

Public Relations - Model Policy

Model **Local Government Framework Policy**

Public Relations Subject Matter Specific

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Council Authorised Policy	Policy No.: 003
Executor: Chief Executive Officer	Date of Currency: <i>Date to date</i>
<i>For Acknowledgement, Accountability and Inconsistency see Policy 001- Corporate System</i>	

Purpose of this Policy

The purpose of this Public Relations, subject-matter specific, Framework Policy is to:

- Simplify the identification of events and activity impacting the Local Government's Public Relations reputation;
- Exemplify expectations for Public Relations behaviours;
- Assist in enhancing the reputation of the Local Government.

Policy Object

The object of this policy is to set the tone of language used by the Local Government to align the activities, functions and affairs of the Local Government with the intention of the Local Government Act. 1995, in respect to matters impacting the Public Relations reputation of the Local Government and Council.

Policy Scope

As a Framework or Principal Policy, this Policy has universal application across the Local Government's, acts, actions, interactions, and decisions.

Policy 001 – Corporate System Framework Policy applies to this policy.

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Policy Statements

Except where specifically otherwise prescribed in law; this Principal Policy determines that the Local Government:

1. Identifies that to establish and apply different behavioural standards to different groups whether elected, employed or members of the community is to institutionalise discrimination, bias and prejudice.
2. Will treat with all due care and respect, free from discrimination, bias or prejudice, all persons who have commercial business with or who are engaging with the Local Government in respect to a service provided or contracted to be provided by the Local Government, including services for which rates are levied;
3. Will apply its assets, activities and Officer behaviours to example expectations to be followed by or within the Community;

Code of Conduct & Customer Service Charter

[Local Government Act 1995, Section 5.103.] [Local Government Act Subsections 1.3. (2) & (3)]

The Local Government:

4. Will, act to avoid discrimination, bias and prejudice, by developing, applying, and publishing on the Local Government website, a single Code of Conduct exemplifying the behaviour expectation for all persons and all parties.
5. Determines that the single Code of Conduct will address, at the least:
 1. Customer Service standards;
 2. Consumer Service Standards;
 3. Commercial Activity Standards;
 4. Council and Committee Behaviours and Standing Orders;
 5. Standards for Local Government Communications;
 6. Moderation of access to Local Government controlled or influenced remote access media communications.
6. Determines that the Code is to establish and affirm and be measured by the principles prescribed at Sections 1.3.(2) and 1.3.(3) of the Local Government Act. 1995. WA.
7. Will develop and approve by an absolute majority of the Council, and publish to the Community, a schedule of the positions of employment against the level of authority to moderate or otherwise manage each portal, forum, platform or media used by the Local Government.
8. A schedule of Social Media Champions associated with the Local Government is to be published on the Local Government website.
9. Will engage with the Local Community Advocacy Organisation to establish a Community committee to oversight the Local Government Communications.

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Communication Between Administrators and the Community

The Local Government:

10. Will facilitate greater accountability of the Local Government to their Community by ensuring employed staff, when engaging with a member(s) of the Community, discuss and record, openly and transparently, the Local Government Policies, recorded Council decisions and any standard, process, procedure, rule or expectation of the Local Government in respect to the topic of discussion;
11. Will refer or forward in writing, to the relevant Ward Councillor(s), any engagement relating to a matter which ought to be brought to Council, for the Councillor(s) to bring those matters to Council;

Naming of Roads, Parks, Buildings and other Infrastructure

The Local Government:

12. Will develop, maintain and publish on the Local Government website, a selection of suitable names for reference when proposing to name or renaming an existing asset.
13. Will establish on the Local Government website, a public portal enabling members of the Community to register, at any time, suggestions or comment publicly on listed suggestions, and vote for the selection of a name to an asset.
14. Confirms the use of the WA Government convention for nomenclature (naming) standards; (Geographic Names Committee Policy and Standards for Geographical Naming in W.A. (GNCPS))
15. Notes that exclusion from the list does not exclude a word or words from contemporaneous use;
16. Confirms that, subject to Landgate confirmation where required, the Council will by absolute majority determine the final selection of a name for a Local Government asset.
17. Will register proposed names on the list in order of priority by the following criteria:
 1. Indigenous words having meaning relevant to the site or locality to be named;
 2. Indigenous names of relevant local landmarks, flora or fauna;
 3. Prominent or historic District Aboriginal identities;
 4. Persons who have been presented an Award for Distinguished Service.
 5. Persons who have made a significant contribution to the community.
 6. Prominent district identities, including pioneering families.
 7. Names that have historical links with the site or surrounding area.
 8. Individuals who are still living will only be recognised in exceptional circumstances.

