

**HOBSONS**  
**BAY CITY**  
COUNCIL



# Policy Governance Framework

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Adopted May 2026

## **Acknowledgment of Country**

Council acknowledges the Bunurong People of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of these municipal lands and waterways, and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

# Contents

|                                                                  |           |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Introduction .....</b>                                        | <b>4</b>  |
| Purpose .....                                                    | 4         |
| Scope .....                                                      | 4         |
| <b>Context.....</b>                                              | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Definitions .....</b>                                         | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Policy Statement .....</b>                                    | <b>7</b>  |
| Policy document hierarchy.....                                   | 7         |
| Policy development and review .....                              | 7         |
| Document Owner and Document Lead.....                            | 8         |
| Consultation, drafting and assessment of operational impact..... | 9         |
| Content and design principles.....                               | 9         |
| Authorising environment .....                                    | 11        |
| Implementation and communication .....                           | 12        |
| Policy Register and Policy Library .....                         | 12        |
| Induction .....                                                  | 13        |
| Document control and version history.....                        | 13        |
| <b>Other relevant documents.....</b>                             | <b>13</b> |
| Legislation .....                                                | 13        |
| Related Council and other documents.....                         | 13        |
| <b>Monitoring, compliance, reporting and review.....</b>         | <b>13</b> |
| <b>Document control .....</b>                                    | <b>14</b> |
| <b>Version history.....</b>                                      | <b>14</b> |

# Introduction

## Purpose

1. The purpose of the Policy Governance Framework is to provide the governance framework for developing, approving, reviewing and maintaining Council's policy documents and for ensuring their consistent development, review, presentation and dissemination.

## Scope

2. This policy applies to the Council, all officers, contractors and consultants. All policy documents must comply with the Policy Governance Framework.

## Context

3. In adopting a framework for the governance of policy documents, Council demonstrates its commitment to the principles of good governance including accountability, public transparency and community engagement.
4. To support Council activities, it adopts many policy documents. These policies are called different titles (Strategies, Frameworks, Policies, Procedures etc.) and may or may not be required by legislation.
5. The strategic direction of Council is determined by the Councillors when they adopt policy documents at a council meeting that is convened under the provisions of the *Local Government Act 2020* and Council's Governance Rules.
6. Policy documents which guide the day-to-day operations of the Council are adopted by the Chief Executive Officer, by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT), by ELT members and Managers. Generally speaking,
  - 6.1. The CEO adopts policy documents including where they are required to do so by legislation and when required for operational reasons.
  - 6.2. Members of ELT and Managers approve operational policy documents which fall within their portfolio and are operationally focused.

## Definitions

7. For the purposes of this Framework and any related policy documents, the following definitions apply:

|                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Approving entity</b> | Means Council or the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), or ELT, or an ELT member or Manager.<br><br>A non-exhaustive list of the policy documents which are to be approved by whom is at Attachment A. |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Council</b>            | Means the Councillors making a resolution at a formal council meeting convened under the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i> and Council's Governance Rules.                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Charter</b>            | Means a statement of fundamental principles about an activity or issue.<br><br>An example is the Audit and Risk Committee Charter.                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Code</b>               | Means a statement of mandatory practices that sets out the minimum standards for a role or activity.<br><br>Examples are the Model Councillor Code of Conduct and the Staff Code of Conduct.                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Document Owner</b>     | Means the relevant Manager whose role and responsibilities includes the subject matter dealt with by the policy document but is not required to themselves be the subject matter expert in the activity or issue dealt with by the policy document.<br><br>The relevant Manager is to be assigned to each Policy document. |
| <b>Document Lead</b>      | Means a technical and subject matter expert who is appointed by the Document Owner to lead the policy development process and be the key contact for the Coordinator Governance.                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Form</b>               | Means a document that operationalises part of a policy document.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Framework</b>          | Means a document that includes statements of policy and procedure explaining how policy governance or risk is to be managed. The Framework may be an overarching policy document from which several subsidiary policy documents may be prepared.<br><br>An example is Council's Sport and Recreation Framework.            |
| <b>Guide or Guideline</b> | Means advisory and explanatory statements providing detail, context or recommendations for good practice, which supports policy statements and should be complied with unless there is a justifiable operational reason not to do so.                                                                                      |

