

Management report to Council

Agenda item 6.2

Review of Councillor Protocol

Council

Presenter: Kirsty Pearce, Acting Director Governance

28 February 2023

Purpose and background

1. The purpose of this report is to provide for an update to the Councillor Protocol (Protocol).
2. The Protocol provides an understanding around individual and collective responsibilities. It is structured into three sections and provides guidance on roles and responsibilities, informed decision-making and city representation roles.
3. A review of the Protocol was last undertaken in December 2020 at the commencement of the current Council term.

Key issues

4. As part of a review program of key documents guiding the roles, responsibilities and support provided to Councillors, a review of the 2020 Protocol has been undertaken.
5. Following consideration by Councillors, in consultation with Council officers, a revised draft Protocol is proposed and a copy is included as Attachment 2. Any text proposed to be removed or replaced is indicated by strike through.
6. The key areas covered as part of the latest update provide for the following:
 - 6.1. Greater clarity in respect of the operation of media protocol.
 - 6.2. Improved access to communication with key decision makers from other levels of government.
 - 6.3. Regular reporting on resolutions of the Future Melbourne Committee and Council.
 - 6.4. Updated guidance on the provision of information and advice by management.
 - 6.5. Other general updates to reflect change in practice.

Recommendation from management

7. That Council:
 - 7.1. Adopts the draft Councillor Protocol included as Attachment 2 to this report.
 - 7.2. Authorises the Acting Director Governance to make any further minor editorial changes to the Protocol prior to the publication.

Attachments:

1. Supporting Attachment (Page 2 of 16)
2. Draft Councillor Protocol (Page 3 of 16)

Supporting Attachment

Legal

1. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Finance

2. There are not financial implications arising from this report.

Conflict of interest

3. No member of Council staff, or other person engaged under a contract, involved in advising on or preparing this report has declared a material or general conflict of interest in relation to the matter of the report

Health and Safety

4. In developing this proposal, no Occupational Health and Safety issues or opportunities have been identified.

Stakeholder consultation

5. No external consultation was undertaken in developing this proposal. The Protocol provides for a set of understandings around roles, responsibilities and working arrangements.

Relation to Council policy

6. The current review seeks to update the Protocol last adopted by Council in December 2020. It is of one of a range of key documents guiding the roles, responsibilities and support provided to Councillors which are reviewed at regular intervals.

Environmental sustainability

7. There is no significant sustainability impact arising from the recommendation in this report.



Councillor Protocol

As adopted by Council on [28 February 2023](#) ~~15 December 2020~~

CONTENTS

1. PURPOSE	<u>33</u>
2. SCOPE	<u>33</u>
3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	<u>33</u>
3.1. Lord Mayor	<u>33</u>
3.2. Deputy Lord Mayor	<u>33</u>
3.3. Councillors	<u>33</u>
3.3.1. General	<u>33</u>
3.3.2. Councillor - Representing the Lord Mayor	<u>44</u>
3.3.3. Councillor - Acting Chair	<u>44</u>
3.4. Portfolio Lead	<u>44</u>
3.4.1. Overview	<u>44</u>
3.4.2. Committee Business	<u>44</u>
3.4.3. City Representation as Portfolio Lead	<u>44</u>
4. INFORMED DECISION MAKING	<u>55</u>
4.1. Briefings to Councillors	<u>55</u>
4.1.1. Provision of information and advice by management	<u>55</u>
4.1.2. Councillor Forum	<u>66</u>
4.1.3. Leadership Team Briefings	<u>66</u>
4.1.4. Individual Councillor Briefings	<u>66</u>
4.1.5. Briefing Papers (A section 4.1.6 'Correspondence' to be inserted)	<u>66</u>
4.2. Preparation of Committee and Council reports	<u>77</u>
4.2.1. Reports from management	<u>77</u>
4.2.2. Councillor requests for report preparation (A section 4.2.3 'Resolutions' to be inserted)	<u>88</u>
4.3. Support for Portfolio Lead	<u>88</u>
4.4. Dealing with confidential information	<u>99</u>
5. CITY REPRESENTATION	<u>109</u>
5.1. Media	<u>1040</u>
5.1.1. General principles	<u>1040</u>
5.1.2. Determination of the Council spokesperson on any matter	<u>1040</u>
5.1.3. Media Team support	<u>1140</u>
5.1.4. Media releases and events	<u>1141</u>
5.1.5. Obligations on Councillors in relation to media contact	<u>1141</u>
5.1.6. Social media	<u>1244</u>
5.2. Corporate communications	<u>1242</u>
5.3. External publications	<u>1242</u>
5.4. Representing the city at events, functions and delegations	<u>1242</u>
5.4.1. Nationally and Internationally	<u>1242</u>
5.4.2. Local Representation - Functions, Events and Delegations	<u>1342</u>
5.4.2.1. Opportunities generated through Council organised and supported events	<u>1342</u>
5.4.2.2. Opportunities received directly by Councillors and the administration from external sources	<u>1343</u>
5.4.2.3. Support for Councillor Representation	<u>1443</u>
5.4.3. Representation at Council organised or supported events	<u>1444</u>
5.4.4. Requests for Council support or funding for events	<u>1444</u>

