

Councillor Code of Conduct 2017

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Table of Contents

1	PurposeScope			
2				
3	Roles and Relationships			
	3.1	Role of Maribyrnong City Council	2	
	3.2	Councillor/organisation relationship	2	
	3.3	Role of a Councillor	2	
	3.4	Functions of the Mayor	3	
	3.5	Office and role of the Deputy Mayor	3	
	3.6	Functions of the Chief Executive Officer	3	
4	Con	Conduct		
	4.1	Principles of Conduct	4	
5	Dispute Resolution Procedure			
	5.1	Councillors commit to constructive working relationships	5	
	5.2	Three stage resolution procedure	6	
6	Commitment to Code		10	
7	Endorsement of Code		11	
8	Review of Code			
9	Additional Conduct Provisions			

1 Purpose

The purpose of local government is to provide a system under which Councils perform the functions and exercise the powers conferred by or under the *Local Government Act 1989* (the Act) and any other Act for the peace, order and good government of their municipal districts. Good governance is fundamental to a Council being able to fulfil its purpose. Good governance relies on good working relations between Councillors.

The Councillors for the City of Maribyrnong (2016 – 2020) are:

- Cr Sarah Carter River Ward
- Cr Simon Crawford Yarraville Ward
- Cr Catherine Cumming Stony Creek Ward
- Cr Gina Huynh River Ward
- Cr Cuc Lam Stony Creek Ward
- Cr Mia McGregor Yarraville Ward
- Cr Martin Zakharov Yarraville Ward.

2 Scope

This Code applies to Councillors of Maribyrnong City Council.

This Code:

- Sets out the standards of conduct expected of elected representatives.
- Endeavours to foster good working relations between Councillors to enable Councillors to work constructively together in the best interests of the local community.
- Mandates Councillor Conduct designed to build public confidence in the integrity of local government.

3 Roles and Relationships

3.1 Role of Maribyrnong City Council

The role of Maribyrnong City Council is to provide leadership and good governance for the City. This includes:

- Acting as a representative government by taking into account the diverse needs of the local community in decision making.
- Providing leadership by establishing strategic objectives and monitoring their achievement.
- Maintaining the viability of the Council by ensuring that resources are managed in a responsible and accountable manner.
- Advocating the interests of the local community to other communities and governments.
- Acting as a responsible partner in government by taking into account the needs of other communities.
- Fostering community cohesion and encouraging active participation in civic life.

3.2 Councillor/organisation relationship

Maribyrnong City Council consists of Councillors (the elected arm) and the organisation/staff (the operational arm).

Councillors appoint the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the organisation, determine Council policies, and set the strategic direction of the Council and the City. The organisation is responsible for the implementation of Council policy and decisions, service delivery and providing professional advice to Councillors.

Good governance is dependent on how well the relationship between Councillors and the organisation works, as well as an understanding and adherence to the roles and responsibilities of Councillors, the CEO and the organisation.

3.3 Role of a Councillor

A Councillor's role as defined by the Act is to:

- Participate in the decision making of the Council.
- Represent the local community in that decision making.
- Contribute to the strategic direction of the Council through the development and review of key strategic documents of the Council including the Council Plan.

In performing the role of Councillor he or she must:

- Consider the diversity of interests and needs of the local community.
- Observe the principles of good governance and act with integrity.
- Provide civic leadership in relation to the exercise of the various functions and responsibility of the Council under the Act and other Acts.
- Participate in the responsible allocation of the resources of Council through the annual budget.
- Facilitate effective communication between the Council and the community.

The role of a Councillor does not include the performance of any of the functions of the CEO as set out under section 94A of *the Act*.

3.4 Functions of the Mayor

The Mayor is the principal spokesperson and figurehead who is elected by the Council. A key role of the Mayor is to facilitate good relationships with Councillors, between Councillors and the CEO.

