmity of the subject person,
- g) whether the breach is technical or trivial only,
- h) any previous breaches,
- i) whether the breach forms part of a pattern of conduct,
- j) the degree of reckless intention or negligence of the subject person,
- k) the extent to which the breach has affected other parties or the council as a whole,
- l) the harm or potential harm to the reputation of the council or local government arising from the conduct,
- m) whether the findings and recommendations can be justified in terms of the public interest and would withstand public scrutiny,
- n) whether an educative approach would be more appropriate than a punitive one,
- o) the relative costs and benefits of taking formal enforcement action as opposed to taking no action or taking informal action,
- p) what action or remedy would be in the public interest.

8.38 At a minimum, the investigator's final report must contain the following information:

- a) a description of the allegations against the subject person,
- b) the relevant provisions of the code of conduct that apply to the alleged conduct investigated,
- c) a statement of reasons as to why the conduct reviewer considered that the matter warranted investigation,
- d) a statement of reasons as to why the conduct reviewer considered that the matter was one that could not or should not be resolved by alternative means,
- e) where the matter is investigated by a conduct review committee, a statement as to why the matter was one that warranted investigation by a conduct review committee instead of a sole conduct reviewer,
- f) a description of any attempts made to resolve the matter by use of alternative means,
- g) the steps taken to investigate the matter,
- h) the facts of the matter,
- i) the investigator's findings in relation to the facts of the matter and the reasons for those findings,
- j) the investigator's determination and the reasons for that determination,
- k) any recommendations.

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- 8.39 The investigator must provide a copy of their report to the complaints coordinator, the subject person and the complainant.
- 8.40 Where the investigator has determined that there has not been a breach of the code of conduct, the complaints coordinator must provide a copy of the investigator's report to the general manager or, where the report relates to the general manager's conduct, to the Mayor and this will finalise consideration of the matter under these procedures.
- 8.41 Where the investigator has determined that there has been a breach of the code of conduct and makes a recommendation or recommendations under clause 8.35, paragraph (a), the complaints coordinator must provide a copy of the investigator's report to the general manager. Where the general manager agrees with the recommendation/s, the general manager is responsible for implementing the recommendation/s.
- 8.42 Where the investigator has determined that there has been a breach of the code of conduct and makes a recommendation or recommendations under clause 8.35, paragraphs (b) or (c), the complaints coordinator must provide a copy of the investigator's report to the general manager or, where the report relates to the general manager's conduct, to the Mayor. The general manager is responsible for arranging the implementation of the recommendation/s where the report relates to a councillor's conduct. The Mayor is responsible for arranging the implementation of the recommendation/s where the report relates to the general manager's conduct.
- 8.43 Where the investigator has determined that there has been a breach of the code of conduct and makes a recommendation or recommendations under clause 8.35, paragraphs (d) to (h), the complaints coordinator must, where practicable, arrange for the investigator's report to be reported to the next ordinary council meeting for the council's consideration unless the meeting is to be held within the 4 weeks prior to an ordinary local government election, in which case the report must be reported to the first ordinary council meeting following the election.

Consideration of the final investigation report by council

- 8.44 The role of the council in relation to a final investigation report is to impose a sanction where an investigator determines that there has been a breach of the code of conduct and makes a recommendation in their final report under clause 8.35, paragraphs (d) to (h).
- 8.45 The council is to close its meeting to the public to consider the final investigation report where it is permitted to do so under section 10A of the Act.

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- 8.46 Where the complainant is a councillor, they must absent themselves from the meeting and take no part in any discussion or voting on the matter. The complainant councillor may absent themselves without making any disclosure of interests in relation to the matter unless otherwise required to do so under the Act or the Model Code.
- 8.47 Prior to imposing a sanction, the council must provide the subject person with an opportunity to make an oral submission to the council. The subject person is to confine their submission to addressing the investigator's recommendation/s.
- 8.48 Once the subject person has completed their oral submission they must absent themselves from the meeting and, where they are a councillor, take no part in any discussion or voting on the matter.
- 8.49 The council must not invite oral submissions from other persons for the purpose of seeking to rehear evidence previously considered by the investigator.
- 8.50 Prior to imposing a sanction, the council may by resolution:
- a) request that the investigator make additional enquiries and/or provide additional information to it in a supplementary report, or
 - b) seek an opinion by the ~~Division~~ **Office** in relation to the report.
- 8.51 The council may, by resolution, defer further consideration of the matter pending the receipt of a supplementary report from the investigator or an opinion from the ~~Division~~ **Office**.
- 8.52 The investigator may make additional enquiries for the purpose of preparing a supplementary report.
- 8.53 Where the investigator prepares a supplementary report, they must provide copies to the complaints coordinator who shall provide a copy each to the council, the subject person and the complainant.
- 8.54 The investigator is not obliged to notify or consult with any person prior to submitting the supplementary report to the complaints coordinator.
- 8.55 The council is only required to provide the subject person a further opportunity to address it on a supplementary report where the supplementary report contains new information that is adverse to them.
- 8.56 A council may by resolution impose one or more of the following sanctions on a subject person:
- a) that the subject person apologise to any person or organisation affected by the breach in such a time and form specified by the resolution,
 - b) that findings of inappropriate conduct be made public,
 - c) in the case of a breach by the general manager, that action be taken under the general manager's contract for the breach,

