

CITY OF PORT PHILLIP

GUIDELINES FOR COUNCILLORS AND OFFICERS APPOINTED TO COUNCIL PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEES

These guidelines have been developed to ensure that the highest standards of governance are modelled by Councillors and officers appointed to Council Project Steering Committees and that the standing of the City of Port Phillip is enhanced as a consequence of the community stakeholder consultation process.

The formation of a steering committee signals that Council intends to commit or has already committed significant funds to the project. The steering committee forum provides an opportunity for Councillors and officers to build community confidence and support for the Council and the project. This is best achieved by working together in a spirit of cooperation where all members are encouraged to fully express their views through open discussion while respecting the views of others. Councillors and officers may present personal views based on their experience and professional training. They should however, respect decisions already made by the Council, present them accurately and when required, argue for their support.

Some simple ways of ensuring that a respectful and productive atmosphere is created are:

- **Active-listening**

It is a good discipline to focus attention on the person speaking, to listen and understand what is being said, and to wait until the speaker has finished speaking before offering a response or contribution.

- **Addressing members by title when appropriate**

While members will normally be on a first name basis, it is appropriate to introduce Councillors as “Cr (Name)” and other members by reference to their position if introducing them to guests or attending a formal occasion.

- **No surprises**

If Councillors or officers have significant and relevant information that could come as a complete surprise to the Council representatives, then it must be shared prior to the meeting.

- **Staying with the process**

It is important that Councillors and officers attend scheduled meetings of the Committee unless prevented from doing so by unforeseen or unusual circumstances. This avoids the Committee having to go back over matters previously discussed and demonstrates a commitment by Councillors and officers to others around the table.

The role of the chairperson is to ensure everyone participates effectively in the meetings and to moderate contributions with a view to achieving agreed outcomes, or a clear understanding of points of difference. This includes:

- ensuring everyone is given an opportunity to express a point of view
- moving the meeting forward when it becomes “bogged down”
- reminding members of desired outcomes and limitations
- ensuring that matters required to be determined by Council or officers under delegation are referred for decision in a timely manner