The functions of the Mayor include:

- Providing guidance to Councillors about what is expected of a Councillor including in relation to the role of a Councillor and the observation of the Councillor Conduct principles and this Code.
- Acting as the principal spokesperson for the Council.
- Supporting good working relations between Councillors.
- Carrying out the ceremonial duties of the office of Mayor.
- Chairing Council Meetings and enabling participation of Councillors in the decision making process.
- Having a close working relationship with the CEO, thereby creating and ensuring positive relationships with the organisation, leading to good planning, identification and resolution of issues.

3.5 Office and role of the Deputy Mayor

Council can, by resolution, create the office of a Deputy Mayor. In Council's Governance Local Law, the Councillor appointed to the office of Deputy Mayor chairs Council Meetings in the Mayor's absence and is to be given preference by Council when appointing a Councillor to act as Mayor, for any period that the Mayor is absent or unable to act.

3.6 Functions of the Chief Executive Officer

The CEO has a number of statutory responsibilities, and is accountable to the Councillors for delivering Council's policies, strategies and services. The CEO's function is to provide professional, relevant and timely information and support to the Council.

The Act identifies the CEO as being responsible for:

- Establishing and maintaining an appropriate organisational structure.
- Ensuring that the decisions of the Council are implemented without undue delay.
- Day to day management of the Council's operations in accordance with the Council Plan.
- Developing, adopting and disseminating a code of conduct for Council staff.
- Providing timely advice to the Council.
- Ensuring that the Council receives timely and reliable advice about its legal obligations under the Act and any other Act.
- Supporting the Mayor in the performance of the Mayor's role as Mayor.
- Carrying out the Council's responsibilities as a deemed employer with respect to Councillors as deemed workers which arise under or with respect to the Accident Compensation Act 1985 and the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013.
- Performing any other function or duty of the CEO specified in the Act or any other Act.

The CEO is also responsible under *the Act* for developing, implementing and enforcing policies and protocols to manage the interactions between Councillors and staff.

In addition, the role includes:

- Developing and monitoring operational plans and strategies.
- Maintaining the financial viability of the Council compliance with legislative frameworks.
- Promoting a positive organisational culture.
- Fostering positive relationships with various stakeholders, including government agencies and peak bodies.
- Promoting a positive public image of the Council.

4 Conduct

The Act sets out the primary principle and general Councillor Conduct principles which govern the behaviour expected of Councillors.

4.1 Principles of Conduct

Primary Principle of Councillor Conduct

In performing the role of Councillor, he or she must:

- Act with integrity.
- Impartially exercise his or her responsibilities in the interests of the local community.
- Not improperly seek to confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person.

General Councillor Conduct Principles

In performing the role of a Councillor, he or she must:

- Avoid conflicts between his or her public duties as a Councillor and his or her personal interests and obligations.
- Act honestly and avoid statements (whether oral or in writing) or actions that will or are likely to mislead or deceive a person.
- Treat all persons with respect and have due regard to the opinions, beliefs, rights and responsibilities of other Councillors, council officers and other persons.
- Exercise reasonable care and diligence and submit himself or herself to the lawful scrutiny that is appropriate to his or her office.
- Endeavour to ensure that public resources are used prudently and solely in the public interest.
- Act lawfully and in accordance with the trust placed in him or her as an elected representative.
- Support and promote these principles by leadership and example and act in a way that secures and preserves public confidence in the office of Councillor.

5 Dispute Resolution Procedure

5.1 Councillors commit to constructive working relationships

Constructive relationships and goodwill are the foundations of good governance, therefore the guiding principle of this procedure is that every Councillor has a right to be heard and treated respectfully and is committed to maintaining a positive working relationship with fellow Councillors at all times.

Councillors are committed to a 'no surprises' approach, sharing information and working together respectfully to achieve the best outcomes for the community.

Councillors agree that they have a responsibility to demonstrate good governance as a team, we must individually behave well. Councillors acknowledge that from time to time, disagreements will arise, however when this occurs, they are committed to:

- Doing whatever is necessary to repair and maintain good working relationships with each other.
- Demonstrating strong and inspired leadership.
- Supporting each other.
- Respecting the skills and abilities of all of Council members.
- Be forward looking and strategic in their thinking and planning.