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- d) in the case of a breach by a councillor, that the councillor be formally censured for the breach under section 440G of the Act,
 - e) in the case of a breach by a councillor:
 - i. that the councillor be formally censured for the breach under section 440G of the Act, and
 - ii. that the matter be referred to the **Division Office** for further action under the misconduct provisions of the Act.
- 8.57 The council is not obliged to adopt the investigator's recommendation/s. Where the council does not adopt the investigator's recommendation/s, the council must resolve not to adopt the recommendation and state in its resolution the reasons for its decision.
- 8.58 The council may, by resolution, impose a sanction on the subject person under clause 8.56 different to the sanction recommended by the investigator in their final report.
- 8.59 Where the council resolves not to adopt the investigator's recommendation/s, the complaints coordinator must notify the **Division Office** of the council's decision and the reasons for it.

PART 9 RIGHTS OF REVIEW

Failure to comply with a requirement under these procedures

- 9.1 Where any person believes that a person has failed to comply with a requirement prescribed under these procedures, they may, at any time prior to the council's consideration of an investigator's final report, raise their concerns in writing with the **Division Office**.

Practice rulings

- 9.2 Where a subject person and an investigator are in dispute over a requirement under these procedures, either person may make a request in writing to the **Division Office** to make a ruling on a question of procedure (a practice ruling).
- 9.3 Where the **Division Office** receives a request in writing for a practice ruling, the **Division Office** may provide notice in writing of its ruling and the reasons for it to the person who requested it and to the investigator, where that person is different.
- 9.4 Where the **Division Office** makes a practice ruling, all parties are to comply with it.
- 9.5 The **Division Office** may decline to make a practice ruling. Where the **Division Office** declines to make a practice ruling, it will provide notice in writing of its decision and the reasons for it to the person who requested it and to the investigator, where that person is different.

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Requests for review

- 9.6 A person the subject of a sanction imposed under Part 8 of these procedures other than one imposed under clause 8.56, paragraph (e), may, within 28 days of the sanction being imposed, seek a review of the investigator's determination and recommendation by the **Division Office**.
- 9.7 A review under clause 9.6 may be sought on the following grounds:
- a) that the investigator has failed to comply with a requirement under these procedures, or
 - b) that the investigator has misinterpreted or misapplied the standards of conduct prescribed under the code of conduct, or
 - c) that the council has failed to comply with a requirement under these procedures in imposing a sanction.
- 9.8 A request for a review made under clause 9.6 must be made in writing and must specify the grounds upon which the person believes the investigator or the council has erred.
- 9.9 The **Division Office** may decline to conduct a review, where the grounds upon which the review is sought are not sufficiently specified.
- 9.10 The **Division Office** may undertake a review of a matter without receiving a request under clause 9.6.
- 9.11 The **Division Office** will undertake a review of the matter on the papers. However, the **Division Office** may request that the complaints coordinator provide such further information that the **Division Office** considers reasonably necessary for it to review the matter. The complaints coordinator must, as far as is reasonably practicable, provide the information requested by the **Division Office**.
- 9.12 Where a person requests a review under clause 9.6, the **Division Office** may direct the council to defer any action to implement a sanction. The council must comply with a direction to defer action by the **Division Office**.
- 9.13 The **Division Office** must notify the person who requested the review and the complaints coordinator of the outcome of the **Division Office's** review in writing and the reasons for its decision. In doing so, the **Division Office** may comment on any other matters the **Division Office** considers to be relevant.
- 9.14 Where the **Division Office** considers that the investigator or the council has erred, the **Division Office** may recommend that a decision to impose a sanction under these procedures be reviewed.
- 9.15 In the case of a sanction implemented by the general manager or Mayor under clause 8.42, where the **Division Office** recommends that the decision to impose a sanction be reviewed:

