# LOCAL GOVERNMENT GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Resource for all councils to use. Personalise with your templates.

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For those working in the local government industry, the following are some of the technical or semi-technical terms that may be encountered.

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| Absolute majority | A number of votes greater than half the number of Councillors, including the Mayor. |
| Act | A law which has been made by Parliament. Also known as a statute. |
| Ad hoc | For a particular, usually “one off”, purpose. |
| Ad hoc authority | An authority constituted for a particular purpose and limited in its functions to that purpose. |
| Agenda | A list of the matters which are to be brought before a meeting. |
| Area | In the Act this term (spelt with a capital A) is used to designate the district in which a Local Government exercises jurisdiction. |
| Ayes | Votes in favour of a motion or amendment. |
| Ballot paper | The paper on which a vote is recorded. |
| Bill | The draft of a statue before Parliament has passed it as an Act. |
| Bona fide | (an action or decision) made in good faith. |
| Building certifier | A local government officer or private certifier who is responsible for approving building plans, checking buildings in the course of construction and completed buildings to ensure that they have been constructed in accordance with building control requirements. |
| Casting vote | An additional vote which may be exercised by a person presiding at a meeting when the voting is otherwise equal. |
| Chief Executive Officer (CEO) | The person appointed by a Local Government to that position, as per s194 of the *Local Government Act 2009*. |
| Committee | A meeting of Council as per terms of reference and may relate to a Standing Committee (statutory meeting) or an Advisory Committee. |
| Common law | That body of law which is embodies in judicial decisions as district from statute law which embodied in Acts of Parliament. |
| Compulsory acquisition | The resumption or taking of land under statutory authority. |
| Corporation or body corporate | A body incorporated by statute. A legal entity, separate from those members who comprise it. |
| Councillor | An elected representative of a Local Government. |
| Debate | Formal discussion on monitor or report. |
| Debenture | An instrument issued by a Local Government authority as security for a loan. It is under the seal of the Local Government and it contains a promise to repay the amount of the loan specified. |
| Delegation | Then entrusting of power of authority to another person or body. |
| Deliberative vote | An ordinary vote, as distinguished from a casting vote. |
| Differential rate | A general rate which is levied at a different level in some parts of the Local Government Area than it is in others. |
| Discretionary powers | Powers which their holder may or may not choose to exercise (cf. mandatory powers). |
| Division (at a meeting) | Formal method of voting in which the vote of each Councillor is declared and recorded. |
| Division (territorial) | A defined part of a Local Government’s Area. |
| Elector | Someone who is entitled to vote at an election. |
| Electoral Roll | The official list of those who are entitled to vote at an election. |
| Environmental health officer | An environmental Health Officer responsible for environmental and public health administration EX officio by virtue of one’s office. Usually the holding of one office by virtue of the holding of some other office e.g the Mayor often an “ex officio” or “automatic” member of all Council committees. |
| Ex officio | By virtue of one’s office. Usually the holding of one office by virtue of the holding of some other office – e.g. the Mayor is often an “ex officio” or “automatic” member of all Council committees. |
| Fee | A sum payable to a Local Government for the issue of a permit, or similar document, or for carrying service. |
| Formal motion | A motion relating to procedural matters only. |
| General rate | A levy on ratepayers which provides the basic revenue of a Local Government. |
| Grant | Money paid by State or Federal Governments to Local Governments by way of assistance. Grants may be tied, (i.e. to be used only for the purpose nominated) or untied. |
| Intra vires | Now fairly archaic – Latin words meaning "within the power”, (cf. ultra vires). |
| Libel | Defamatory matter embodied in written or other permanent form. |
| Local laws | A law made by a Local Government under statutory authority. |
| Mayor | In Queensland the official title of the chief elected member of a Local Government. |
| Meeting | A meeting of a local government must be properly convened in accordance with the relevant statutory provision. |
| Minute book | The book in which is recorded the transactions and decisions of a meeting. |
| Minute clerk | The officer responsible for recording the minutes of a meeting. |
| Minutes | The formal record of the proceedings at a meeting and the decisions reached. |
| Mandatory powers | Powers which must be exercised by their holder, (cf. discretionary powers) |
| Nomination day | The last day for receiving nominations for election to fill a particular vacancy. |
| Notice of motion | A notice giving the precise words of a motion which it is intended to move at a later time or ,more usually, a later meeting. |
| Ombudsman | The Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations. |
| Order of business | The order in which the matters to be dealt with at a meeting are to come before it. |
| Ordinary business | Business which may be transacted at a meeting, as distinct from a "special meeting". |
| Poll | Taking the vote at an election, or a motion or an amendment. |
| Person presiding | The person chairing a meeting of a local government or one of its committees. |
| Precept | A demand made by one authority for payment of money due to it from some other body or agency. |
| Quorum | The minimum number of Councillors who must be present to constitute a valid meeting. |
| Rateable property | Property in respect of which there is power to impose rates. |
| Rate remission | The waiving of the liability to pay rates already due. |
| Returning officer | The person responsible for the proper conduct of an election. |
| Resolution | A formal expression of opinion, or a motion which has been carried by a local government meeting. |
| Right of reply | The right of a mover of the motion to close the debate by making the last speech in respect of it. |
| Simple majority | A majority of those present, irrespective of how many others not present are entitled to be present (cf. an absolute majority). |
| Slander | Defamatory matter expressed in a term which lacks permanence. |
| Special meeting | A meeting which, instead of being one of the regular meetings, has been called specially to deal with matters specified in its agenda. |
| Standing committee | A continuing committee whose functions and responsibilities continue until the Local Government changes or discharges it and is a committee of its councillors that meets to discuss the topic decided by the local government when establishing the committee. |
| Standing orders | Rules governing procedure at meetings. |
| Statute | An act of Parliament. |
| Statutory powers | Powers set out in an Act of Parliament, which may be discretionary or mandatory. |
| Ultra vires | Now archaic - Latin words meaning "beyond the powers" (cf. intra vires). |
| Voters' roll | The official list of those who are entitled to vote at an election |