

## CORPORATE POLICY FRAMEWORK & GUIDELINES

### APPROVALS

|                                 |   |                |         |
|---------------------------------|---|----------------|---------|
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### Contact:

*For any assistance on this Framework or Policy development, contact the Governance & Corporate Services Department's Senior Governance Specialist on 4846 3527.*

## 1. POLICY FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this Framework is to provide guidance on the types of policies with Council, the approval authority process and instructions on how to develop/review policies.

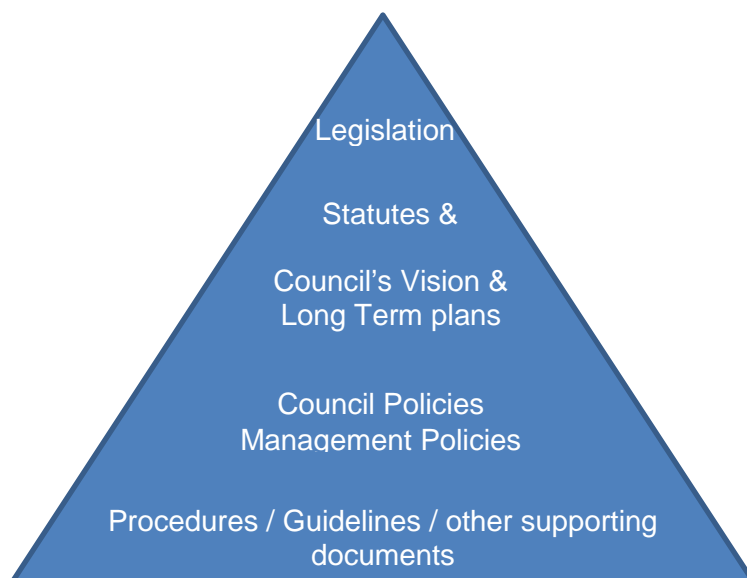
### Why Councils have Policies

A policy is a statement of principles or position that is intended to guide or direct decision-making and operations that supports the achievement of Council's vision and objectives. Policies have high level direction, a long-term focus and are applied across Council as a whole. They form the foundation of Council's governance processes and the basis of the quality system

Policies support the achievement of quality outcomes and reduce institutional risk by establishing standards and internal controls. The principles outlined in policy are shaped by:

- the legislation and regulations that govern Council (& local government)
- national standards and community expectations
- the values and vision Council articulates in its strategic plan

All policies are living documents until such time as they are amended, replaced or repealed, which must all be actioned through the appropriate approval authority. Where there is conflict with an Act or Regulation, the legislation overrides the Policy.



Note: it is important to differentiate between what is a Policy, Guideline or Procedure and which is the appropriate tool for your purpose. Refer to the "GUIDELINE: Policies, Procedures and Guidelines – What are they and which should I use?" (Doc ID 1076400) to assist in identifying the correct tool.

## 1.1 POLICY CATEGORIES

To assist the organisation in determining policy, however ensuring that the appropriate 'arm' of the organisation is considering and adopting policies, the following provides Councils framework for policy types and the approval authority.

| Policy Type         | Policy Category | Rationale   | Example   |
|---------------------|-----------------|---|---|
| Council Policies    | Statutory       | legislative requirement or prescribed in the relevant legislation   | Audit Committee; Disposal of Council property; procurement            |
|                     | Community       | direct impact on the community  | Community Engagement; naming of parks                                 |
|                     | Administrative  | provide direction for internal management of the day to day operations of Council. These policies don't have a direct impact on the community | Fleet/Motor Vehicle; Conference attendance                            |
| Management Policies | Operational     | provide direction for internal management of the day to day operations of Council   | Study leave, higher duties, recognition of service, corporate uniform |

## 1.2 POLICY APPROVAL AUTHORITIES

The following authorities are delegated under this framework:

| Policy Type       | Approve new policy or amendment to policy |                        |
|-------------------|---|------------------------|
|                   | Approval Authority                        | Reporting requirements |
| Council Policy*   | Council                                   | Not applicable         |
| Management Policy | CEO/ELT                                   | Council for noting     |

\* All Council Policies must be submitted to ELT in the first instance for review and endorsement to proceed

## 1.3 POLICY REVIEW PROTOCOL

Council must review its policies on a regular basis, at minimum once a year. As this can be quite onerous on time, the following is the cycle for reviews:

| Review               | Frequency |   |
|----------------------|-----------|---|
| Desktop review       | Year 1    | <i>For the purposes of this Framework, 2016/17 will be considered year 2 with future years to follow with year 1 and 2 alternating.</i> |
| Comprehensive review | Year 2    |   |

The comprehensive review would involve each Manager to complete a checklist to confirm the review and legitimacy/currency of their Policies. A report will be forwarded to council providing reference to each Policy. Only those with amendments will be presented to council, the remainder will be noted as reviewed with no amendments.