1. Purpose

The Councillor Protocol (the Protocol) provides a set of understandings on the individual and collective roles and responsibilities of Councillors. The Protocol guides Councillors in the conduct of their role, interaction with each other and Council officers and covers processes supporting decision-making and city representation roles of Councillors.

2. Scope

The Protocol

- seeks to complement the function and conduct expectations of Councillors as described in the *Local Government Act 2020*
- recognises the role of Lord Mayor as principal spokesperson for Council as described in the *Local Government Act 2020*.

The commitment by Councillors to the expectations in the Protocol is embedded in the Councillor Code of Conduct 2020.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1. Lord Mayor

The statutory provisions do not fully define the role and function of the Lord Mayor. As with many other aspects of government, it is tradition, convention and practice that broaden and better define the role of the Lord Mayor. The Lord Mayor's role has three key functions as chief representative and principal spokesperson: to lead the Council in its decision-making, represent the views of Council and its community and act as ceremonial head at events.

3.2. Deputy Lord Mayor

The Deputy Lord Mayor has a leadership and representational role in conjunction with the Lord Mayor. Due to the large number of Mayoral engagements and commitments, the Deputy Lord Mayor is expected to assist in representing the Lord Mayor at various functions and meetings and, upon request from the Lord Mayor, with principal spokesperson responsibilities.

The Deputy Lord Mayor will assume the role of Acting Lord Mayor during periods of absence of the Lord Mayor or at the request of the Lord Mayor.

3.3. Councillors

3.3.1. General

In fulfilling the legislative role of Council, all Councillors shall be guided by the principles in the Council's Code of Conduct. In carrying out their role, Councillors shall:

- provide civic leadership and contribute effectively to the interests and advancement of the Capital City and its community
- contribute to the strategic vision for the City as a Capital City

- participate in deliberations of Committee and Council.

3.3.2. Councillor - Representing the Lord Mayor

Councillors will represent the Lord Mayor at functions and meetings where the Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor are unavailable. Allocation of representation roles will be made based on portfolio responsibilities of Councillors (see section 3.4 for further protocol).

3.3.3. Councillor - Acting Chair

In exceptional circumstances where both the Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor are absent from office, the Council or Future Melbourne Committee may appoint an Acting Chair for those segments normally chaired by the Lord Mayor.

3.4. Portfolio Lead

3.4.1. Overview

Establishment of the policy and strategic direction of the City requires Councillors and management to work together to deliver best possible outcomes for the community. To facilitate this process, Council will allocate to Councillors areas of portfolio responsibility. As Portfolio Leads, Councillors will fulfil leadership roles in decision-making, community engagement and city representation areas outlined below.

3.4.2. Committee Business

As a Portfolio Lead, the Councillor shall:

- assist the Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor, as Chair and Deputy Chair, in the efficient conduct of business undertaken in public and closed sessions of the Future Melbourne Committee meetings
- represent the decisions and views of the Committee on matters which relate to the Committee's responsibilities in line with media protocols outlined in section 5.1
- undertake a role in relation to emerging issues, challenges and opportunities relevant to the portfolio area. This may involve liaison and consultation with key stakeholders on areas that impact on the development and review of Council priorities and programs
- lead discussion on areas within portfolio responsibilities and assist other Councillors in developing the fullest possible understanding of matters being put to the Council. This includes keeping other Councillors updated through avenues such as Councillor Forum and Councillor-Only Session.