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Structures, Ornaments, Apparatus and Advertising

The Local Government:

18. Will develop and publish to the Community, on its website, the conditions, based on the following table, under which fixed or temporary; structures, ornaments, apparatus or signage may be attached to trees or other assets under the control of the Local Government. The following;

Approval may be granted where the application demonstrates:	Approval will be refused where the application:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• a measurable benefit to the Community;• acceptance by the local community;• supporting wildlife habitat or nesting;• safety and aesthetical appeal;• charitable purpose;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• is for commercial gain;• is not consistent with the aesthetics of the location;• is unsafe;• is likely to cause damage;• may cause harm to the health of a tree, associated vegetation, humans or fauna;

19. May request removal by the adjoining property owner, or remove, without notice, any structure, ornaments, apparatus or signage, not complying with conditions given in a written prior approval.
20. Requires a responsible party having been granted approval, will, as a condition of that approval, bear any expense associated with that approval, including, recompense for any damage done or cost incurred arising from any structures, ornaments, apparatus or signage not compliant with conditions given in that written prior approval
21. May seek recompense from a responsible party, for any damage done or cost incurred arising from any structures, ornaments, apparatus or signage not compliant with conditions given in a written prior approval

Civic Ceremonies, Receptions, Functions & Local Government Sponsored Events

Civic Events are further listed and addressed in Policy 002 Community Engagement

The Local Government:

22. Will ensure Civic Events are held as examples of Community Engagement, Public Relations and as such shall be free of discrimination or discriminatory practice.
23. No ratepayer or resident of that Local Government district and who requests an invitation to a Civic Event shall be denied attendance at that Civic Event;
24. No speaker at any such event shall use that opportunity to speak to party political matters;

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25. Will ensure that any external sponsorship for an event managed by the Local Government and for which the Local Government is required to sign a contract, shall be unrestricted entry to any member of the District Community (entrance fees excepted) and that the event must be measured for District Community benefit.
26. May offer sponsorship in the form of; cost reimbursement, “in kind” contribution, advertising in Local Government forums, administration resource, event registration and revenue management, or complimentary asset use;
27. Subject to approval by an absolute majority of Council, will develop and publish to the public a schedule of;
 1. Typical event type, maximum value of sponsorship, and contract type, that will be applied to assessment;
 2. Value of sponsorship delegated to be authorised by the CEO or defined others;
 3. The value above which all other requested or proposed sponsorship shall be decided by an absolute majority of Council;
 4. If, when and how the Local Governments Intellectual Property (IP) may be authorised by the CEO to be used at or for a sponsored event.
28. Determines that only events providing measured benefit to the District Community and which do not impact adversely on the necessary day to day functions of the Local Government Administration, may be entertained for sponsorship.
29. Will in each case, evaluate risk prior to a sponsorship offer being confirmed.

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Charity and Disaster Appeals

Charity Engagements are further addressed in Policy 002 Community Engagement

The Local Government;

30. Notes that it is not the normal business or function of a local Government to directly donate to Disaster Appeals as it leaves the Local Government open to accusations of discrimination;
31. Will however, support and sponsor District Community Organisation efforts in their projects which may include, compassionate, emergency and disaster relief;
32. Notes that, many Volunteer Community service organisations engage in a variety of compassionate charities which include Disaster Relief but are frequently restricted through, such as lack of, access to advertising, lack of facilities for receipt of donations, lack of equipment or assets for storage. Supporting these Volunteer Community-service organisations like those engaging in disaster and compassionate appeals are an ideal opportunity for value added Public Relations engagement between the Local Government and its District Community;

