



GLEN INNES SEVERN COUNCIL Communication Policy

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 5.07/20 10.02/17 7.07/14 8.03/11 10.07/08 45.06/06	MEETING: 23 July 2020 23 February 2017 24 July 2014 24 March 2011 24 July 2008 29 June 2006
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PREAMBLE

Clear, transparent and effective communication, with the residents of **Glen Innes Severn Local Government Area (LGA)** and between Glen Innes Severn Council staff, is intrinsic to effective policy and service development. One of Glen Innes Severn Council's Strategic Priorities is *Continue to improve our **open communication** with the community*. Having an up-to-dated Communication Policy is necessary in order to achieve ongoing improvements in open communication, both externally and internally.

AIMS

The aims of the Communication Policy are:

- To highlight Council's best practice principles in order to achieve effective communication;
- To improve staff satisfaction, retention, motivation, productivity, loyalty and relationships by enhancing internal communication;
- To ensure the public, Councillors and staff are informed of Glen Innes Severn Council's decisions, policies, programs, events and issues in a timely and accurate manner;
- To ensure Council is portrayed positively, so that the public perception of the organisation is enhanced;
- To increase community support for the services, activities and initiatives of Council;
- To increase community knowledge, so that customers are aware of the services which Council provides;
- To continue to build a consistent, positive relationship with the local media which maximises opportunities for positive publicity and minimises adverse publicity.

Reference Number:	Version Number: 6 Date of Effect: 23/07/2020	Review Date: July 2023	Responsible Officer: MCO
Related Documents: Media Policy; Correspondence Guidelines; Report Writing Guidelines; Computer Usage Policy; GISC Code of Conduct for Council Staff; Management of Mail Policy; Customer Service Standards; Grievance Resolution Policy and Procedures; Community Engagement Strategy; Corporate Advertising Guidelines; Community Committees of Council Manual; Human Resources Policy Statement Register; Social Media Policy; Intranet Guidelines; <i>Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009</i> .			

1. General Communication Standards:

- All staff members are expected to comply with relevant guidelines and policies when preparing all written correspondence, including the Correspondence Guidelines, Computer Usage Policy, and Management of Mail Policy;
- Non-bureaucratic communication is expected, including using a “Plain English” style to write all documents;
- Staff are expected to achieve excellence in customer service in accordance with the Glen Innes Severn Council Customer Service Standards;
- Councillors will be offered appropriate and adequate information and training in order for them to aptly assist in communicating Council messages and decisions to the public;
- All Councillors and staff members, who attend meetings, seminars and conferences, are expected to act in a professional manner;
- Speeches given by Councillors or Senior Staff are to be thoroughly researched and well written.

2. External Communication:

- Council shall prepare media releases for distribution according to the Media Policy;
- Council shall produce a resident newsletter for distribution throughout the LGA on a quarterly basis or more frequently as may be required;
- Council shall distribute copies of its resident newsletter to the General Managers and Mayors of neighbouring Councils to raise a positive awareness of Glen Innes Severn Council and its activities;
- Council shall use consultative committees, Community Satisfaction Surveys and the Community Engagement Strategy to gauge the community’s needs and opinions on specific issues;
- Council shall develop protocols and procedures relating to the content of Council’s website and social media;
- Council shall review its websites to ensure that information is comprehensive, regularly up-dated and accessible;
- Council shall maintain an up-to-date copy of the Glen Innes Severn Council’s Policy register on the Council website, in accordance with the requirements of the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*;
- Council shall maintain an Events Calendar on the Glen Innes Highlands website, which lists major community events, as well as events associated with Council;

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- Council shall take appropriate action in response to complaints from the public, in accordance with the Glen Innes Severn Council's Complaints Policy and the Code of Conduct for Council Staff.