3.4.3. City Representation as Portfolio Lead

In line with protocols outlined in section 5 that acknowledge the role of the Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor, a Portfolio Lead will also play a key role in representing the City of Melbourne.

A Portfolio Lead has an integral role in communicating an agreed Council position and sharing of information and insight leading to that position.

If a Portfolio Lead has a personal view which differs from an agreed Council position, he/she will ensure that clarity between the two is provided when making comment.

When commenting or engaging on matters of upcoming, but yet to be determined, Council business, a Portfolio Lead will play a facilitation role by providing information about the process and encouraging input without prejudging an outcome.

- **Community Leadership and Engagement:** Leadership in liaison and consultation is an important part of a Portfolio Lead role. As such, a Portfolio Lead shall:
 - act as a focus for liaison between the Council, community and external organisations on significant issues relating to the portfolio area. The Portfolio Lead shall take the lead on such issues raised with Councillors and where necessary shall ensure fellow Councillors and Council officers are informed and consulted in efforts to provide positive outcomes for the community and the city in general and be given the opportunity of playing a lead role in community engagement activities that fall within portfolio areas of responsibility. These activities will facilitate the development of, and communication to, the community of Council policies, strategies and programs
 - be given the opportunity of participating (with the Lord Mayor and Chief Executive Officer) in meetings between Council and Ministers at State and Federal levels of government on major policy issues or decisions
 - be engaged by Council officers when significant meetings including stakeholders are planned in order to better judge whether Councillor involvement is desirable.
- **Media Spokesperson Roles:** A Portfolio Lead will be the authorised spokesperson when the Lord Mayor is not the spokesperson, in line with the media protocols outlined in section 5.1.
- **Events, Functions and Delegations:** A Portfolio Lead will, in line with representation protocol outlined in section 5.4, be given the opportunity of representing Council at a range of cultural, community, business and sporting events in Melbourne. These will involve those organised or supported by the City of Melbourne and those being staged by external sources. Many of these will involve speaking opportunities. A Portfolio Lead may also be required to represent Council at forums, meetings or conferences at a national and international level on key issues relating to portfolio responsibilities. Such representation will be in accordance with travel guidelines contained in the Council Expenses Policy.
- **Advisory Committees and External Organisations:** The Councillor representing Council on an advisory committee or external organisation will normally be the relevant Portfolio Lead.

4. Informed decision making

4.1. Briefings to Councillors

4.1.1. Provision of information and advice by management

Information is made available on a daily basis that will assist the representation and decision-making roles of Councillors. To obtain information that is up-to-date and offered in the right context, liaison should occur with the Chief Executive Officer or a member of the Management Leadership Team (MLT). Speaking directly to Council officers below MLT level without the authorisation of the appropriate MLT member may result in Councillors receiving advice that has not been formally endorsed by management. Exceptions are made for Councillor Liaison staff and other designated media and planning staff that have been nominated by their Director who for operational reasons require direct contact with Councillors.

The provision of information and advice to Councillors operates on the principle that information provided to one Councillor should generally be made available to all Councillors.

As referred to in the Councillor Code of Conduct, the *Local Government Act 2020* provides that individual Councillors cannot direct or attempt to influence Council officers in the performance of their duties. Councillors as a group make decisions and this is done through a resolution adopted at a special Committee or Council meeting.

Councillors should refrain from publicly criticising Council officers in a way that casts aspersions on their professional competence or credibility. Councillors should advise the Chief Executive Officer in a timely fashion of any concerns that a Council officer has acted contrary to a formal Council policy or decision.

In addition to statutory provisions regarding confidential information, Councillors must not release to an external person or organisation any documents or information that the Chief Executive Officer or member of the MLT has formally requested be kept confidential or that has been marked confidential.