|                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                 | An example is Working from Home Self Assessment Guide.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Major amendment</b>          | Means a significant change to the intent of the policy document. These amendments are usually in response to a review of the Policy or Procedure, but may occur due to legislative or regulatory changes, business changes or where a need to improve current practice is identified.                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Minor amendment</b>          | Means a change made to a policy document to correct or update a title, name, numbering, web link, or a reference (to law, another policy document, a delegation or other relevant document); correct document formatting, spelling, grammar or clarity of language which does not otherwise affect the document intent or content; or otherwise modify the policy document in a way that does not significantly change the intent or content of the existing version of the policy document. |
| <b>Legislative Framework</b>    | Primarily means the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i> (Vic) and associated regulations and as applicable means other legislation as it applies to Council.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Policy</b>                   | Means a statement of mandatory principles guiding the organisation's operations and significant decision making that explains why and what activities it conducts.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Policy document</b>          | Means the collective noun for all Codes, Charters, Frameworks, Policies, Procedures, Guidelines and Forms.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Policy Library</b>           | Means where all current and expired policy documents are located.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Policy Register</b>          | Means the register of current and archived policy documents recording the document's history, creation, publication, approval and ongoing review.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Policy document template</b> | Means the current template for policy documents.<br><br>Click here to access the templates.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Procedure</b> | <p>Means statements of the mandatory prescribed processes, practice and/or actions, which operationalise a statement of policy.</p> <p>An example are the fuel card procedures which have been developed as part of the Fuel Card Policy</p> |
| <b>Strategy</b>  | <p>Means a document which describes a high-level strategy that is subject specific, aligning to Council's vision, and is focused on Council related activity</p> <p>An example is Council's Open Space Strategy</p>                          |

## Policy Statement

### Policy document hierarchy

8. Policy documents operate within a hierarchy. Documents lower in the hierarchy must be consistent with documents higher in the hierarchy. To the extent that any document lower in the policy document hierarchy is inconsistent with a higher document, the higher document will prevail except where a policy document is more favourable than and does not contradict legislative requirements.
9. The policy document hierarchy is:
  - 9.1. Legislation (Acts, Regulations, Ministerial Guidelines)
  - 9.2. Council Plan
  - 9.3. Council Strategies/Frameworks
  - 9.4. Council Policies
  - 9.5. Council Procedures
  - 9.6. Council Guidelines
10. Supporting documentation to operationalise and explain policy documentation include forms, manuals and checklists.

### Policy development and review

11. Policy development and review is continuous. Existing policies are to be reviewed every four years unless an earlier trigger event for review occurs. The policy reviews will need to commence at least six months prior to the four years expiring. Governance policies under the *Local Government Act 2020* will be reviewed before the start of the election period prior to each general council election.

12. The triggers for a new policy document or for major amendments to an existing policy document, may include changes to the external operating environment, changes to government policy or legislation, new strategic or operational initiatives, the need for consistency, practice improvement and gaps or inconsistencies in existing policy documents.
13. Before developing a new policy document, consideration is to be given to whether the proposed policy document can be incorporated into an existing policy document, rather than creating a separate policy document.
14. Proposals for new policy documents and for major amendments to an existing policy are to be discussed with the approving entity as part of the development or review process
15. Based on information provided by the Document Owner, the Governance Coordinator will prepare a quarterly (or more frequently where required) report for ELT about proposed policy documents or documents due to be reviewed in the next quarter and a status report about policy reviews which are in progress.
16. The report will identify:
  - 16.1. The need being addressed by the policy document/s and how this relates to Council's strategic, operational or business priorities including any legislative or policy mandated requirements.
  - 16.2. Why this need cannot be met by incorporating the proposed policy documents into an existing policy document.
  - 16.3. The subject matter, technical and writing expertise required to create the new policy documents and whether this is available internally or externally.
  - 16.4. The consultation process through which the policy documents will be drafted.
  - 16.5. The anticipated operational impact.
  - 16.6. The document owner and likely approving entity.
17. Following consideration by ELT, a quarterly Policy Update report will be provided at a Councillor Briefing and the Audit and Risk Committee about the reviews of council policies. These reports will include an update to the *Forward Planner: Policy Document Reviews* which details the expected timing of policy document reviews, the reason for the reviews and Document Owner. For easy reference, the Forward Planner will be available on a dedicated section on the Councillor Portal and on the Staff Hub for Councillors and officers to access respectively.

## Document Owner and Document Lead

18. The Document Owner is responsible for oversight of the policy document review, adoption and implementation process.
19. The Document Lead will report to the Document Owner at mutually agreed intervals about the policy development and implementation process.