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- a) the complaints coordinator must provide a copy of the **Division Office's** determination in relation to the matter to the general manager or the Mayor, and
 - b) the general manager or Mayor must review any action taken by them to implement the sanction, and
 - c) the general manager or Mayor must consider the **Division Office's** recommendation in doing so.
- 9.16 In the case of a sanction imposed by the council by resolution under clause 8.56, where the **Division Office** recommends that the decision to impose a sanction be reviewed:
- a) the complaints coordinator must, where practicable, arrange for the **Division Office's** determination to be tabled at the next ordinary council meeting unless the meeting is to be held within the 4 weeks prior to an ordinary local government election, in which case it must be tabled at the first ordinary council meeting following the election, and
 - b) the council must:
 - i. review its decision to impose the sanction, and
 - ii. consider the **Division Office's** recommendation in doing so, and
 - iii. resolve to either rescind or reaffirm its previous resolution in relation to the matter.
- 9.17 Where having reviewed its previous decision in relation to a matter under clause 9.16 the council resolves to reaffirm its previous decision, the council must state in its resolution its reasons for doing so.

PART 10 PROCEDURAL IRREGULARITIES

- 10.1 A failure to comply with these procedures does not, on its own, constitute a breach of the code of conduct except as may be otherwise specifically provided under the code of conduct.
- 10.2 A failure to comply with these procedures will not render a decision made in relation to a matter invalid where:
- a) the non-compliance is isolated and/or minor in nature, or
 - b) reasonable steps are taken to correct the non-compliance, or
 - c) reasonable steps are taken to address the consequences of the non-compliance.

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**CODE OF CONDUCT -
 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE
 November 2014**

PART 11 PRACTICE DIRECTIONS

- 11.1 The **Division Office** may at any time issue a practice direction in relation to the application of these procedures.
- 11.2 The **Division Office** will issue practice directions in writing, by circular to all councils.
- 11.3 All persons performing a function prescribed under these procedures must consider the **Division Office's** practice directions when performing the function.

PART 12 REPORTING ON COMPLAINTS STATISTICS

- 12.1 The complaints coordinator must arrange for the following statistics to be reported to the council within 3 months of the end of September of each year:
 - a) the total number of code of conduct complaints made about councillors and the general manager under the code of conduct in the year to September,
 - b) the number of code of conduct complaints referred to a conduct reviewer,
 - c) the number of code of conduct complaints finalised by a conduct reviewer at the preliminary assessment stage and the outcome of those complaints,
 - d) the number of code of conduct complaints investigated by a conduct reviewer,
 - e) the number of code of conduct complaints investigated by a conduct review committee,
 - f) without identifying particular matters, the outcome of code of conduct complaints investigated by a conduct reviewer or conduct review committee under these procedures,
 - g) the number of matter reviewed by the **Division Office** and, without identifying particular matters, the outcome of the reviews, and
 - h) The total cost of dealing with code of conduct complaints made about councillors and the general manager in the year to September, including staff costs.
- 12.2 The council is to provide the **Division Office** with a report containing the statistics referred to in clause 12.1 within 3 months of the end of September of each year.

PART 13 CONFIDENTIALITY

- 13.1 Information about code of conduct complaints and the management and investigation of code of conduct complaints is to be treated as confidential and is not to be publicly disclosed except as may be otherwise specifically required or permitted under these procedures.

