

Hobart City Council

Elected Member (EM) commitments

February 2024

Preamble

The purpose of this document is to capture an intention and commitment from the body of EMs that evidences their desire to work respectfully and co-operatively. It is to be used as a guide; a tool to challenge behaviour that is inconsistent and to celebrate the emergence of a collaborative culture free from destructive conflict. It does not assert or intend to be a legal gloss on relevant legislation or the Code of Conduct.

The document in final form will be put to Council to vote and approve and will thereafter be used in accordance with the above paragraph until otherwise amended or replaced.

Our commitments

We will always act in a manner that creates the greatest benefit for the City of Hobart (City), its ratepayers, residents and visitors to it, by:

- 1. Acting in a respectful manner with each other, the employees of the City and all other stakeholders;*
- 2. Ensuring that our debate, disagreements, communications, publications and advocacy are underpinned by reliable, shared and transparent evidence and focuses on policy and issues, not people and personalities;*
- 3. Pursuing an open and respectful discourse between EM's when advancing change pursuant to their role before any public commentary.; and*
- 4. Never sharing or showing support for commentary or publications that unreasonably hurts, defames, humiliates, intimidates or subjects EM's or employees of the City to ridicule or otherwise acting in a rude or offensive manner to other EM's and employees of the City.*

Underlying Truths

We understand and agree we are elected by a constituency upon a stated platform that we are expected to raise and advocate. We are entitled and expected to champion that platform.

As an EM we draw upon our experience, our political views and the evidence relevant to any subject matter, in the argumentation and decision making we are involved in.

It is likely that as part of fulfilling our roles, there will be time where we need to critical, question and disagree with other EM's, the City, other levels of government or other stakeholders, and hold them to account on behalf of people who live within the boundaries of the City.

In making decisions we aim to do so on behalf of all current and future residents, not just our constituency or those who supported our election.

Agreed Commitments in our Role

| Issue | Commitment |
|---|--|
| Scope of our role | <p>We are involved, among other things, in the development, monitoring, supervision and amendment of strategy and budget for the City, the review of planning issues, schemes, plans, process, policy, capital works, asset purchase and management, services and programs (a non-exhaustive list) but we have a limited role in the operational execution of the strategy.</p> |
| Our conduct around debate | <p>We are advocates for residents and the interests of the city. We are accountable to the community as well as the staff and colleagues that we work with at Council. We value the role of political debate in a healthy democracy and will prosecute our political platforms within Council. We do so relying upon evidence that is objectively true, fair and not personal or anecdotal in nature.</p> <p>Our pursuit of change within the mechanisms of Council will be transparent and evidence based. We will consider the advice provided by the administration as part of our work. We may also draw on the opinion and advice of other stakeholders to enrich the discussion and decision making.</p> <p>Our discussions with each other and staff will be undertaken respectfully, preserving confidentiality of discussions and submissions to ensure the best evidence is before the EM's at the times of public debate and decision making.</p> <p>After EM's make a decision in Council we are entitled to say we disagree and why publicly but we will respect the views of the majority and maintain respectful language towards and about other EM's. When we disagree we will make this about issues and policy.</p> |
| The use of media (press, radio, TV, social media etc) | <p>We are all politicians and advocates. We may publish commentary supporting our political views and articulate and argue our view as it relates to our role as an EM. We will seek opportunities to choose collaboration and positivity about our City.</p> <p>For the health of the organisation and the reputation of the City and in recognition of the principals of good governance, our commentary will not be framed in such a way as to bring the Council into disrepute.</p> <p>We must never identify or criticise an employee of the City publicly.</p> |
| Workplace Health and Safety | <p>We understand the City's safety obligations to employees and elected members of the City and we will not take any action towards any colleague of the City that creates a psychological hazard to the person.</p> <p>We will honour the division of responsibility between the Executive (the providers of expert evidence and operational execution) and our role described above. We will balance our needs as advocates with respect for the constraints and commitments the employees need to fulfil.</p> <p>We will not write or publish unreasonably hurtful, rude, offensive, humiliating or otherwise inappropriate communications (including copying in unrelated people to communications) to an employee or elected member.</p> |