20. The Document Lead is responsible for the writing, consulting, developing, implementing and/or reviewing the policy document to ensure it meets Council's strategic and operational priorities.
21. The Document Owner and Document Lead will provide information to the Coordinator Governance to assist with the steps detailed below.
22. It is preferable that internal resources are used wherever possible to prepare the policy document.

### Consultation, drafting and assessment of operational impact

23. The Coordinator Governance will be a central contact for managing the policy governance framework.
24. The Coordinator Governance is to assist the Document Lead to create a new policy document or draft major amendments to an existing policy document including ensuing the project management plan:
  - 24.1. Ensures that policy documents are thoroughly tested in the development stage to ensure they can be implemented effectively with likely operational problems identified and resolved prior to the approving entity reviewing the policy document.
  - 24.2. Includes that the Document Lead consults with the community and other external stakeholders regarding the development and review of policies in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Policy. The Document Lead will be referred to the Coordinator Community Engagement to ensure the consultation process meets the policy requirements and that the timing of the engagement occurs at the appropriate time in the process, using the most appropriate tools and for the required period.
  - 24.3. Provides for a written log of all consultation undertaken, feedback received and drafting changes made throughout the policy development process.
  - 24.4. Includes the requirement to liaise with the Organisational Development and Communications Units early in the process to plan support for the implementation of the new policy document.
  - 24.5. Where applicable, document the process to consult employees and other stakeholders regarding the development and review of the policy and supporting documentation.

### Content and design principles

25. The content and design of all policy documents will adhere to the following principles.

A policy document:

  - 25.1. Is a principles-based document that explains why, what and how activities and issues are to be conducted at Council with operational content set out in procedures.

- 25.2. This includes statements of policy, which are usually in documents which are named Strategies, Frameworks and Policies; and operational content to implement policy is usually in documents named Procedures, Guidelines, Manuals and other supporting documentation.
- 25.3. Council's preferred approach is that a policy document is clearly distinguished from procedural matters. Policy content and procedural content for the same activity or issue are to be in separate documents. Both documents must be created, reviewed and updated at the same time unless it is recommended by the Document Owner this is it not reasonable to do so.
- 25.4. Is consistent with or more favourable than applicable Federal and State legislation, Government policy, Ministerial Directions and sector best practice frameworks.
- 25.5. Complies with the following overarching governance principles as provided for in the *Local Government Act 2020*:
- 25.5.1. Council decisions are to be made, and actions taken in accordance with the relevant law
  - 25.5.2. Priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community including future generations
  - 25.5.3. The economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks, is to be promoted
  - 25.5.4. the municipal community is to be engaged in strategic planning and strategic decision making
  - 25.5.5. innovation and continuous improvement is to be pursued
  - 25.5.6. collaboration with other Councils and Governments and statutory bodies is to be sought
  - 25.5.7. the ongoing financial viability of the Council is to be ensured
  - 25.5.8. regional, state and national plans and policies are to be taken into account in strategic planning and decision making
  - 25.5.9. the transparency of Council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured.
- 25.6. Is costed to ensure the ongoing financial viability of the Council is ensured.
- 25.7. Has been prepared in a way which meets the requirements of the Community Engagement Policy.
- 25.8. Supports and remains consistent with Council's changing legislative responsibilities, strategic and operational priorities and values.
- 25.9. Is reviewed every four years unless circumstances require that a policy document is reviewed earlier.
- 25.10. Is created in response to a clearly demonstrated legislative, strategic, operational or best practice need; and tailored to the nature, size and complexity of Council's operations.

- 25.11. Is relevant and transparent in its purpose and meaning.
- 25.12. Is developed regarding the regulatory and administrative consequences of implementation.
- 25.13. Is comprehensive but only to the extent required to achieve the purpose of the policy document.
- 26. Policy documents will be written:
  - 26.1. Using the approved template designed to support the Policy Governance Framework content and design principles.
  - 26.2. In an active voice (subject, verb and object such as the dog rushed the person rather than the person was rushed by the dog), using plain English language that is clear and unambiguous adopted as required for the intended audience and consistent with the Council Style Guide.
  - 26.3. Using a logical structure; with heading and sub-headings that clearly explain the policy document's content and number of each paragraph and sub paragraphs.
  - 26.4. Succinctly, being not longer than is necessary to clearly achieve the operational and strategic purpose of the policy document.
  - 26.5. In gender inclusive and culturally sensitive language.
  - 26.6. With consistent and accurate terminology.