Councillors commit to the following actions to promote teamwork and procedural fairness:

- Promoting an environment that is conducive to Councillors speaking directly and respectfully with each other, raising concerns with each other and, if needed, resolving disputes directly with one another.
- Agreeing to disagree and accepting that different views on a policy or operational matter does not, of itself, constitute a dispute.
- Respecting majority decisions, regardless of a Councillor's view.
- Supporting a consensus position, because this is in the best interests of the community.
- Respecting the opinions and view of all Councillors equally and fairly, including where differences of opinion occur.

Councillors agree not to misuse the dispute resolution procedure set out below, for political influence or gain. Councillors acknowledge that where a pattern of unsubstantiated or vexatious complaints appears, the Mayor may refuse to acknowledge the alleged dispute. Finally, once a dispute has progressed through the resolution procedure, it cannot be raised for resolution under this process again.

Councillors acknowledge that direct, informal resolution is an effective way to resolve conflict. Councillors recognising that they have been elected to represent the best interests of the community, acknowledge their obligation to make every effort to resolve differences and internal disputes directly with one another, in a courteous and respectful manner.

5.2 Three stage resolution procedure

Councillors agree to follow a three stage resolution procedure. For the purposes of this procedure, a dispute is an interpersonal difference or conflict, or an alleged contravention of this Code. If the Councillors have been unable to resolve through 'Stage 1 - Direct Resolution' the process will move to the next stage.

However, the procedure under Stages 2 and 3 cannot be used to resolve interpersonal differences or conflict, or differences in policy or decision making, which are appropriately resolved through debate and voting in Council and committee meetings.

Stage 1 - Direct Resolution

Direct resolution involves a Councillor(s) raising concerns directly with the Councillor(s) with whom they have a dispute by:

- Approaching them directly.
- Telling them the behaviour they consider to be unacceptable.
- Explaining the impact of the behaviour.
- Asking them to cease the behaviour.

Where the above process has not achieved resolution, parties must seek assistance from the Mayor. It is not the Mayor's responsibility to resolve the dispute, however he or she will facilitate a discussion between the parties and make every other effort to assist the parties to achieve a positive and constructive outcome.

Stage 2 – External Mediation

Where a Councillor wishes to lodge a dispute concerning an alleged contravention of this Code, he or she must submit the dispute in writing, to the Mayor. Where one of the parties is the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor will act in the role of the Mayor for the purposes of Stage 2 of the process only.

The Councillor must include the following elements in his or her written notification of a dispute:

- Specify the name of the Councillor alleged to have contravened the Code.
- Specify the provision(s) of the Code that is alleged to have been contravened.
- Include evidence in support of the allegation.
- Name the Councillor appointed to be their representative where the application is made by a group of Councillors.
- Be signed and dated by the applicant or the applicant's representative;
- The measures he or she has taken to complete steps above to resolve the dispute directly with the other Councillor(s).
- In what manner the dispute is unduly affecting the operation of the Council.
- The outcome he or she is seeking.

The Mayor will consider whether or not a genuine dispute exists. The Mayor will, if following an initial meeting with each party to the dispute, refer the issue to the Principal Conduct Officer (PCO).

The PCO is to ascertain (in writing) whether or not the other party is prepared to attend an "external mediation". If the other party declines to participate in an external mediation, he or she is to provide their reasons for doing so in writing to the PCO.

When the other party declines to participate in an external mediation, this does not constitute a contravention of this Code.

If the other party agrees to participate in an external mediation, the PCO is to advise the applicant, the Mayor and CEO.

The PCO is to engage the services of an external mediator to conduct the mediation at the earliest practicable opportunity.

The mediator is to document any agreement reached during the mediation. Copies of the agreement are to be provided to both parties. Where one party does not comply with the agreement, the other party has recourse to Stage 3 of the dispute resolution procedure.

If the parties cannot resolve the dispute during the mediation, the applicant has recourse to Stage 3 of the dispute resolution procedure.