4.1.2 Councillor Forum

The Chief Executive Officer and relevant members of the administration will provide a regular Councillor Forum to impart information and allow for discussion. Matters for consideration will usually include briefings on the more significant matters due to come before a meeting of Council or a Committee, briefings on significant matters by external parties, and briefings on the progress of significant Council projects, finances, strategies and plans. The Chief Executive Officer will set the agenda for the Councillor Forum, but will consider suggestions from the Lord Mayor, Deputy Lord Mayor and Councillors. Regular Councillor Forums will be timed as consistently as possible, in expectation that Councillors will endeavour to attend all such meetings unless there is a reasonable reason why they cannot do so, noting however that attendance is not a statutory requirement.

4.1.3. Leadership Team Briefings

In recognition of the leadership roles of the Chief Executive Officer, the Lord Mayor and the Deputy Lord Mayor, regular meetings will be held. These meetings shall provide the opportunity of raising emerging issues (including stakeholder issues), that have the potential to impact on Council position or policy. Discussion shall seek to identify the most appropriate strategy or way forward in progressing such matters. The Chief Executive Officer shall provide advice in relation to progressing matters within budgeted resources. This includes advice in respect of any operational issues raised by the Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor.

4.1.4. Individual Councillor Briefings

Separately to portfolio briefings (see section 4.3), the Chief Executive Officer will also offer regular meetings with individual Councillors to determine whether Council priorities are being met and to consider matters raised by the Councillor.

4.1.5. Briefing Papers

In addition to the face-to-face briefings above, Briefing Papers from the Executive Leadership Team will be circulated to all Councillors as appropriate.

[Any time an Annual Plan Major Initiative is proposed to be noted as being complete, Councillors will be informed with a Briefing Paper. Councillors will receive a monthly briefing paper that provides a status update on progress in relation to delivery of Council Plan Major Initiatives. This is also supported by provision of a quarterly briefing paper, in the lead up to consideration at a Council meeting, on Major Initiatives, finances and the capital works program.](#)

4.1.6 Correspondence to and from key decision makers

Copies of formal correspondence which conveys or responds to a Council position or request, or which notifies the Council of a decision that affects the City, and which is sent or received by the Lord Mayor, Chief Executive Officer or other council officers where relevant, will be promptly uploaded to the Councillor portal.

Such correspondence includes:

- Letters from the City which:
 - are written as a result of a resolution of Council or delegated Committee and subsequent replies;
 - request a change to the law or position of another level of Government and subsequent replies;
- Letters to the City notifying it of:
 - changes to the Melbourne Planning Scheme, or responding to a request by the City to change the Melbourne Planning Scheme;
 - any other significant statutory decisions taken by a State or Commonwealth decision-maker that Councillors as members of the governing body should reasonably be expected to be aware of;
- Any other letters to or from the City that Councillors as members of the governing body should reasonably be expected to be aware of.

Councillors will not publish or share any correspondence uploaded to the Councillor portal under this section if it has been classified as confidential, or without the express permission of the City of Melbourne Councillor or staff member who was author or recipient of the letter. When in doubt, the Chief Executive Officer will determine the status of the correspondence in question.

4.2. Preparation of Committee and Council reports

4.2.1. Reports from management

The management will provide professional advice and recommendations to Councillors in the form of reports to Committee and Council. The administration will maintain a forward plan of proposed Committee and Council business and this shall be available to all Councillors weekly and will list the items proposed for consideration over the next three month period, ~~including by monthly briefing paper setting out the draft list of items to be considered at the next three months' agendas for Council and Committee meetings, noting that these lists are always subject to change.~~ A Portfolio Lead will be kept informed of upcoming issues through regular Portfolio Group meetings.

The preparation and submission of such reports shall generally be based on the following:

- **Public interest:** The proposal raises an issue of significant public interest.
- **Policy change:** The proposal raises an issue of policy or process not covered by existing policy or practice.
- **Public objection:** The proposal has given rise to substantial public objection or appears likely to do so.
- **Consistency:** The Chief Executive Officer or delegate recommends approval of the proposal, but such approval would be, or could reasonably appear to be, inconsistent with a previous decision or decisions by or on behalf of the Council.
- **Unbudgeted expenditure:** Implementation of the proposal would require expenditure of Council funds, and such funds have not been specifically provided for in the budget.