It is noted that reviews or updates to policies do not have to wait for the formal review periods mentioned above. If a policy requires updating, Departments are encouraged to progress this at any time to ensure Councils policies are up to date and employing best practice.

## 1.4 POLICY ADMINISTRATION

The Policy Register and reviews will be administered through the Governance & Corporate Services Department.

Once a Policy has been adopted by the relevant approval authority, and the Governance & Corporate Services Department advised and provided evidence of approval, the final version will be prepared for publication, which will include but not limited to, removal of the draft watermark, Register updated, policy number and other relevant information updated on the Policy and published on Council's systems.

Any education or training required on the Policy is the responsibility of the responsible Department and must be considered when developing and submitting the Policy for approval, including any cost implications.

There will be one location on Council's website for all appropriately authorised Policy Documents, as there also will be on IRIS and ECM.

The Governance & Corporate Services Department will facilitate version control on all adopted Policies and ensure a record is made of amended, replaced and repealed policies in the appropriate register.

### Policy formation:

While the Governance & Corporate Services Department is available to provide advice on policy formation, it is noted that the owner/responsible department is the content and knowledge expert. The owner/responsible department are responsible for developing, consulting and requesting approval for a Policy.

## 2. POLICY DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

### 2.1 WHAT ARE POLICIES?

Policies are clear, simple statements of how IRC intends to conduct its services, actions or business. They provide a set of guiding principles to help with decision making. A policy sets out IRC position on a specific matter, but does not necessarily prescribe in detail how to perform certain functions. The main characteristics of policies are that they are formally documented, approved and reviewed. Compliance is required, and non-compliance may be actionable through appropriate conduct policy documents.

Policies don't need to be long or complicated – a couple of sentences may be all you need for each policy area. Policies relate to issues where Isaac Regional Council (IRC) requires a certain line of action to be followed, consistently

Policies should not be used for adhoc, once off decision making.

Policies must be adopted by the approval authority identified in the Policy Framework.

### DEFINITION OF A POLICY

A Policy is a concise formal statement that outlines non-discretionary governing principles and intentions, in order to guide IRC practices. Policies are a formal statement of intent that mandate principles or standards that apply to IRC governance, operations or to the practice and conduct of its elected Members and employees/contractors. In short, policy provides members of IRC with the approved way of operating in relation to a particular matter.

### THE ROLE OF POLICY

Policy plays an important role within IRC operations and decision making. It provides the principles which dictate how the members of IRC should act.

Those principles are derived from and shaped by: the law and regulations that govern IRC; national/industry standards, best practice and community expectations; and the values and mission IRC articulates in its strategic plan.

It is the role of Policy to:

- Set standards and a position of IRC;
- Ensure compliance with legal and statutory responsibilities;
- Guide IRC towards the achievement of its strategic plan;
- Provide a framework for action and decision making; and
- Improve the management of risk.

Policies are intended to be long term in application. They are reviewed at least annually.

Policies should be developed in consider risk management principles

## 2.2 POLICY DEVELOPMENT STAGES & GUIDANCE

This guideline provides the development stages and guidance for all Policies whether they are new or amended. It is noted that all policies are living documents until they are amended, replaced or repealed, which must all be actioned through the appropriate approval authority.

The policy development (including amendment) involves the following stages:

### **Stage 1: Approval to proceed**

Why the need for a policy may arise:

- As a result of legislation
- A directive from Council, CEO, Directors
- To mitigate risk;
- To formalise a strategic position or program

When considering the development of a new or amending a current policy, also reflect on the following:

- Is a new policy required or amendment to an existing policy
- Does creating or amending a policy impact on other policies or procedures

Ensure that the development of a new policy isn't a reactive response and that there is a need for a policy to respond to an issue

All new Policy Documents and substantial amendments to existing Policy Documents require approval to proceed from the relevant Director, or if applicable CEO/ELT prior to drafting or re-drafting.

Minor amendments to an existing Policy Document may be submitted directly to ELT for processing. Minor amendments are changes that do not impact on the scope, intent or application of the Policy Document (for example changes to position titles as a result of organisational change, broken hyperlinks, typographical errors).

### **Stage 2: Drafting**

Policy Documents must be drafted using the approved template, and include the word 'draft' as a watermark. Definitions used in Policy Documents must be consistent with Council's terminology, etc.

Draft Policy Documents are not to be made available externally, except with the approval of the relevant Director and/or CEO.

If drafting a new Policy, advise Governance & Corporate Services Department as a courtesy.

If amending a Policy, all changes are to be made in mark-up.



Unless mandatory in nature, refrain from including procedural matters/steps in a Policy. Where procedures are required to support a Policy, a template is available to guide the author.