3. Internal Communication:

- Online induction sessions are to be conducted for all new staff to inform them about relevant policies and procedures;
- Council shall continue to use the existing Staff Consultative Committee to consult with staff;
- Council shall use the existing Work Health and Safety (WHS) Consultative Group to consult with staff regarding WHS issues;
- All managers, supervisors and team leaders are expected to keep staff well informed about issues affecting them e.g. training, new policies, procedures or legislation relevant to their roles;
- All managers, supervisors and team leaders are expected to use appropriate communication skills and appropriate respect when allocating tasks to other employees e.g. engaging in face-to-face communication, emails and over the telephone, giving clear instructions, encouraging others to ask clarifying questions, listening to staff members' comments, providing a reasonable time frame for completion of tasks, giving constructive feedback and praise;
- Employees are encouraged to share their ideas and suggestions for improvement with section managers and directors;
- Appropriate action is taken to resolve workplace conflict and misunderstandings in a timely fashion, in line with Council's Grievance Resolution Policy;
- Regular staff meetings within all work teams are held at least once a month with the exception of January;
- Council shall produce an internal Human Resources newsletter bimonthly or more frequently as may be required;
- Important information relevant to all staff is to be distributed via pay slip attachments and via the bi-monthly Human Resources staff newsletter;
- Front counter staff are expected to relay messages and relevant information to the relevant staff member/s on the same day that they are received;
- MANEX meetings are used to ensure sensitive policy issues are well researched and acted on in a timely fashion;
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- All relevant staff members are expected to use the organisation's Report Writing Guidelines when preparing reports to Council;
- Council shall provide training in report writing and/or policy writing for new staff members who are required to write these documents, and for staff members who are experiencing difficulty writing reports/policies in the required format;
- All new / reviewed policies are to include a section on communication / implementation;
- Copies of the minutes of Ordinary Council Meetings are placed on Council's website and registered into Council's recordkeeping system (ECM);
- A Minutes Summary providing details of all policies adopted and other information of interest to staff members will be emailed to all staff, media outlets, and Section 355 Committees of Council after each meeting;
- An up-to-date copy of the Glen Innes Severn Council's Policy Register is maintained on the intranet and on Council website;
- Staff members without computer access are informed that they can obtain a hard copy of the policy register from their supervisor;
- Staff implement and adhere to the Guidelines relating to the content of the Intranet.

4. Communication between Staff and Councillors:

- Communication between staff and Councillors should normally be channeled through MANEX members, in accordance with Council's Human Resources Policy Statement Register- Section HR 8.08;
- The Executive Assistant and the Media and Communications Officer (MCO) may communicate directly with the Mayor on appropriate issues;
- In accordance with Council's Code of Conduct for Council Staff, staff members are not permitted to discuss individual staffing issues or operational matters with Councillors, unless the Councillor is acting in a private or business capacity. For example, it is permissible for Councillors to contact staff about their personal rates, registration of their pets, or private Development Applications. In line with the Code of Conduct, Councillors acting in a private capacity must receive exactly the same level of service as any other resident. Councillors may also directly contact relevant project staff about specified projects when they are involved as a contractor in a paid or voluntary capacity on a particular project under Council's Procurement Policy.

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5. Media:

- Staff must refer to, and abide by, Council’s Media Policy for all matters relating to media statements, releases, or enquiries.

6. Use of Communication Devices:

- Council recognises that it is not practical or reasonable to expect staff to maintain an absolute division between their professional and personal lives, so there will be occasions when it is necessary for staff members to contact family members or other personal associates to attend to emergencies or other pressing personal issues during work hours;
- To facilitate this and to encourage a flexible and family friendly work environment, Council will permit staff members to have limited use of their personal mobile phones/tablets or Council owned communication devices (telephones, mobile phones, tablets and other computing equipment) during work hours;
- Use of communication devices for purposes other than emergencies or essential personal issues ideally should be confined to an employee’s own personal time, i.e. before or after work or during meal breaks.

COMMUNICATION / IMPLEMENTATION

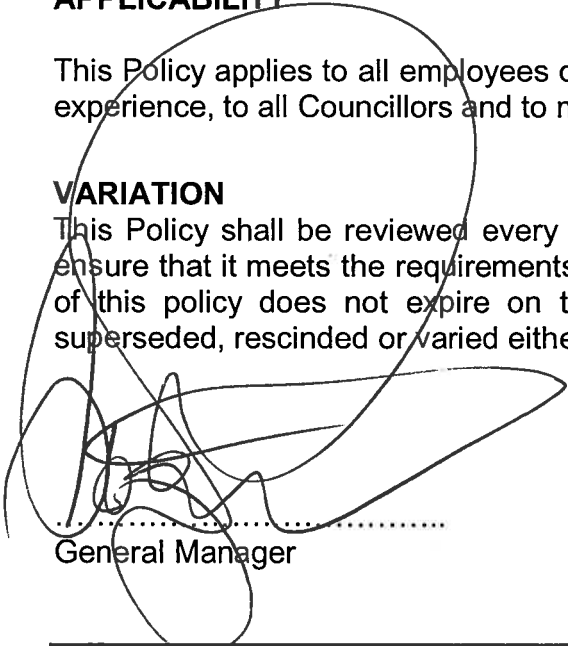
Following the Policy’s adoption, the Media and Communications Officer will forward a copy of the Policy to all Managers for them to discuss at team meetings.

APPLICABILITY

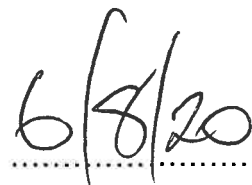
This Policy applies to all employees of Council, including volunteers and people on work experience, to all Councillors and to members of Community Committees of Council.

VARIATION

This Policy shall be reviewed every three (3) years, or earlier if deemed necessary to ensure that it meets the requirements of legislation and the needs of Council. The term of this policy does not expire on the review date, but shall continue in force until superseded, rescinded or varied either by legislation or a new resolution of Council.



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General Manager



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Date

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