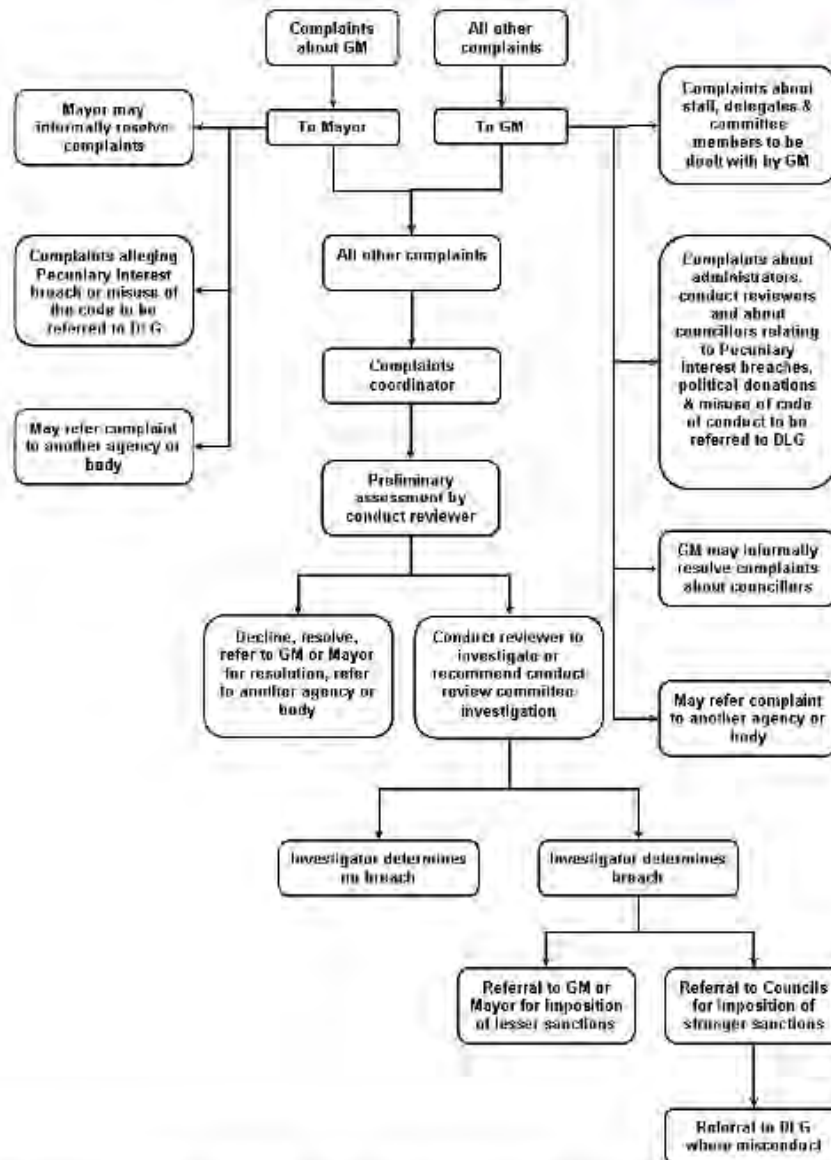
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**CODE OF CONDUCT -
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MODEL CODE PROCEDURE FLOWCHART



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ATTACHMENT 5

**DRAFT GUIDELINE ON INTERACTION
BETWEEN COUNCILLORS AND STAFF**

Related Policy

This guideline is part of Council's Code of Conduct. It exists to strengthen the working relationship between Councillors and Council's Senior Management Team, **and to define appropriate Councillor contacts with other Council officers.**

Scope

The City of Ryde Council acknowledges that Councillors require access to Council information and staff in order to exercise their civic duties under the *Local Government Act, 1993* (The Act). Interactions between Councillors and staff are necessary to facilitate well-formed policies and decisions and to provide optimum service delivery.

The Act requires Councillors and staff to:

- Act honestly and responsibly when carrying out their functions.
- Not take advantage of their position by unduly influencing Councillors or staff in the performance of their duties or functions.
- Not use their position to obtain, either directly or indirectly, an advantage for them or any other person.

Council's Code of Conduct provides that "Councillors must not contact a member of the staff of the Council on Council related business unless in accordance with the policy and procedures governing the interaction of councillors and council staff that have been authorised by the council and the general manager" (Clause 6.2c).

This Guideline governs the interaction of Councillors and Council staff, and as such is an enforceable part of the Code of Conduct.

Objectives

The objectives of this Guideline are to:

- Ensure that Councillors receive advice to assist them in the performance of their civic duty in an orderly, courteous and regulated manner.
- Ensure Councillors have adequate access to information in order for them to exercise their statutory roles.
- Ensure Councillors have clarity on which staff they can communicate with and the processes for contacting staff.

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- Ensure staff understand their obligations with regard to providing information to Councillors and the set service standards.
- Maintain transparent decision making and governance arrangements.

The aim of this Guideline is to facilitate a positive working relationship between Councillors as elected representatives of the community and the staff employed to administer the operations of Council.

