



Moreland City Council

Council Meeting Guideline

Determining when to conduct Council Meetings Online

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 saw the introduction of State health restrictions and public health advice which continues to affect the conduct of Council meetings. In particular, stay at home restrictions and advice, masking requirements, density provisions and social distancing requirements have all operated or continue to operate to protect the safety of Councillors, staff and community. They have also had impact on how Council meetings can operate.

The State Government amended the *Local Government Act 2020* to allow for Council meetings to be conducted online instead of in person, until April 2022. Council meetings can only be conducted online if the meeting is also available to be viewed online by members of the public (with the exception of confidential items).

Due to the sometimes uncertain or unpredictable changes in COVID-19 restrictions, health advice, or other circumstances, operational decisions about the conduct of Council meetings will sometimes be made at short notice by the Chief Executive Officer.

Decision making criteria for conducting a meeting online

In determining whether to hold a Council meeting online rather than in person, the Chief Executive Officer will consider the following criteria:

1. Safety of Councillors, Council staff and members of the public.
2. Compliance with legal restrictions, public health advice and occupational health and safety requirements.
3. Maximising effective participation of Councillors in Council meetings, including consideration where Councillors may have a temporary or chronic health condition affecting physical attendance.
4. Community access to enable community members to observe the Council meeting, whether in person or online.

These criteria also apply to working out operational arrangements for in person Council meetings during the pandemic, including setting a limit on observer numbers if needed, along with any associated registration process.

Public Question Time

Council resolved on 9 December 2020 that Public Question Time would be in person if the Council meeting is in person, subject to relevant public health requirements.

The Council resolution also stated that if public health requirements do not permit in-person Public Question Time at a Council meeting then Public Question Time will be conducted online, resembling as closely as possible the conduct of in-person Question Time before the pandemic.

Information and advice

In planning and adjusting arrangements for Council meetings during the pandemic, the CEO and staff will consider requirements, guidelines, advice and information as relevant including:

- (1) Current State Government of Victoria COVID restrictions (or other restrictions as described) .
- (2) Other relevant State or federal public health and safety advice.
- (3) Relevant legislation including *Local Government Act 2020*, and legislation enacted as part of State of Emergency provisions
- (4) Local Government Minister's Good Practice Guideline MGP-1: Virtual Meetings and other advice from Local Government Victoria.
- (5) Moreland's Governance Rules.
- (6) Relevant Council resolutions on changes to the delivery of service during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- (7) Advice from Councillors on any relevant temporary or permanent circumstances, e.g.. health conditions.
- (8) Any other relevant feedback from Councillors, staff and community.

Notification

Councillors and the community will be advised as soon as possible of relevant changes to the conduct of Council meetings.

If any members of the public have previously registered to attend or speak at a meeting, and arrangements for the meeting have to change, then those members of the public will be specifically advised of changes affecting their presence or participation.

Authorised

Guideline authorised by Council resolution on 12 May 2021.