Stage 3 – Arbiter

At this part of the process a Councillor or a group of Councillors is required to make an application alleging that a Councillor has contravened this Code. The application must include the same information as detailed in the written notification of a dispute as required under Stage 2. The information supplied must be updated if Stage 2 has occurred.

On receiving a written application for the dispute resolution procedure to proceed to the appointment of an arbiter, the PCO will:

- Advise the Mayor and CEO of the application without undue delay.
- Provide a copy of the application to the Councillor who is the subject of the allegation at the earliest practical opportunity but not later than two working days from receipt of the application.
- Identify an arbiter to hear the application.
- Obtain from the arbiter written advice that they have no conflict of interest in relation to the Councillors involved.
- Notify the parties of the name of the proposed arbiter and provide them with the opportunity (2 working days) to object to the person proposed to be the arbiter.
- Consider the grounds of any objection and either appoint the proposed arbiter or identify another arbiter and give the parties a continuing opportunity to object until an arbiter is appointed.
- Provide a copy of the application to the appointed arbiter as soon as practicable.
- After consultation with the arbiter, advise the applicant and the respondent of the time and place for the hearing.
- Attend the hearing(s) and assist the arbiter in the administration of the process.

An applicant may withdraw an application for a dispute resolution procedure prior to a determination being made by the arbiter. Once an application has been withdrawn, the same or a similar application relating to the same instance in relation to the respondent Councillor cannot be resubmitted by the applicant.

In identifying an arbiter to hear the application, the PCO must select an arbiter who is suitably independent and able to carry out the role of arbiter fairly.

The role of the arbiter is to:

- Consider applications alleging a contravention of this Code by a Councillor.
- Make findings in relation to any application alleging a contravention of this Code which the arbiter must give to the Council, the applicant and the respondent, together with a written statement of reasons supporting the findings.
- Recommend an appropriate sanction or sanctions where the arbiter has found that a Councillor has contravened this Code.

In considering an application alleging a contravention of this Code, an arbiter will:

- In consultation with the PCO, fix a time and place to hear the application.
- Authorise the PCO to formally notify the applicant and the respondent of the time and place of the hearing.
- Hold as many meetings, including directions hearings, as he or she considers necessary to properly consider the application.
- Have discretion to conduct the hearings as he or she deems fit while ensuring that the hearings are conducted with as little formality and technicality as due and proper consideration of the application allows.
- Ensure that the parties to and affected by an application are given an opportunity to be heard by the arbiter.
- Consider an application by a respondent to have legal representation at the hearing to ensure that the hearing is conducted fairly and may, in his or her absolute discretion, grant the application or deny the application.
- Ensure that the rules of natural justice are observed and applied in the hearing of the application.
- Ensure that the hearings are closed to the public.

Where an application to have legal representation is granted by an arbiter, the costs of the respondent's legal representation are to be borne by the respondent in their entirety.

An arbiter:

- May find that a Councillor who is a respondent to a dispute resolution procedure application has not contravened this Code.
- May find that a Councillor who is a respondent to a dispute resolution procedure has contravened this Code.
- Will suspend consideration of a dispute resolution procedure during the election period for a general election.

A copy of the arbiter's findings, statement of reasons and any recommended sanctions is to be submitted to the next Ordinary Meeting of the Council for its consideration. If an arbiter has found that a contravention of the Code has occurred, the Council may, after considering the arbiter's findings, statement of reasons and recommendation on sanctions, give any or all of the following written directions to the Councillor:

- Direct the Councillor to make an apology in a form or manner specified by the Council.
- Direct the Councillor to not attend up to, but not exceeding, 2 meetings of the Council (in respect of the next scheduled meetings of the Council).
- Direct that, for a period of up to, but not exceeding, 2 months on a date specified by the Council the Councillor:
 - Be removed from any position where the Councillor represents the Council.
 - To not chair or attend any advisory committee or special committee meeting or an assembly of Councillors or any other meeting specified in the direction.