It is important to have an effective working relationship that recognises the important but differing contribution both parties bring to their complementary roles.

Introduction

Good governance and effective service delivery are dependent on a good relationship between the elected members and the organisation, and an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of both groups.

Good governance requires clear and effective communication protocols for Councillors and senior staff which provide for courteous and respectful communication.

Both Councillors and senior staff should strive for a work-life balance between their work commitments and their personal, community and cultural responsibilities, interests and obligations.

This Guideline addresses Interaction between Councillors and Staff with regard to:

- *Appropriate Staff contacts*
- *Personal Interaction between Councillors and Staff*
- *Councillors' HelpDesk*
- *Emails*
- *Phone Calls and messaging*
- *Social Media*
- *Accessing Information*
- *Personal Enquiries*

It also provides a table of service standards with regard to Councillor and Staff interaction.

Interactions that are not conducted in accordance with these Guidelines may be inappropriate.

Councillors are encouraged to advise the General Manager where an interaction is inappropriate.

Staff are empowered to advise Councillors where an interaction is inappropriate and refer them to these Guidelines. Alternatively, staff should inform their Manager of any inappropriate actions.

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Appropriate Staff contacts

The General Manager authorises the following staff interaction:

- Contact between Councillors and Group Managers is appropriate for matters specific to that Group Manager's area of individual responsibility.
- Contact with HelpDesk staff is appropriate for all Councillor service requests and enquiries.
- Contact with other specific staff is appropriate as part of a Councillor's role on an Advisory Committee, at Council events or meetings, and similar situations.
- In some instances, a Group Manager or the General Manager will direct individual staff to contact Councillors to provide specific information or clarification relating to a specific matter.

Apart from the instances above, all communication with Councillors is to be made via the General Manager or relevant Group Manager.

Personal Interaction between Councillors and Staff

While this Guideline, and the Code of Conduct, governs the interactions between Councillors and staff, it does not prevent Councillors and staff from communicating generally. From time to time, Councillors and staff may be present at social and community events. In such situations, both parties must refrain from discussing matters relating to council business.

Councillors' HelpDesk

The Charter of Respect requires that Councillors make service requests to staff through the Councillors' HelpDesk.

The HelpDesk allows Councillors to:

- ***Make Forward*** service requests for information and/or actions,
- Seek updates on Council's operations; and
- Forward queries and complaints received from residents.

All requests from Councillors to the HelpDesk are logged and then ***sent forwarded*** to the relevant Council officer for a response. All Councillor requests to the HelpDesk are acknowledged by email (with a reference number).

The service standard for an initial response to a Councillor is five (5) working days, with HelpDesk responses to include the name and details of the relevant Group

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Manager: Reports regarding the performance of the HelpDesk will be provided to Councillors each month through the Councillor Information Bulletin. In addition, Councillors will be surveyed annually to measure satisfaction levels regarding the HelpDesk and areas for improvement.

In the case of enquiries regarding Development Applications, planning matters and procurement processes, responses will be provided to all Councillors each week through BoardVantage. This is to promote openness, transparency and accountability in what is considered a high risk area of Council's operations.

Where a Councillor's request requires the allocation of resources or expenditure of funds, the Councillor will be requested to consider a Notice of Motion.

If a Councillor would like staff to contact and update a resident directly, they should indicate this in their request. When sending a service request to the HelpDesk, Councillors should include sufficient information to enable staff to respond, for example, the name and contact details of a resident if staff are required to contact them.

The HelpDesk is provided for Councillors only and emails should not be copied to residents. The HelpDesk provides support to Councillors with the responses provided for the information of Councillors only.

Staff will endeavor to indicate to Councillors if a response contains confidential information and it is not in the public interest to circulate to residents.

Any requests that are not sent via the HelpDesk will be forwarded or redirected to the HelpDesk by staff. This may impact upon the time taken to respond.

Documents such as the Executive Team Minutes and Minutes of the Mayor's Meeting with the Executive Team will be provided to all Councillors by the HelpDesk using BoardVantage.

While it is acknowledged that the procedures relating to the conduct of the Councillor HelpDesk are an operational matter to be determined by the General Manager, Councillors will be consulted on any proposed changes.

Emails

The following email protocols apply to Councillors and staff:

Reply to all – This function is to be used with discretion. Think about whether "all" really need to be aware of your reply to conduct business.