- **Consultation:** The Chief Executive Officer or delegate is not satisfied that the proposal has been the subject of appropriate consultation with those likely to be interested in or affected by it.
- **Decision by Council:** The Chief Executive Officer or delegate:
 - is not satisfied that the proposal is one that is appropriate for the decision of the administration rather than the Council
 - believes that it is more appropriate that the proposal or any issue arising in connection with it should be determined by the Council rather than the administration.
- **Call-in of proposal:** Any Councillor has indicated a desire to call in the proposal for Council decision.

4.2.2. Councillor requests for report preparation

Individual Councillors seeking the preparation of a report to Committee or Council should convey the request to the Chief Executive Officer. The Chief Executive Officer will assess the request and if fulfilling such a request requires use of significant resources, proposes substantial unplanned work or has a budget impact, a briefing paper shall be prepared for consideration by Councillors. The Chief Executive Officer will only proceed with preparation of a report following advice that a consensus view was reached at Councillor-Only Session on the need for a report.

4.2.3 Reporting on implementation of Council and Future Melbourne Committee resolutions

Progress reporting on implementation of specific resolutions of Council and Committee will occur through a number of information sharing channels including Briefing Papers, Councillor Forum and Portfolio Group meetings. In addition to these, a monthly report will be provided to Councillors on all outstanding resolutions under resolutions under the current Council term.

4.3 Support for Portfolio Lead

Management shall establish operational processes to support the role of Portfolio Lead and Deputy Lead in the decision-making and city representation functions of Council.

A key component of arrangements shall involve establishment of Portfolio Groups to foster information exchange and advice on emerging decisions, issues and opportunities relating to the portfolio. The functioning of Portfolio Groups shall be guided by the following principles:

- Each Portfolio shall have a designated Portfolio Sponsor who is a member of Council's MLT and nominated by the Chief Executive Officer.
- Regular meetings shall be established and the frequency shall be flexible and guided by portfolio activity and operational requirements.
- Some Portfolio Groups may hold regular concurrent meetings in the interests of efficiency.
- Portfolio Groups shall comprise the Portfolio Lead and Deputy Lead, Portfolio Sponsor/s and relevant members of the MLT and other Council officers as required to assist with areas covered by a portfolio.
- A Portfolio Sponsor shall provide advice and guidance and conduct meetings to deliver integrated and relevant advice by ensuring all areas of the organisation relevant to the portfolio are actively engaged in briefing a Portfolio Lead/Deputy and outcomes are clearly captured and communicated. It is important to note that sometimes it is necessary, on difficult policy issues, to be aware of policy options that are not being pursued and why. The Portfolio Lead and Deputy will be informed when this occurs.
- Information to be shared and reviewed with a Portfolio Lead/Deputy shall include:

- **Annual Major Plan Initiatives** Progress on delivery of agreed commitments and opportunity to share/feed ideas as the new Annual Plan cycles approaches, including any associated media or stakeholder engagement.
- **Upcoming Council business:** Briefings on impending decisions for meetings of Future Melbourne Committee and Council, including any associated media or stakeholder engagement.
- **Media, communication and engagement:** Details of [other](#) planned or anticipated media activity, proposed community or stakeholder consultation or engagement by Council and opportunities for representation roles in areas of portfolio responsibility.
- MLT offer a Portfolio Lead an administrative sounding board on matters raised by community and stakeholder groups on issues relating to the portfolio. This will be offered through Portfolio Group meetings or directly with the relevant member of the MLT depending on timing.
- Portfolio Leads and Deputy Leads offer an important avenue to achieving a broader understanding and consensus by all Councillors on matters (relating to the relevant portfolio) scheduled to be presented to Committee or Council.
- The stage of engagement of Portfolio Leads in matters to be presented to Committee and Council will be guided by ELT deliberations on specific matters or at the discretion of the respective Portfolio Sponsor. [ELT and Portfolio Sponsors will be guided by the following principles:](#)
 - [That policy setting and strategic direction for the City is a central role of Council](#)
 - [That informed decision making by Council is best achieved through early and active engagement](#)
 - [That Councillors, as the public face of the City, are key to building community awareness and confidence in delivery of services and projects.](#)
- Opportunities for feedback from Councillors are appropriate on matters such as development of a policy, strategy, plan or submission. When matters of a statutory or operational nature arise, verbal briefings for the purpose of information sharing may be appropriate.
- Councillors must recognise the role of all Council officers in providing integrated professional, objective and impartial advice and analysis and the role of the Chief Executive Officer in ensuring that all advice to Council meets this criteria. Should Councillors wish to explore avenues to seek an alternative resolution by Committee or Council, advice on governance and procedural processes will be made available.
- To support the principle of information provided to one being generally available on the Councillor portal to all Councillors, action notes of Portfolio Group meetings will be circulated to all Councillors. Councillors may seek additional information through the Portfolio Lead or management in an area of interest. Action notes will also be made available to Council's MLT to foster greater cross-organisational cooperation and awareness.