A Councillor must participate in Stage 3 of the dispute resolution procedure. The Act provides that misconduct by a Councillor means any of the following:

- failure by a Councillor to comply with the Council's dispute resolution procedure; or
- failure by a Councillor to comply with a written direction given by the Council in response to an arbiter's determination that the Code has been contravened; or
- repeated contravention of any of the Councillor conduct principles.

Allegations of misconduct are heard on application by a Councillor Conduct Panel.

An application cannot be made for a dispute resolution procedure during the election period for a general election. Any dispute resolution procedure that is in progress is to be suspended during the election period for a general election.

If the respondent to an application for a dispute resolution procedure is not returned to office as a Councillor in the election, the application lapses. If the respondent is returned to office in the election, the application may resume if:

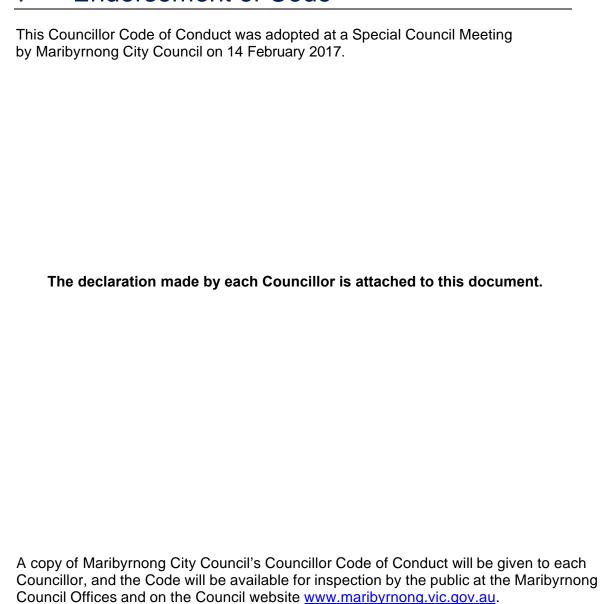
- The application was made by the Council and the Council so resolves.
- The application was made by a group of Councillors and any one of those Councillors who has been returned to office wishes to proceed with the application.
- The applicant (individual Councillor) is returned to office and wishes to proceed with the application.

6 Commitment to the Code

As Councillors of the Maribyrnong City Council, we commit to abiding by this Code, including that we will comply with:

- The primary principle of Councillor conduct;
- The general Councillor conduct principles;
- Any policy or protocol introduced by the CEO to manage the interactions between Councillors and staff; and
- The dispute resolution procedure.

7 Endorsement of Code



8 Review of Code

This Code will be reviewed within four months of a municipal general election and when Council determines appropriate.

9 Additional Conduct Provisions

Further to the above statutory requirements, Councillors will obey the law, relevant regulations and policies and procedures including the following:

Required By	Provision		
Equal Opportunity Act 2010	In accordance with Section 73, a Councillor of a municipal council must not, in the performance of his or her public functions, discriminate against:		
	a) another Councillor of that Council; or		
	 b) a member of a committee of that Council who is not a councillor of that council. Section 102 specifically provides that a 		
	Councillor must not sexually harass another Councillor.		
Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006	As a public authority under this Act Council has imposed upon it an obligation to act in a way that is compatible with human rights.		
Local Government Act 1989	 In accordance with section 76D, a Councillor must not misuse his/her position to: Gain or attempt to gain, directly or indirectly, an advantage for themselves or for any other person. Cause, or attempt to cause, detriment to the Council or another person. The circumstances involving the misuse of a position by a person who is or has been a Councillor or member of a special committee include: Making improper use of information acquired as a result of the position he/she holds. Disclosing information that is confidential information. Directing or improperly influencing, or seeking to direct or improperly influence, a member of Council staff. Exercising or perform, a power, duty or function that he or she is not authorised to exercise or perform. Using public funds or resources in a manner that is improper or unauthorised. Failing to disclose a conflict of interest as required by the Act. 		