Attachments – Where possible limit the size and number of attachments. Instead consider providing links to websites or BoardVantage as this reduces the message size.

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Provision of Information – Information provided to Councillors is to assist them in the conduct of their civic duties. Care should be given prior to forwarding information and regard must be given to the potential confidentiality requirements regarding information.

Circulation of resident correspondence – Correspondence will be circulated only when the author has specifically requested it be forwarded to all Councillors or specific Councillors.

BoardVantage – The circulation of information to Councillors will be done through BoardVantage as it is the preferred method to provide information.

Phone Calls and SMS messaging

(a) Councillors contacting staff

It is acknowledged that Councillors will require personal contact with Senior Staff, including the General Manager, when an urgent matter arises and an immediate response is required. In these circumstances, Councillors are requested to contact the Senior Staff member, Customer Service or the Councillor HelpDesk as follows:

- *During Office hours (Monday to Friday: 8.30am to 4.45pm):*

Calls to any member of the Executive Team during these times will be answered by either the relevant staff member or an assistant. On rare occasions it may be necessary for Councillors to leave a message. This will be returned as soon as practicable.

- *Outside Office hours (Monday to Friday: 7.30am to 8.30am and 4.45pm to 8pm):*

Councillors can contact members of the Executive Team on their mobile phone numbers. Should it be necessary to leave a message, the Councillor can expect a return call as soon as possible.

- *Other times*

At any other time Councillors should only contact a member of the Executive Team by phone or SMS in a genuine emergency.

It is noted that some events are conducted outside of work hours and phone calls or messages regarding these specific events may be appropriate.

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- *Customer Service 9952 8222 and After Hours Requests*

Councillors can contact 9952 8222 at any time. The City of Ryde has an on-call officer available at all times to respond to urgent matters. When a Council request or complaint is received after hours, a call centre operator at "Well Done Services" refers the request/complaint to the relevant on-call Council Officer via SMS if appropriate.

In addition, the request or complaint is emailed to Council's after hours email address by "Well Done Services". These emails are reviewed and replied to, as appropriate, by Council's Customer Service Centre the next working day. All request/complaints are then registered with Council's **Customer Request Management** (CRM) System – Merit.

Where Councillors identify themselves as such, this will be specifically recorded and the Councillor will receive a follow up email or phone call.

- *Councillor HelpDesk*

Calls to the Councillor HelpDesk during office hours will be answered by a member of the Governance Section. Outside office hours, Councillors can leave a message. Messages will be checked every weekday morning and phone calls will be returned.

In addition, if a Councillor leaves a message and their phone number, the request will be identified as a Councillor request and recorded in the Councillor HelpDesk.

- *SMS messages*

SMS messages from Councillors requesting information or service will be forwarded to the HelpDesk to be acknowledged and actioned.

(b) Staff contacting Councillors

It is acknowledged that staff will be required, on occasion to contact Councillors. In these circumstances, staff will follow these protocols:

- *Calls to Councillors*

Staff will attempt to limit calls to Councillors. Calls will be made in response to a request or where an email is considered inappropriate.

Staff will not call Councillors outside office hours unless it is urgent, in response to a request to call or a message left. Staff will endeavour to contact Councillors using their preferred method of contact whether it be email or phone call, and to their preferred location, whether it be home, office or mobile.

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- *During Office hours (Monday to Friday: 8.30am to 4.45pm):*
Calls to Councillors during office hours will be limited unless it is in response to a particular query or message from a Councillor.
- *Outside Office hours (Monday to Friday: 7.30am to 8.30am and 4.45pm to 8pm):*
Calls or SMS messages to Councillors during these hours will be limited to responses to requests or messages, or matters of urgency.
- *Other times*
At any other time staff will only contact Councillors by phone or SMS in the case of a genuine emergency.

It is noted, that some events are conducted outside of work hours and phone calls or messages regarding these specific events may be appropriate.

(c) Phone Calls – Residents

Residents seeking assistance should be directed to Council's Customer Service Centre on 9952 8222 between Monday to Friday 8am to 5.30pm. All calls outside these hours to Council, that is Monday to Friday 5.30pm to 8am and all day Saturday and Sunday, are directed to Council's after hours service by contacting 9952 8222.

It is not appropriate for Councillors to provide residents with a staff member's direct contact details. Similarly, staff will not provide residents with Councillors contact details, other than the details which Councillors have designated for public use.

