

5.5.2 LATE ITEM: Approval of Council Briefing and Council Meeting Dates for 2016

Ward:	-	Date:	6 November 2015
Precinct:	-	File Ref:	ADM0016 & ADM0066
Attachments:	1 – Council Briefing and Council Meeting Schedule 2016		
Tabled Items:	-		
Reporting Officer:	Len Kosova, Chief Executive Officer		
Responsible Officer:	Len Kosova, Chief Executive Officer		

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION:

That Council **ADOPTS** the **2016 Council Briefing and Council Meeting Schedule** included as Attachment 1, consisting of a four-weekly meeting cycle of:

1. **Twelve (12) Council Briefing Sessions, commencing Tuesday 2 February 2016; and**
2. **Twelve (12) Council Meetings, commencing Tuesday 9 February 2016.**

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To consider and adopt the schedule of Council Briefings and Council Meetings for 2016.

BACKGROUND:

Under the *Local Government Act 1995* (Section 5.3) and the *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996, (Regulation 12)*, Council must set its Ordinary Meeting dates and times for the next twelve (12) months and these must be published at least once a year.

Council adopted the 2015 Council Meeting Schedule at its meeting on 4 November 2014 (Item 9.5.2) and, in doing so, changed from the previous fortnightly Council meeting cycle to a four-weekly Council Meeting cycle preceded by a Council Briefing Session on the Tuesday of the week before each Council Meeting. The four-weekly Ordinary Council Meeting cycle commenced with an Ordinary Council meeting on 20 January 2015. A Council Briefing was not held in January 2015 due to the unavailability of several Council Member's on leave at the time.

At its meeting on 20 January 2015, Council adopted guidelines for the operation of Council Briefings. These are reflected in the Council Briefing Principles at the front of the Council Briefing Agenda and have been incorporated in Policy No. 4.2.3: Council Briefings, Meetings & Forums – Format, Procedures and Maximum Duration.

DETAILS:

In making its decision of 4 November 2014, Council also resolved to review the effectiveness of the four-weekly meeting cycle in November 2015. Whilst no parameters were established for Council to conduct this review, in Administration's opinion the four-weekly meeting cycle has been successful and is preferred to the previous fortnightly meeting cycle for a variety of reasons, including:

- The draft Council Meeting Agenda is issued to Council Members and is publicly available almost two weeks prior to the Council Meeting where decisions will be made on items included in that Agenda. This provides an important opportunity for Council Members and members of the public to review draft Council Meeting reports and raise questions or request further information relating to those matters well in advance of a decision-point;

- The previous fortnightly meeting cycle meant that Administration was continuously either preparing an Agenda for the upcoming Council Meeting or acting on decisions made at the last Council Meeting. The current four-weekly Council Briefing/Meeting cycle has realised some much needed capacity in the organisation to pursue work other than that associated with the Council meeting process;
- The current four-weekly meeting cycle has not adversely affected the timely consideration or determination of issues by Council or Administration;
- The four-weekly meeting cycle has allowed the introduction of an Agenda Review and Settlement process by the Executive Team, prior to the Briefing Agenda being published and again after the Briefing Session is held (before the formal Council Agenda is published), with the intent of improving the quality of reporting to Council; cross-Directorate input on agenda reports; and Administration responses to questions and requests for information raised during the Council Briefing.

In view of the above, Administration has prepared a draft 2016 Council Briefing and Ordinary Council Meeting Schedule (see **Attachment 1**) based on the current four-weekly cycle, commencing with a Council Briefing on 2 February followed by a Council Meeting on 9 February 2016. This Schedule does not include a January meeting, nor does it include Council Forum dates, for the following reasons:

- January is traditionally the quietest time of the year for local government, as many staff, Council Members, residents, customers, consultants, contractors and government departments take leave or close during this period. Many local governments take advantage of this and reserve the month of January as a once-a-year opportunity to enjoy a 'Council recess' period, without any noticeable impact on business continuity. A Council Briefing was not held in January 2015 in light of these circumstances;
- The City's Administration Centre and several service areas shut down for four business days during the last Christmas/New Year period (on 29, 30 and 31 December 2014 and 2 January 2015) with full services resuming (and the majority of staff returning to work) on 5 January 2015. During this period key staff remained contactable and frontline service staff remained on duty for parks maintenance, road maintenance, waste collection, cleaning and the like.