Required By	Provision
Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004	Have regard to the principles of health and safety. Councillors have the status of employees under the <i>Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004</i> and should ensure that they contribute to a healthy and safe workplace. Councillors should be particularly mindful of their interaction with Council Officers.
Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014	Recognise the requirements regarding access, use and release of personal information which also applies to Councillors as individuals.
Governance Local Law 2011	Regulates the use of the common seal, provides for the procedure to elect the Mayor and Deputy Mayor and incorporates by reference Council's Meeting Procedure.
Maribyrnong City Council Meeting Procedure (incorporated by reference in the Governance Local Law 2011)	Council's Meeting Procedure which is incorporated by reference in the Governance Local Law 2011, prescribes the way Council and Special Committees meetings are conducted to ensure orderly and efficient meetings.
Maribyrnong City Council Councillor Support and Expenses Policy 2017	This Policy covers Maribyrnong City Council's civic support for Councillors, and the parameters and procedures for reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses incurred.
Maribyrnong City Council Election Period Policy 2016	This policy prohibits the use of Council resources being utilised for electioneering purposes and binds Councillors to the Councillor Code of Conduct during the election period to avoid breaches of the Code.
Maribyrnong City Council Social Media Policy February 2011	This policy provides guidance to Councillors for the appropriate use of social media platforms and to ensure compliance with confidentiality, governance, legal, privacy and regulatory parameters.
Maribyrnong City Council Councillor and Staff Interaction Protocol 2016	How interaction between Councillors and Officers is to occur.



Local Government Act 1989 - S76(C)

I, Megan Bridger-Darling, hereby declare that I have read Councillor Code of Conduct for Maribyrnong City Council as adopted at the Special Meeting of Council held on Tuesday, 14 February 2017, and declare that I will abide by this Code.

Cr Megan Bridger-Darling

21 January 2019

Witness:

Stephen Wall

Chief Executive Officer

21 January 2019



Local Government Act 1989 - S76(C)

I, Sarah Carter, hereby declare that I have read the Councillor Code of Conduct for Maribyrnong City Council as adopted at the Special Meeting of Council held on Tuesday, 14 February 2017, and declare that I will abide by this Code.

Councillor Sarah Carter 14 February 2017

Witness:

Stephen Wall

Chief Executive Officer



Local Government Act 1989 - S76(C)

I, **Simon Crawford**, hereby declare that I have read the Councillor Code of Conduct for Maribyrnong City Council as adopted at the Special Meeting of Council held on Tuesday, 14 February 2017, and declare that I will abide by this Code.

Councillor Simon Crawford

14 February 2017

Witness:

Stephen Wall

Chief Executive Officer



Local Government Act 1989 – S76(C)

I, **Gina Huynh**, hereby declare that I have read the Councillor Code of Conduct for Maribyrnong City Council as adopted at the Special Meeting of Council held on Tuesday, 14 February 2017, and declare that I will abide by this Code.

Councillor Gina Huynh

20 /02 2017

Witness:

Stephen Wall

Chief Executive Officer

20 / 2 / 2017



Local Government Act 1989 - S76(C)

I, **Cuc Lam**, hereby declare that I have read the Councillor Code of Conduct for Maribyrnong City Council as adopted at the Special Meeting of Council held on Tuesday, 14 February 2017, and declare that I will abide by this Code.

Councillor Cuc Lam 14 February 2017

Witness:

Stephen Wall

Chief Executive Officer



Local Government Act 1989 – S76(C)

I, Mia McGregor, hereby declare that I have read the Councillor Code of Conduct for Maribyrnong City Council as adopted at the Special Meeting of Council held on Tuesday, 14 February 2017, and declare that I will abide by this Code.

Councillor Mia McGregor 14 February 2017

Witness:

Stephen Wall

Chief Executive Officer



Local Government Act 1989 – S76(C)

I, Martin Zakharov, hereby declare that I have read the Councillor Code of Conduct for Maribyrnong City Council as adopted at the Special Meeting of Council held on Tuesday, 14 February 2017, and declare that I will abide by this Code.

Councillor Martin Zakharov

14 February 2017

Witness:

Stephen Wall

Chief Executive Officer