

Circular Details	Circular No 18-45 / 18 December 2018 / A621294
Previous Circular	18-35 <i>The new Model Code of Meeting Practice for Local Councils</i>
Who should read this	Mayors / Councillors / General Managers / Joint Organisation Executive Officers / Council governance staff
Contact	Council Governance Team – (02) 4428 4100 / olg@olg.nsw.gov.au
Action required	Council to Implement

Commencement of the new Model Code of Meeting Practice for Local Councils in NSW

What's new or changing

- Amendments made to the *Local Government Act 1993* (LGA) in August 2016 by the *Local Government Amendment (Governance and Planning) Act 2016* (the Phase 1 amendments) provide for a model code of meeting practice (Model Meeting Code) to be prescribed by the Regulation.
- Following an extensive consultation process, a Model Meeting Code has been prescribed under the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2005* (the Regulation) and the existing meetings provisions of the Regulation have been repealed. The new Model Meeting Code is available on OLG's website.
- The Model Meeting Code has two elements:
 - It contains mandatory provisions (**indicated in black font**) that reflect the existing meetings provisions of the Act and update and enhance the meetings provisions previously prescribed under the Regulation to reflect contemporary meetings practice by councils.
 - It contains non-mandatory provisions (**indicated in red font**) that cover areas of meetings practice that are common to most councils but where there may be a need for some variation in practice between councils based on local circumstances. The non-mandatory provisions also operate to set a benchmark based on what OLG sees as being best practice for the relevant area of practice.
- The Model Meeting Code also applies to meetings of the boards of joint organisations and county councils. The provisions that are specific to meetings of boards of joint organisations are **indicated in blue font**. References to councils below also include references to joint organisations and county council unless otherwise specified.

What this will mean for your council

- Councils are required to adopt a code of meeting practice that incorporates the mandatory provisions of the Model Meeting Code prescribed by the Regulation. A council's adopted meeting code must not contain provisions that are inconsistent with the mandatory provisions.
- A council's adopted meeting code may also incorporate the non-mandatory provisions of the Model Meeting Code and any other supplementary provisions adopted by the council.
- Councils and committees of councils of which all the members are councillors must conduct their meetings in accordance with the code of meeting practice adopted by the council.

Key points

- Under the transitional provisions of the LGA, councils must adopt a code of meeting practice that incorporates the mandatory provisions of the Model Meeting Code no later than 12 months after the next ordinary elections.
- Until a council adopts a new code of meeting practice, its existing code of meeting practice will remain in force up until six months from the date on which the new Model Meeting Code was prescribed, (**14 December 2018 – 14 June 2019**). If a council fails to adopt a new code of meeting practice within this period, under transitional provisions contained in the Regulation and the LGA, any provision of the council's adopted meeting code that is inconsistent with a mandatory provision of the Model Meeting Code prescribed under the Regulation will automatically cease to have any effect to the extent that it is inconsistent with the mandatory provision of the Model Meeting Code.
- Irrespective of whether councils have adopted a code of meeting practice based on the Model Meeting Code, all councils (but not joint organisations) will be required to webcast meetings of the council and committees of which all members are councillors from **14 December 2019**. The webcasting requirement may be met simply by posting an audio or video recording of the meeting on the council's website.
- Before adopting a new code of meeting practice, under section 361 of the LGA, councils are still required to exhibit a draft of the code of meeting practice for at least 28 days and provide members of the community at least 42 days in which to comment on the draft code. This requirement does not apply to joint organisations.
- In adopting the Model Meeting Code, joint organisations should adapt it to substitute the terms "board" for "council", "chairperson" for "mayor", "voting representative" for "councillor" and "executive officer" for "general manager".
- In adopting the Model Meeting Code, county councils should adapt it to substitute the term "chairperson" for "mayor" and "member" for "councillor".

Where to go for further information

- Further information is provided in the FAQ attached to this circular.
- The new Model Meeting Code is available on OLG's website at www.olg.nsw.gov.au.
- OLG will be providing further guidance and assistance to councils to support implementation of the new Model Meeting Code during the six month transitional timeframe.
- For more information, contact the Council Governance Team by telephone on 02 4428 4100 or by email at olg@olg.nsw.gov.au.



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