Social Media

Councillors and staff should be mindful of the following issues when using Social Media:

- Privacy
- Confidentiality
- Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment
- Misrepresentation of City of Ryde
- Improper interactions between Councillors and staff
- Seeking or obtaining advantage or preferential treatment because of their position or role

Councillors and staff should refer to the *Social Media Policy and Procedure on Representing City of Ryde on Social Media*.

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Accessing Information

The General Manager and the Public Officer are responsible for ensuring that members of the public, Councillors and administrators can gain access to documents under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*.

Where the General Manager and/or the Public Officer determine to refuse access to a document or information sought by a Councillor, they must act reasonably. In reaching this decision they must take into account whether or not the document sought is required for the Councillor to perform his or her civic duty. The General Manager or the Public Officer must state to the Councillor the reasons for the decision if access is refused.

Councillors can appeal the decision for refusal by contacting either the NSW Information Commissioner on 1800 194 210 and/or the Administrative Decisions Tribunal on 9223 4677. It should be noted that the *Government Information (Public Access) Act* only allows appeal to these bodies if an initial *Formal Access to Information Application* has been made and a *Request for Review* of determination sought.

Councillors are required to treat all information provided by staff appropriately and to adhere to any confidentiality requirements. If a Councillor is unsure whether a document or advice is confidential they should contact the relevant Group Manager or Councillor HelpDesk for clarification prior to releasing the information.

Where possible, staff will clearly identify information which is confidential to assist Councillors in the appropriate handling of such information.

From time to time, it may be necessary to have specific protocols for access to information and Councillors and staff are expected to respect and adhere to these protocols. This is particularly the case for sensitive and confidential information where information management protocols are required to allow Council to protect and monitor confidential documents while balancing the need to assist Councillors and staff in the performance of their duties.

Personal Enquiries

Councillors and staff must follow the same process as all other members of the public if they require information, action or advice in relation to a personal or private matter.

Councillors and staff should be mindful of the public perception of their request and direct all general enquiries to the Councillors' HelpDesk or the Customer Service Centre as appropriate.

If a staff member receives a request from a Councillor which is not considered relevant to the Councillor's civic duties, the General Manager is entitled to require the Councillor to demonstrate how the request relates to the Councillor's civic duties.

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If the General Manager is not satisfied that the request relates to the Councillor's civic duties, the General Manager is entitled to refuse to action the request or advise the Councillor of the normal process for members of the public to make such requests.

Examples of Appropriate Interactions

- Informal briefings and Councillor Workshops are opportunities for staff who are experts in their area to convey and disseminate information to Councillors. Staff can seek feedback from Councillors and Councillors are encouraged to ask questions from staff. In this 'relaxed' environment, care must be taken to ensure that both parties show respect and courtesy to each other.
- Councillors and staff present a positive and united front in public forums.
- Care must be taken to ensure that Councillors and staff do not discuss individual or operational staff matters other than broader workforce policy issues.
- Staff must ensure that information provided to one Councillor is available to all Councillors so that there is equity and transparency in the distribution of information.
- Council staff must contact Councillors within the provisions of this Guideline and must refrain from providing ad hoc advice to Councillors. Staff must ensure that information provided to Councillors is valid, up-to-date and impartial.

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Service Standards

Item	Standard
Councillor HelpDesk Requests: Acknowledged	Within 1 working day
Councillor HelpDesk Requests: Response	Within 5 working days
Councillor Requests: Not through the HelpDesk	No service standard will apply
Councillor HelpDesk Requests (Development Applications and Planning Matters)	Weekly update to all Councillors regarding all requests
Phone Calls to Group Managers during Office Hours	Office phone will be attended by either the Group Manager or their assistant. Messages will be returned by a staff member the same day.
Phone Calls to the HelpDesk during Office Hours	HelpDesk phone will be attended by Governance staff. Messages left during office hours will be returned the same day.
Phone Calls to the HelpDesk outside Office Hours	Messages left will be returned the next working day.

Important Note – Code of Conduct

The General Manager will retain responsibility for enforcing and delegating the decision to provide or refuse to provide information. This will be subject to the decisions of Council and will be in accordance with the Code of Conduct, particularly Part 6 of the Standards of Conduct – Relationship Between Council Officials.

In addition, this Guideline governs the interaction of Councillors and Council staff and as such is an enforceable part of the Code of Conduct. Accordingly, complaints regarding breaches of this Guideline will be handled in accordance with the Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure.

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