

Name of Policy:	Policy Framework		
Adoption by Council:	26 March 2025	Minute number:	101/2025
Last review date:	February 2025		
Review timeframe:	4 years		
Next scheduled review date:	February 2029		
Related legislation:			
Associated policies/documents:			
Responsible division:	Corporate Services		

Strategic Plan link

Community Outcome 4: Strong leadership and good Governance

<i>4.2 Council demonstrates good governance and financial management to ensure decisions and transactions are ethical, efficient, safe and fair</i>	<i>4.2.1 Use governance frameworks and processes to guide our decisions and to ensure council is accountable to the community</i>
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Policy Framework

Objective

The objective of this Framework is to provide a guide for the development of Policy that is consistent with legal obligations, does not duplicate legislation or regulations, and provides a guide for the development of supporting documentation for Policy including, procedures and guidelines.

This Framework also provides for public access through a register of Policy that is current and is available electronically.

Key Terms

A Policy is a set of guiding principles used to set direction within the organisation.

A procedure is a series of steps to be followed as a consistent approach to accomplish an end result. It is how to ensure the Policy objectives are achieved.

A guideline provides additional information specific to a section of Council that supports the direction set by Policy and Procedure.

What is a Policy?

Policies outline Council's position on a particular issue.

A Policy can be described as a general plan of action that shows the overall intention or stance that Council intends to take on a matter. The underlying principle for developing a Policy is to provide a consistent approach to a matter or issue that forms the basis of a standard response or decision making.

A Policy is general in nature, has broad application and helps to ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations, contract requirements and delegation of authority by the Council and General Manager.

Policies promote operational efficiencies and reduces corporate risk. Policies should not contain requirements. Procedures, guidelines, processes, directives, work instructions, and the like flow from policies and the requirements of any Policy are specified in those documents.

Policies have either an external focus and are endorsed by Council by resolution (referred to in this document, as *Council Policy*) or have an internal operational focus and are endorsed by the Leadership Group with the General Manager's approval (referred to in this document, as *Administrative Policy*).

A Council Policy is a statement of principles that govern the activities of Council in its relationship with the public. Policies should clearly state Council's position on an issue and provide adequate guidance to ensure consistency in decision making. This consistency should reduce risk and/or waste associated with the process/issue that may occur through inconsistent practices.

Administrative Policy aims to provide greater efficiencies in terms of decision making by the General Manager and staff exercising delegations relating to operational activity.

When developing a Policy, the author must ensure that the Policy is consistent with current delegations from Council and the General Manager. Administrative Policy also aims to provide some consistency to service provision over time so that it is not persuaded by the changing nature of the political body.

What is a Procedure?

A procedure is a particular way of accomplishing something such as the "How-To" document that accompanies a Policy.

A procedure is a written and approved specification for execution of some activity, often composed of steps, using established methods or forms designed to achieve a uniform approach to comply with applicable policies or directives.

A procedure should be a series of steps to be followed as a consistent and repeatable approach or cycle to accomplish an end result. Procedures provide a platform for implementing the consistency needed to decrease process variation, which increases procedural control. Decreasing process variation is how we eliminate inefficiency and increase performance.

A single Policy may have a number of related procedures.

What is a Guideline?

A guideline is a document that contains additional information about acceptable methods for implementing requirements found in policies and procedures that have been approved by the Leadership Group or Council. Guidelines do not necessarily mandate the actions that are to be taken; rather they offer a suggested process or steps to follow.

Guidelines may be more appropriate to use than a formal procedure in a work environment where a degree of flexibility is required to ensure the efficient and effective operation of that work area.

Preparing a Policy

Policy should satisfy the following criteria:

- It is a governing principle that mandates or constrains actions.
- It has cross organisation application.
- It changes infrequently and sets a course for the foreseeable future.
- It helps ensure compliance, enhance Council outcomes or reduces corporate risk;
- Is reviewed and endorsed by the Leadership Group for approval by the General Manager, if Administrative, or by Council itself.

The Policy statement needs to be short, and it should clearly state Council's intent. It may only need a few points, as related documents and/or procedures should provide the detail of how the Policy is to be implemented and the relevant workflows.