4.4 Dealing with confidential information

In the course of conducting Council business, information of a confidential nature may be brought to the attention of Councillors or management. There will be occasions, where due to factors such as timing and sensitivity of a matter, the information may not be able to be shared more broadly by Councillors or management.

Councillors and management will work within the statutory requirements and provisions guiding access to confidential information as part of the decision-making process. These are referenced in the Councillor Code of Conduct and elsewhere in the Councillor Protocol.

5. City representation

Opportunities for the Lord Mayor, Deputy Lord Mayor and Councillors to represent the City will arise through a range of mechanisms including media activity, event attendance and contribution to internal and external publications.

The following protocol outlines the processes by which opportunities will be progressed and allocated.

Where there is potential portfolio overlap when dealing with media or other representation roles. Councillors are encouraged to reach an agreement on the designated representative. Where an agreement cannot be reached by Councillors in accordance with this protocol, the matter will be referred to the Lord Mayor for determination.

5.1. Media

5.1.1. General principles

The Lord Mayor, Deputy Lord Mayor and Councillors play an important role in representing our organisation and our community. The *Lord Mayor* is the principal spokesperson for the Council in accordance with Section 18 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

The following protocol acknowledges that the Lord Mayor is the principal spokesperson for the Council but also recognises the important role of Portfolio Leads in communicating Council policy on matters relevant to the Melbourne community. The aim of this protocol is to share individual media opportunities between the Lord Mayor and the relevant portfolio lead wherever practicable.

This protocol acknowledges that the resources of the Media Team will be made available to assist the Lord Mayor, Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillors and Chief Executive Officer (or delegate) to communicate with media outlets on matters of Council policy.

Councillors who have played a key role in development of a Council position and would like to be engaged with media should advise the Lord Mayor and the relevant Portfolio Lead. This will ensure that the Councillor is kept informed when advancing media opportunities.

A Councillor acting as an authorised spokesperson in line with the following protocol has a responsibility to represent the Council position in relation to a matter. If that Councillor wishes to express a personal view which differs from an adopted position, the Councillor is obliged to identify that the opinion or view is their own.

5.1.2. Determination of the Council spokesperson on any matter

The Lord Mayor is the principal spokesperson for the Council in accordance with the Act. The Lord Mayor may delegate this role to the Deputy Lord Mayor where appropriate.

Portfolio Leads are secondary spokespersons for the Council in relation to matters within their respective portfolios only. Respective spokesperson roles will be managed and agreed on a case by case basis between the Lord Mayor and Portfolio Lead. ~~Theis does not override allocation process~~ will reflect the Lord Mayor's role as principal spokesperson [and acknowledge the role of Portfolio Leads in community engagement and city representation functions](#).

The Chief Executive Officer is the spokesperson for any internal organisational matter.

5.1.3. Media Team support

The Media Team will support the spokesperson in undertaking their role and in generating and responding to media.

A ~~member of the Media Team~~ [media adviser](#) will generally accompany Lord Mayor, Deputy Lord Mayor and Councillors, if required, to media opportunities or events where a media spokesperson role is likely.

If any matter within this section relates to a motion that has or will be moved by a Councillor in the General Business section of a Council or Special Committee meeting, the Media Team will make the relevant Councillor generally aware of any activity and, if relevant, the proposed approach.