Refer to Policy 002 – Community Engagement for:

- *Volunteer Support Centre;*
- *Volunteering;*
- *Volunteer Advisory and Oversight Committee.*

Conflict Avoidance

Conflict resolution is addressed in Policy 002 Community Engagement

The Local Government;

33. Will, in carrying out its functions, use the best endeavours of its Officers, to avoid conflict, or disputation;
34. Will ensure all elected, employed and other persons associated with the Local Government, will take all steps necessary to reach a consensus between the Local Government and the impacted members of the Community;

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Distinguished Service

The Local Government;

35. Will determine standard criteria for defining Distinguished Service;
36. Council will design and approve by absolute majority a standard Local Government styled, framed, gilded certificate;
37. Council will design and approve each, by absolute majority a Distinguished Service Badge and Broach;
38. May by unanimous decision of Council, recognise, an Elected or Employed Officer or a Member of the Public for an award of Distinguished Service to Local Governance or Community, as measured against those standard criteria;
39. An Elected Officer (Councillor or Mayor) shall cause a nomination, including written supporting argument, to be presented to Council;
40. Nominates an awardee will receive a framed, gilded certificate detailing the reasons for the granting of the Award and lapel badge or broach presented to the recipient at the next formal Civic event following endorsement of the award.

Honorary Freeperson of the Local Government

The Local Government;

41. Recognises the awarding of the status of Honorary Freeperson of the Local Government is the highest award the Council is able to gift and will only to be given for exceptional circumstances following a unanimous decision of the full Council;
42. Identifies that unless rescinded by a unanimous vote of Council, the award as Honorary Freeperson is a lifetime award entitling the Freeperson to, without cost, attend any Local Government event or Local Government facility;
43. Will invite all such recipients to attend all Civic functions of the Local Government;
44. Will publicly list all Honorary Freeperson on the Home Page of the Local Government website;
45. Identifies that the status of Honorary Freeperson is personal to the recipient and is not transferable to heirs or successors, friends or relations;
46. Requires that nominations may only be made by an elected person and shall be delivered directly to Council for consideration;
47. Requires that, prior to a decision being taken by the Council, such nomination shall be advertised publicly throughout the District for a minimum period of thirty days and the views of the Community collected, collated and put to the Council for information toward their consideration of an informed decision;

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Speaking on Behalf of the Local Government

[Local Government Act Subsections 2.8. (d) & (f) & 5.41. (f)]

The Local Government;

48. Determines that, irrespective of 47 following, the Mayor may at any time speak for the Local Government for the purposes of news media reports, social media reports, investigation enquiries and other general public, position statements;
49. Determines that, the Mayor may expressly delegate, in writing, a person to speak on the Mayor's behalf;
50. Determines that, irrespective of speaker, any authorised media communication shall be open and transparent, expressing only those views or information which are the recorded resolutions or policy positions of the Council and not the views or opinions of the Mayor, the Local Government's administrators nor of any other party.
51. May by resolution of Council, approve a standard detailing the process to be followed where certain communications on behalf of the Local Government may be formally delegated to the CEO or other person allowing such person(s) to:
 7. Speak to matters restricted to some or all of; operational, legal, commercial, technical or staff matters;
 8. Produce and distribute community publications and information;
 9. Produce and install public notice signage;
52. Identifies that when liaising with the CEO as authorised by Subsection 2.8. (f) of the Act, the Mayor is speaking on behalf of the Local Government;
53. Identifies that, unethical, derogatory or abusive language or behaviour are not permitted to be used by any Elected Member, Employee or other officer of the Local Government in any media or in any forum;

Management of such behaviour is addressed in Model Policy 004 – Governance and Enforcement.