Important: always ensure that if you are proposing a new Policy, that it is not in conflict with any other current policy. Identify if there is conflict and either propose amendments to that policy as well and/or consider if it needs to be replaced/repealed. Ensure you consult with the owner of the Policy if it isn't in your Department.

### **Stage 3: Consultation**

Consultation is to be wide, inclusive and provide sufficient time for the provision of feedback.

All policies that impact workplace relations, human resources and other staffing matters must be referred to Human Resources for consultation with staff, as appropriate, in accordance with the enterprise agreements and similar documents.

Where the application of a Policy Document has a significant impact on more than one functional area, it is appropriate to ensure wide consultation has been undertaken and all parties support the document to progress for approval.

It is recommended that Managers consult with other stakeholders. As a suggestion, new policies are raised at EMT for noting and if applicable reviewed/discussed

For quality assurance, the Governance & Corporate Services Department must be consulted on final drafts prior to submission for approval. All Council Policies must be submitted to ELT in the first instance for review and endorsement to proceed.

### **Stage 4: Document Approval**

The Approval Authority for policies is as described above.

Approval from all stakeholders must be documented. With a covering report and final approved version of the Policy Document, the policy is to be submitted to a formal ELT Agenda.

When submitting a Policy for approval, the author must always ensure the appropriate recommendation wording is provided. In particular if the policy is replacing another Policy and/or repealing a policy.

### **Stage 5: Publication and Communication**

There will be one location on Council's website for all appropriately authorised Policy Documents.

The Governance & Corporate Services will facilitate version control on all adopted Policies and ensure a record is made of amended, replaced and repealed policies in the appropriate register.

The Governance & Corporate Services Department will notify staff of new or substantially revised Policy Documents via relevant online communications.



## Stage 6: Implementation

The responsible department will develop an implementation and communication plan, if necessary. The plans must, but is not limited to, indicate any impacts on systems, business processes and required training.

## Stage 7: Evaluation and Review

Refer Policy Review Protocol above

Formal review of Policy Documents will be facilitated by the Governance & Corporate Services Department.

## Maintenance and Reporting

A Policy Document will remain in force unless:

- formally revoked by the relevant Approval Authority, or
- superseded by another Policy Document.

## 2.3 TIPS & HINTS – HOW TO WRITE A POLICY

### 1. Format

The **styles shown in the template must be used** -- Do not modify the template or styles; only use 'outline numbering' as in the example on the template.

### 2. Table

Complete the table rows referring to Policy Title and Responsible Department. The Governance & Corporate Services Department will complete the rest of the table.

#### Policy title

Ensure the title of the policy captures the subject of the policy as unambiguously as possible. Take into account the perspective of the reader when naming the policy.

### 3. Objective

This section must provide a succinct purpose of the policy. If the policy is responding to a legislative requirement, refer to the relevant Act or Regulation and section.

### 4. Scope

Provide a clear statement about when and to whom the policy applies.

### 5. Definitions

Provide definitions where meaning of words are at risk of being interchangeable and/or interpreted differently. Also use this section to note any acronyms. If no content is required for this section, include the words 'not applicable'. Do not delete the heading.

## 6. Policy Statement

Clearly state the standards or essential features which underpin decision-making and /or the way members of Council conduct the activities.

## 7. Legislation and related guidelines

Identify relevant legislation and/or codes etc that influence this Policy and or good references.

## 8. References

Provide all relevant internal references that link to the Policy. For example relevant forms or templates, guidelines or procedures.

## 2.4 DRAFTING HINTS

- Write the policy in plain English. Be clear and concise, and avoid jargon, complex language and long paragraphs. Aim to communicate as simply and effectively as possible, as appropriate for the intended audience.
- Do not allow for every possible interpretation of the policy, try to close every loophole or attempt to accommodate all exceptions, as this can complicate the policy unnecessarily. Stakeholders with difficulties interpreting the policy can consult the Policy Responsible Officer or lodge the problem on the feedback/issues log.
- If an action is mandatory, use 'must'. If the action is recommended, use 'recommended'. Avoid use of 'should' and 'shall'. Try to limit the use of 'will' to occasions when it is describing a future action; and not as a synonym for 'must'.
- Use the present tense and active voice where possible.
- Avoid gender-specific pronouns: for example, use 'they' instead of 'he or she'.
- Where acronyms are considered helpful, give the full term/title before using the acronym: for example, 'Goods & Services Tax (GST)'
- Do not repeat legislation.
  - There is a risk of conflict if the Act is amended and the Act is the source of truth and should remain so
  - If a relevant Act covers the policy objective, intent, powers, there is no need for a Policy
- Unless mandatory, procedures should not be included in the policy
- Include key criteria for decision making, e.g. community grants
- Policies should not replace a managers responsibilities or delegation