While Councillors are entitled to speak to the media on any topic, if they are not acting as the authorised spokesperson on Council matters or positions as described in this protocol, the Media Team's resources and assistance are not available to them.

[Councillors will be kept informed on media, communication and engagement activities primarily through the following mechanisms:](#)

- [Access to a Weekly Media Report which provides an overview of activity in the week ahead and in review.](#)
- [Updates provided through Portfolio Group Meetings on key matters and opportunities relating the portfolio.](#)
- [Notification of media enquiries to the relevant portfolio lead/s as well as sharing final media responses with all Councillors and proposed responses.](#)

5.1.4. Media releases and media events

Wherever the City of Melbourne publishes a media release or a prepared statement to one or more journalists or media organisations, the statement will, except where it is inappropriate to provide any quote, include quotes by the Lord Mayor as spokesperson in accordance with section 5.1.2 and relevant Portfolio Lead. For proactive media events, the Portfolio Lead will also be invited to play a supporting role with the Lord Mayor.

All Councillors will receive copies of all media releases upon publication to the Councillor portal and City of Melbourne's website.

5.1.5. Obligations on Councillors in relation to media contact

The Lord Mayor, Deputy Lord Mayor and Councillors will when providing public comment in any media (other than self-published media on social media platforms), whether initiating contact with or responding to a journalist or media organisation, and whether or not the Councillor is a spokesperson on the matter in question, should alert the Director, Strategic Communications or nominated staff member without delay of the time and topic of the comment, and the organisation that the comment was provided to.

If the Lord Mayor, Deputy Lord Mayor or a Councillor providing comment to a journalist is not the spokesperson for the matter at hand, they will inform the journalist of the identity of the spokesperson. If a Councillor provides comment, they will alert the relevant portfolio holder as soon as possible.

If the Lord Mayor, Deputy Lord Mayor or a Councillor provides comment to a journalist that could be deemed to be divisive, or against an agreed Council position, they will alert all Councillors of the nature of the comment as soon as possible.

5.1.6. Social media

The City of Melbourne uses social media to engage with the wider community. The administration operates various social media accounts in accordance with the City of Melbourne Social Media Policy.

As the Council's principal spokesperson and representative, appropriate social media accounts using the title of Lord Mayor will be maintained by the administration. The accounts will be utilised as part of the City of Melbourne's broader communication and engagement through social media.

As part of a broader approach to enhancing community and public engagement in Council decision-making processes, the [Media Strategic - Communications Branch team](#) will, where appropriate, publicise impending Committee and Council business through traditional and social media. They will also publicise outcomes on matters which may benefit from increased community awareness and debate.

[Councillors who choose to operate personal social media accounts may have access to City of Melbourne content, namely existing information, links and images/social tiles, which can be used to support greater community awareness and engagement in Council activities, programs and events. Content provided to Councillors will be made available through the Strategic Communications Branch or a member of MLT.](#)

[The personal social media accounts of Councillors will not be operated by Council officers.](#)

5.2. Corporate communications

The City of Melbourne will use a range of digital and print communication methods to reach, inform and engage the community and will strive to do this in a sustainable and cost effective manner.

The methods and platforms used will vary and evolve over time to allow Council to respond and adapt to current and emerging trends in the way the community prefers to receive information about activity within the municipality.

5.3. External publications

Opportunities to contribute to publications produced by external sources shall be referred to the Lord Mayor, Deputy Lord Mayor or Councillors as appropriate to their Portfolio Lead role or that of the Lord Mayor as principal spokesperson. Appropriate support will be provided where the subject matter has a strong alignment with Council goals, policies and objectives.

5.4. Representing the city at events, functions and delegations

5.4.1. Nationally and Internationally

As a Capital City, Council plays an important role in issues at a local, national and international level. In representing the Council, Councillors and the administration will be required to travel with the aim of strengthening domestic and international relationships and arrangements. Travel undertaken by Councillors and the administration will be in accordance with guidelines that provide for authorisation processes, reporting and recording of related expenses. The protocols covering travel by Councillors are outlined in the Council Expenses Policy.