## Authorising environment

- 27. The approving entities for policy documents are:

### **Policy documents approved by Council**

- 27.1. All policy documents that the Council is legislatively directed to endorse and/or which are determined to be strategic policy documents.
- 27.2. These policy documents must be endorsed at a meeting of the Council which is convened under the *Local Government Act 2020* and the Council's Governance Rules.
- 27.3. Policy documents considered by Council must first be approved by ELT, following a recommendation being made by the Document Owner.
- 27.4. The approval and adoption of the policy document by Council is to be minuted and made available to the public via the council website.
- 27.5. All policy documents approved by Council are posted on the council website, communicated on the Staff Hub and recorded in the Policy Library and Register by the Governance Coordinator.

### **Policy documents approved by the Chief Executive Officer**

- 27.6. The CEO will approve policy documents including those which they are required for them to approve by legislation and for operational reasons.

Examples of such policy documents required by legislation include the Workforce Plan and the Staff and Councillor Interaction Protocol.

### **Policy documents approved by the Executive Leadership Team**

- 27.7. Policy documents which are operational in nature and have an organisation wide application will be adopted by ELT.
- 27.8. The Document Owner will provide a report and recommendation to ELT prior to their adoption of an operational policy.
- 27.9. ELT decisions about policy documents will be minuted.
- 27.10. All policy documents approved by ELT will be communicated on the Staff Hub and recorded in the Policy Library and Register by the Governance Coordinator.

### **Procedures, guidelines and manuals approved by ELT members or Managers**

- 27.11. Procedures, guidelines and manuals associated with policy documents are to be approved by the relevant Document Owner and where required provided to ELT to support the adoption of a policy document.
  - 27.12. Procedures, guidelines and manuals which guide the operation of services and are not part of a policy document which is approved by the CEO or ELT are approved by the responsible Manager.
- 28. The Coordinator Governance will assist the Document Owner and Document Lead to identify the authorising entity and include the proposed authorising entity in the quarterly report to ELT in advance of commencing the drafting or review of a policy.
  - 29. The Manager Corporate Integrity can approve minor amendments of policy documents that would otherwise require approval by the Council or ELT.

### **Implementation and communication**

- 30. Once a policy document is approved the Document Owner (with the support of the Coordinator Governance and the Document Lead) will:
  - 30.1. as appropriate ensure the policy document is published in the Policy Library and the Council website and circulated to employees and stakeholders.
  - 30.2. as required in partnership with Organisational Development Unit provide employees and stakeholders with training and awareness to ensure they understand their responsibilities under a new or revised policy document.

### **Policy Register and Policy Library**

- 31. A central Policy Register and Policy Library will be maintained by the Coordinator Governance.
- 32. The Policy Register and Policy Library will be available via Governance Portal on the Staff Hub.

33. The information from the Register will be used to keep the externally facing policies updated on the Council website.

## Induction

34. Councillors, CEO and officers will receive an overview of all Council policy documents as part of their induction.

## Document control and version history

35. A document control panel will be included on all policy documents which details the policy name, responsible Directorate, the policy owner, policy type, date adopted by and review date.
36. Version number for all policy documents is:
  - 36.1. New and approved documents start at 001
  - 36.2. Increment of a digit to the left of the full stop, e.g. 001.1 indicates a minor amendment to the policy document.
  - 36.3. All draft policy documents start at 0.1 with revised drafts being renumbered as often as required until the draft is approved. Draft revisions to existing policy documents are numbered by adding a full stop and a further digit to the right of the last digit.

## Other relevant documents

### Legislation

*Local Government Act 2020*

*Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*

*Gender Equality Act 2020*

### Related Council and other documents

Community Engagement Policy

Writing style guide

## Monitoring, compliance, reporting and review

37. The Executive Leadership Team, Managers and Coordinators will receive reports about the application of this policy.
38. In addition to the quarterly reports about current policy reviews, the Audit and Risk Committee and Council will receive an annual report about compliance with this policy.
39. This policy will be reviewed in 2030 or in response to legislative changes, council direction or operational needs.