The development of Policy is a cyclical process whereby a need for a Policy is identified, a draft is prepared, approval gained, and the Policy implemented. A regular review process is to be established, and this process is then repeated when the Policy is reviewed. Review timeframes are defined within the Policy.

Policy Template

A Policy template has been designed to provide a standard format when writing policies.

The template is divided into nine sections as listed below:

1. Policy Objective – Detail the objectives of this Policy. E.g.: To provide a solid governance framework in relation to.
2. Policy Statement – Council's position in relation to the Policy matter.
3. Policy Coverage – to whom the Policy direction applies. E.g.: all staff, all members of a team, Councillors, etc
4. Strategic Plan Link - Demonstrate links to the Community Strategic Plan.
5. Policy Content – Provides the detail, actions and references any procedures.
6. Definitions – terminology explanation.
7. References & Related Documents – supporting documents and reading material.
8. Responsible Officer (position)
9. Attachments

Tips on Policy Writing

Avoid writing statements that lead to an activity that is not under Council's power.

A Policy should be a document that can stand the test of time. References to current events or scenarios are to be avoided.

If figures are to be used, write the full word for the figure then its numeric form in brackets.
E.g. ten thousand dollars (\$10,000)

Use concise plain English for ease of understanding by the reader. Short point form sentences are easier to read than paragraphs of instructions.

Have the document checked for clarity, logic and relevance.

Consider the preparation of procedures or guidelines to accompany the Policy, this may occur at the same time as writing of the Policy or may be prepared later if a number of procedures support the overriding Policy position.

Consider using numbered dot points (Clauses) where possible so reference to specific clauses can be easily made.

The Approval Process

The approval process will be determined by the type of Policy being developed. Outlined in the table below is a brief description of each type of Policy and the approval process required:

Policy Type	Description	Consultation	Approval	Review
Council	Relate primarily to Council's intent regarding service, functions or activities and have an external/ community focus.	Key external stakeholders Management Team Leadership Group Elected Council Public exhibition (where relevant)	Recommended by Management Team and/or Leadership Group Approved by Council	4 Years for existing Policies 2 Years for New Policies
Administrative	Relate primarily to operational issues, focus on internal functions and activities, and is intended for use within the organisation.	Management Team Leadership Group Consultative committee (if staff related)	Endorsed by Leadership Group Approved by GM	Variable as noted in Policy

Steps from Policy Development to Approval

- 1. Identify the need, undertake research and prepare a Draft Policy:**
 - a)** Research the Policy subject matter to ensure all relevant factors are captured including legislation.
 - b)** Identify internal sources of information, asking if there are similar documents already in existence.
 - c)** Identify external sources of information. Other councils or like industries may have similar documentation already in use. Seek industry best practice. The Office of Local Government may provide a model Policy.
 - d)** Consult key stakeholders. Gather information for a first draft from a number of sources to gain different perspectives for a more balanced document.
 - e)** Contact Governance for the latest template and advice regarding content.
 - f)** Circulate the draft document to:
 - i)** Colleagues with experience/knowledge in the area covered by the Policy for feedback and
 - ii)** Key stakeholders
- 2. Refer document to Extended MANEX for general and organisational Policy direction and feedback.**
- 3. Make any required changes to your final draft.**
- 4. Consult and release the draft for comment and feedback:**
 - a)** If a Council Policy:
 - i)** Seek the concurrence of Extended MANEX
 - ii)** Seek endorsement of Leadership Group
 - iii)** Workshop with Councillors at a Policy Working Group.
 - iv)** Governance submits a report to Council seeking adoption and /or placing on public exhibition to seek community feedback where required. In the event that no submissions are received during the exhibition of the Draft Policy, the Policy will be adopted and added to Council's Policy Register without referral back to Council.
 - b)** If an Administrative Policy:
 - i)** If the Policy affects staff, request the consideration of the Consultative Committee.
 - ii)** Seek the concurrence of Extended MANEX.
 - iii)** Seek the concurrence of Leadership Group.
- 5. Consider inclusion of feedback or comment received and prepare a response based on acceptance or rejection of feedback**
- 6. Seeking approval following consultation:**
 - a)** Council Policy:
 - i)** Governance to assist in preparing a report for consideration including response to feedback or comment received.
 - ii)** Seek Council's adoption by resolution.
 - b)** If an Administrative Policy:
 - i)** If no significant changes are required following consultation, submit the Policy to Leadership Group for endorsement and the General Manager's approval.
 - ii)** If changes are required, advise those staff groups with whom you have consulted and submit the Policy to Leadership Group for endorsement and the General Manager's approval.
- 7. Following approval Governance will include in the Policy Register and publish online.**
- 8. Implement staff training and/or information dissemination through:**
 - a)** Training/education sessions to specific groups or individual staff
 - b)** Email or intranet post all users/key stakeholders with a brief overview of the Policy and how it impacts them.
 - c)** Raising the Policy as an agenda item at various meetings
 - d)** Publishing Policy on the intranet (if Administrative) or internet (if Council)
 - e)** Publishing a media release (if Council)
 - f)** Where appropriate develop an E-learning module to be disseminated to staff.