The shutdown had virtually no impact on the community's enjoyment of the services and facilities provided by the City and will therefore occur again during the upcoming Christmas/New Year period (for three business days on 29, 30 and 31 December 2015), with full services resuming on 4 January 2016. Under the proposed 2016 meeting schedule, this will still provide approximately 3 weeks for Administration to prepare and finalise the Agenda for the first scheduled Council Briefing on 2 February 2016 – this would not be possible if a Council Briefing and/or Meeting were held in January;

- The four-weekly meeting cycle will still result in 12 Council Briefings and 12 Council Meetings being held in 2016, notwithstanding that no meetings would be held in January 2016. If any urgent business arises in January 2016 that cannot be dealt with by Administration and cannot wait until the 9 February 2016 Ordinary Council Meeting, then a Special Council Meeting could be held to deal with that particular issue;
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- In terms of the 2016 meeting schedule not reflecting Council Forum dates, this is because the statutory obligation for Council to adopt and publish a meeting schedule only applies to Ordinary Council Meetings and Committee Meetings that are (or are proposed) to be open to the public. The City does not operate a Committee structure/system (except for the Audit Committee which is separately and specifically legislated for) and Council Forums are not recognised under the Act or Regulations – therefore there is no statutory need to publicise them.

Furthermore, Council Forums have experienced mixed feedback, attendance and value in their current form, particularly when compared to the targeted Council Member Workshops that have been held throughout the year. In view of this, Administration intends to present a report to Council in December 2015 to consider modifying the Council Forum format and/or replacing Council Forums with an alternate system, such as subject-specific Council Member Workshops with Administration only. If at that stage Council decides to maintain the status quo in terms of the function and frequency of Council Forums, then the Forum dates can be separately published. Alternatively, if Council decides to revise or abandon the current Council Forum structure then any proposed replacement meetings that are intended to be open to the public can be separately publicised.

CONSULTATION/ADVERTISING:

The Council Briefing and Ordinary Council Meeting dates will be published in both local newspapers and on the City's website.

LEGAL/POLICY:

Section 5.3 of the Local Government Act 1995 states:

“Ordinary and Special Council meetings:

- (1) *A Council is to hold ordinary meetings and may hold special meetings;*
- (2) *Ordinary meetings are to be held not more than three months apart; and*
- (3) *If a Council fails to meet as required by subsection (2) the CEO is to notify the Minister of that failure. ”*

Regulation 12 of the Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996 states:

- “12 (1) *At least once a year a local government is to give local public notice of the dates on which and the time and place at which –*
- (a) *The ordinary Council meetings; and*
 - (b) *The Committee meetings that are required under the Act to be open to members of the public or that are proposed to be open to members of the public;*
- Are to be held in the next 12 months;*
- (2) *A local government is to give local public notice of any change to the date, time or place of a meeting referred to in sub regulation (1);”*

Policy No. 4.2.3: Council Briefings, Meetings & Forums – Format, Procedures and Maximum Duration sets out additional guiding principles for the management of Council Briefings and Meetings.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS:

Nil.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS:

This is in keeping with the City's Strategic Plan – Plan for the Future 2013-2017, Objective 4.1 – *“Provide Good Strategic Decision Making, Governance, Leadership and Professional Management”* and, in particular, Objective 4.1.2 – *“Manage the organisation in a responsible, efficient and accountable manner”*.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS:

Nil.

FINANCIAL/BUDGET IMPLICATIONS:

The advertising of the Meeting and Forum dates will cost approximately \$250.

COMMENTS:

It is recommended that Council adopts the Council Briefing and Council Meeting Schedule for 2016 as shown in **Attachment 1**.