## Document control

|                                |                             |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Policy Name</b>             | Policy Governance Framework |
| <b>Responsible Directorate</b> | Corporate Services          |
| <b>Policy Owner Position</b>   | Manager Corporate Integrity |
| <b>Policy Type</b>             | Council Policy              |
| <b>Date Adopted</b>            | May 2026                    |
| <b>Review Date</b>             | May 2030                    |

## Version history

| <b>Version Number</b> | <b>Date</b> | <b>Authorised by</b> |
|-----------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| 001                   | 26 May 2026 | Council              |

## Attachment A

### Policy documents required to be adopted by Council

| Policy title                                                | Reference in LGA 2020                                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Audit and Risk Committee Charter                            | Section 54 of the Local Government Act 2020                                                                                        |
| Council Expenses Policy                                     | Section 41 of the Local Government Act 2020                                                                                        |
| Councillors Internal Resolution Procedure                   | Section 140 of the Local Government Act 2020<br>Regulation 12A of the Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020 |
| Chief Executive Officer Employment and Remuneration Policy  | Section 45 of the Local Government Act 2020                                                                                        |
| Community Engagement Policy                                 | Section 55 of the Local Government Act 2020                                                                                        |
| Public Transparency Policy                                  | Section 57 of the Local Government Act 2020                                                                                        |
| Election Period Policy (forms part of the Governance Rules) | Section 69 of the Local Government Act 2020                                                                                        |
| Complaints Policy                                           | Section 107 of the Local Government Act 2020                                                                                       |
| Procurement Policy                                          | Section 108 of the Local Government Act 2020                                                                                       |
| Councillor Gift Policy                                      | Section 138 of the Local Government Act 2020                                                                                       |
| Local Law                                                   | Part 3 Division 3 of the Local Government Act 2020                                                                                 |
|                                                             |                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>STRATEGIES</b>                                           |                                                                                                                                    |
| Community Vision                                            | Section 88 of the Local Government Act 2020                                                                                        |
| Council Plan (4-year)                                       | Section 90 of the Local Government Act 2020                                                                                        |
| Financial Plan (10-year)                                    | Section 91 of the Local Government Act 2020                                                                                        |
| Asset Plan (10-year)                                        | Section 92 of the Local Government Act 2020                                                                                        |
| Revenue and Rating Plan (4-year)                            | Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2020                                                                                        |
| Budget (4-year)                                             | Section 94 of the Local Government Act 2020                                                                                        |

## Policy documents and authorising environment

| Policy Type                         | Category                     | Rationale<br>Must meet at least one OR Must meet all the listed items*                                         | Approving entity                            | Consult                                                                                                 | Publish                              |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Council Policy Documents</b>     | Assets                       | Policy required to <b>meet a statutory requirement</b>                                                         | <b>Council</b>                              | <b>Executive Leadership Team (ELT) as appropriate</b><br><br>and<br><br><b>Community as appropriate</b> | <b>Public</b>                        |
|                                     | Community                    |                                                                                                                |                                             |                                                                                                         |                                      |
|                                     | Digital Information Services | Policy addresses a <b>direct community impact</b>                                                              |                                             |                                                                                                         |                                      |
|                                     | Elected Council              |                                                                                                                |                                             |                                                                                                         |                                      |
| <b>Operational Policy Documents</b> | Financial Governance         | Policy addressing <b>organisational issues and is of strategic significance or includes a community impact</b> | <b>Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or ELT</b> | <b>Impacted groups</b> including Councillors or community as appropriate                                | <b>Internal</b> (public as required) |
|                                     | People and Culture           |                                                                                                                |                                             |                                                                                                         |                                      |
|                                     | Service Delivery             |                                                                                                                |                                             |                                                                                                         |                                      |
|                                     |                              |                                                                                                                |                                             |                                                                                                         |                                      |
| <b>Guideline</b>                    | Assets                       | Provide <b>direction for internal management</b> of the day-to-day operations of Council.                      | <b>Document Owner</b>                       | <b>Impacted groups</b>                                                                                  | <b>Internal</b>                      |
|                                     | Digital Information Services | Policy which addresses an <b>organisation-wide need</b> .                                                      |                                             |                                                                                                         |                                      |
|                                     | Financial Governance         | Enables the organisation to <b>comply with statutory requirements</b> .                                        |                                             |                                                                                                         |                                      |
|                                     | People and Culture           | May address <b>community facing impacts</b> when related to service excellence                                 |                                             |                                                                                                         |                                      |

1. Above is an overview and not a definitive account of the policy settings.

2. Where it is unclear, ELT will provide clarity at all times about the authorising environment.