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Councillors Authorised to Speak to Local Government matters

see also Model Policy 002 – Community Engagement

The Local Government;

54. Identifies that Councillors engaging with their community for the purposes of Subsection 2.10. (c) of the Act are expected to discuss openly and transparently any position, policy, process, procedure or other matter of the local government relevant to the facilitation of communication between the community and the Council;
55. Identifies that Elected Members, or other representatives of the Local Government, when invited to contribute to an organisational publication or event, understand that any such contribution shall replicate the Council's views and resolutions and be first, authorised by the Mayor. A record of such authorisations shall be kept and published to the District;
56. Notes that where a councillor is eliciting information on matters to be brought to Council, and does bring that information to Council, prior authority from the Mayor is not required;
57. Requires that where a Councillor receiving a Community engagement referral from a Local Government Employee, or any other person, the Councillor is to follow up that referral in a timely manner;

Councillors Eliciting Matters to be brought to Council

See also Policy 002 – Community Engagement (Attendance at Events – Potential for Conflicting Purpose)

The Local Government;

58. Notes that an Elected Member is required to engage with stakeholders or constituents, for the purpose of eliciting the views and opinions of the District's constituents irrespective of the media or forum through which that may occur;

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Retiring Elected Members

The Local Government;

59. Council will design and approve by absolute majority a standard Local Government mounted Plaque, gift for generic use;
60. Council will design and approve each, by absolute majority of a standard retiring Elected Officer Badge and a retiring Mayor Badge;
61. Will gift a mounted Plaque and Badge to the retiring Mayor or Elected Officer;
62. Will also further award a Mayor or Elected Officer who has served at least one full four-year term of office, and has retired or failed to be re-elected, a token recognition-for-service in the form of a gift or voucher, to the cost of \$100 for each year of service up to a maximum cost to the Local Government of \$1,000 per person;
63. Will not so award or gift to any person who is ousted or been dismissed from office through unethical or criminal conduct;
64. Will present these awards at the Civic event next following the retirement of the Mayor or Elected officer and at which event the encumbered Mayor and Elected Officers are expected to attend;

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Appendices to this Policy Guidance and Explanatory Notes.

Introducing Public Relations

Many of the pre-existing policies reviewed during development of these model Policies were written in a very angry style, promoting aggressive application and oppressive enforcements whose delivered outcome undermined the prescribed intent of the Local Government Act. 1995, which was given as being to benefit the District Community.

A classic example was the use of the phrase “*Compliance with the law is not an option, it is an obligation*”. The use of this kind of phrase in a policy document identifies to the reader that the owner of the policy has little or no understanding or regard for the fundament purpose of Law which is to guide and protect Society and its members. The offensiveness of such a phrase is compounded when the owner is documented to be recalcitrant to their own compliance standards.

Compliance with the Law has many interpretations and without measurement against the purpose and intent of the Law in question, prosecution for compliance usually results in an outcome which suits the power of the prosecutor to the detriment of the purpose and intent of that Law.

Angry and aggressive wording discourages compliance and fails the test of a duty of care to the Community and by that defeats the original purpose for seeking compliance.

These Model policies have been worded to a conciliatory and engaging tone to promote good public relations both to and across the Local Government District Community.

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Definitions

Definitions given in Policy 001 apply to this Policy

For the purpose of this policy the following additional terms are applied to mean;

Audit, Review and Updating

The Audit, Review and Updating of all Policies is address in *Policy 001 – Corporate System Framework Policy*

Additional References Applicable to this Policy

MRSC. (2017). *Local Government Policy Making Process*. Municipal Research & Services Centre, Washington, USA. www.MRSC.org

Landgate. (2017) *Geographic Names Committee Policy and Standards for Geographical Naming in Western Australia* (GNCPS). WA Government.

Superseded Policy

The following listed policy are, on endorsement of this Policy by the City of Melville Council, deleted and replaced by the content of this Policy.

Number	Public Relations Policies	Adopted by Council
CP-003	Public Relations	19/06/2018
CP-012	Honorary Freeman of the City of Melville	19/02/2019
CP-016	Civic and Ceremonial Functions	19/02/2019
CP-015	Recognition of Elected Members Services	
CP-096	Naming of Roads, Parks, Buildings and Infrastructure	21/04/2020
CP-100	Privacy Policy	
CP-106	Elected Members Social Media Policy	20/02/2018
CP-109	Cultural Awareness Policy	16/09/2019
OP-001	Sponsorship	
OP-021	Personal Use of Social Media	
OP-026	Social Media	
OP-029	Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners	
8087	Customer Service Charter	