Policy Review

Policy should be reviewed within prescribed timeframes. (see above).

The purpose for Policy review is to:

1. Ensure that Council Policy reflects current legislative and regulatory requirements,
2. Reaffirm, where possible, current practice is similar within the Local Government sector,
3. Meet the functional and operational requirements of Council staff in executing Policy,
4. Be responsive and reflective of the needs of stakeholders, and
5. Be relevant to the local government context in which MidCoast Council operates and strive for industry leading edge and best practice.

Version Control is included in the Policy template and reflects Policy review and amendments.

Policy Register

Council will maintain a Policy Register which will ensure that all Policy data is searchable to facilitate currency (review dates) and that changes to legislation that impact Policies are managed appropriately. The register will record the following items:

- Name of the Policy
- Adoption Date
- Minute Number
- Last Review Date
- Review Timeframe
- Next Scheduled Review
- Related Legislation
- Associated Policies / Documents
- Responsible Department
- Version Control
- Published on Internet / Intranet
- Stored Locations

Preparing a Procedure

Procedures set out the steps required to implement the Policy. Procedures should specify the method of performing a task, such as who does what, when, how and what records will be kept.

A procedure is a series of specific statements that describe the steps required to turn a Policy or legislation into action. They are designed to ensure that critical processes and systems operate consistently and effectively across the organisation. They can be in written or graphic format. A flowchart is an effective tool for outlining procedure.

Procedure writing should be undertaken by people who are familiar with the activities and functions to be documented. Procedures relating to a specific Policy should be referred to in the related documents sections of the Policy template. This will ensure that people are aware of the processes relating to the Policy.

A procedure template has been designed to provide a standard format when writing procedures.

The template is divided into five sections as listed below:

- 1. Purpose** – a brief statement about the need for the procedure and what it gives guidance to completing.
- 2. Related Documents** – supporting documents and reading material including the overarching Policy
- 3. Process** – A systematic list of related activities, who should complete them, in what sequence and what timeframe.
- 4. Review and Revision** – the standard is between one and two (1 and 2) years.
- 5. Responsible Officer (position)**

For a procedure that supports Council Policy, the approval process should be by the Leadership Group on the endorsement of the relevant Manager. While the procedure does not require Council approval, as it is the operational mechanism by which Council Policy is implemented, it may accompany the report regarding the Policy seeking endorsement.

For a procedure that supports Administrative Policy, the approval process will vary depending on the scope of the procedure, but approval should occur close to the staff undertaking the activity. That is, in most cases by the relevant Manager.

Where the procedure impacts all staff the process for Policy development to adoption is considered appropriate and it is likely that the procedure will accompany the Policy where change is significant.

Preparing a Guideline

Guidelines are prepared, often to support a Policy and procedure, where additional information is required for staff in a special circumstance, situation or location.

Guidelines are generally prepared to support Policy or procedure where the specific topic has a level of complexity where a set procedure cannot cover all of the possible scenarios. It should provide additional information for staff to consider where a step in a procedure is not a yes or no consideration.

Responsible officers (position)

Manager Governance