5.4.2. Local Representation - Functions, Events and Delegations

5.4.2.1. Opportunities generated through Council organised and supported events

As chief representative and spokesperson for Council, the Lord Mayor is given first opportunity to represent Council at functions and events organised or supported by the City of Melbourne.

For functions and events where the Lord Mayor is given first opportunity to represent Council, if the Lord Mayor is unavailable, the invitation is first forwarded to the Deputy Lord Mayor, then the relevant Portfolio Lead if the Deputy Lord Mayor is also unavailable, then the relevant Deputy Lead if the Lead is also unavailable. To ensure that the portfolio holder is kept informed, the relevant Portfolio Lead shall, for information purposes, receive notification of opportunities referred to the Lord Mayor for consideration.

For functions and events where the relevant Portfolio Lead is given first opportunity to represent Council, if the Portfolio Lead is unavailable, the invitation is first forwarded to the Deputy Lead. Where a Councillor has played a key role in development of a Council organised or supported event and would like the opportunity to represent the City at that event, the Councillor should advise the Councillor/s otherwise entitled to be the representative, and either request that the speaking opportunity be passed on, or that arrangements otherwise be made to include the Councillor in the formal proceedings of the event.

Opportunities for representation by Councillors, the Chief Executive Officer and General Managers will be communicated through a Corporate Calendar system which provides full details of opportunities and background information to maximize benefits from Council involvement.

Speechwriting support is not provided for Councillors who wish to speak at functions outside of their official role as a City of Melbourne representative.

For the purposes of the protocol, supported refers to City of Melbourne funding or in-kind-contribution-towards the staging of an event or function. This does include funding provided through the purchase of tickets or seating at events and functions once the event has been announced and promoted.

5.4.2.2. Opportunities received directly by Councillors and the administration from external sources

Invitations received by the Lord Mayor

As the chief representative of Council, the Lord Mayor will be approached by city stakeholders to participate in events, functions and activities important and relevant to Melbourne. If the Lord Mayor is unavailable and the opportunity is transferable, the opportunity will be referred to the Deputy Lord Mayor in the first instance.

If unavailable, the Lord Mayor will refer to another Councillor and may take into account Portfolio Lead roles positions on advisory committees and external organisations, areas of expertise and interest expressed by Councillors.

Invitations received by the Deputy Lord Mayor and Councillors

The Deputy Lord Mayor and Councillors will receive invitations in an individual capacity to represent Council. These may be received in acknowledgement of portfolio responsibilities or in response to established relationships with city stakeholders. Councillors will consider and respond to such invitations in an individual capacity. If the opportunity is transferable, Councillors should consider referring the invitation to the relevant Portfolio Lead.

Invitations received by the administration

Where an external source approaches the administration with a view to seeking representation by a Councillor, the administration first refers the approach to the Lord Mayor for consideration. If the Lord Mayor

declines the invitation and an alternative Councillor is considered acceptable to the organising body, the request is forwarded to the Deputy Lord Mayor and then to the relevant Portfolio Lead.

5.4.2.3 Support for Councillor Representation

In representing Council at events, functions and delegations, Councillors may require support in the form of speech notes, presentations and background information. This support shall be arranged through the Corporate Calendar system or through other agreed processes and support networks. When requesting a speech for an event which is not Council owned or supported, the request must identify a strong alignment with Council goals, policies and objectives or seek to advance the City of Melbourne's leadership role within the community.

5.4.3. Representation at Council organised or supported events

Councillors will have the opportunity to represent Council and host stakeholders and associates at cultural, community, business and sporting events in Melbourne. These include those events organised or supported by Council. Where limited opportunities for participation are available, priority access will be given to the Lord Mayor, Deputy Lord Mayor and Portfolio Leads.

Councillors should be aware that Fringe Benefits Tax and Reportable Fringe Benefits Tax provisions apply in respect of access to events provided by Council. Councillors should refer to the Expenses Policy for further guidance on these provisions.

5.4.4. Requests for Council support or funding for events

Councillors approached for Council support or funding for events and activities must first raise the matter with management for consideration in accordance with Council policy and guidelines under specific programs and projects. The guidelines ensure that assessment processes are fair, transparent and accountable.