

Governance Charter

Version: 4.0

Date updated: 19 February 2019

Responsible Department: Governance

1. Purpose

This Governance Charter is an overarching framework that articulates the various roles, responsibilities and authorities of the Council and the administration in developing the vision for the future of our community and the management of Council operations and performance.

2. Definitions

Council	means Casey City Council, being a body corporate constituted as a municipal Council under the Local Government Act 1989
Councillors	means the individuals holding the office of a member of Casey City Council
Council officer	means the Chief Executive Officer and staff of Council appointed by the Chief Executive Officer.

3. Scope

The Governance Charter applies to all Councillors and Council officers.

4. Context

Good governance is integral to the operations and performance of every organisation.

The role of governance is to ensure that an organisation can deliver in both compliance and performance.

CPA Australia, in its document '*Excellence in Governance for Local Government*' defines Governance as:

...the process by which decisions are taken and implemented, the process by which organisations go about achieving their goals and producing their outputs and the process by which organisations are directed, controlled and held to account.¹

¹ CPA Australia. *Excellence in Governance for Local Governments*. Melbourne, Victoria: CPA Australia, 2007.

Council policy documents change from time to time and it is recommended that you consult the electronic reference copy at www.casey.vic.gov.au/policiesstrategies to ensure that you have the current version. Alternatively you may contact Customer Service on 9705 5200.

The Charter is a demonstration of Council’s commitment to transparency and accountability at all levels and supports the Council by:

- assisting Councillors in partnership with the CEO and executive management team in delivering good governance on behalf of the community;
- providing clear guidelines for Councillors and executive management in relation to their roles and responsibilities, and what is expected of them in relation to performance;
- providing clear advice on the authorising environment of Council;
- providing clear information on the decision making process of Council and the administration;
- acting as a point of reference for disputes; and
- acting as an induction tool for new Councillors and executive officers.



Vision and Values	Authorising Environment	Decision Making and Accountability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear vision and Council Plan • Values and Behaviours • Positive Culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity of roles and responsibilities • Understanding and agreement of roles • Working relationships • Legal Framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective decision making • Effective management • Risk Management • Fiduciary responsibility • Transparency and disclosure • Accountability • Performance Management • Consultation and engagement

5. Charter

The Governance Charter is divided into three key pillars: Vision and Values, Authorising Environment, and Decision Making and Accountability. Each pillar has a number of contributing elements. Over the following pages each element is explained, including how they are put into practice at the City of Casey.

5.1 Pillar 1: Vision and Values

5.1.1 Clear Vision and Council Plan

In order to excel you need to have a clear vision of what you want to achieve and a plan which helps you to achieve the vision.

At the beginning of each term of office, the Council develop a vision for the municipality. With 11 Councillors representing 6 different wards, the development of a clear vision for the organisation helps to create a shared sense of purpose. The vision articulates what Council wants the City of Casey to become in the future. It is a high level, aspirational goal that shapes everything Council does over the next four years.

The vision for the City of Casey is:

“To be Australia’s most liveable city”.

The vision is supported by the development of a four year Council Plan. The Council Plan 2017-2021 was developed by the Councillors with support and advice from the executive leadership team (ELT).

The Council Plan identifies eight key focus areas known as strategic objectives. The eight strategic objectives are:

1. A leader in applying technology and innovation.
2. An inclusive, safe and connected community.
3. A Council whose services and facilities are driven by community needs.
4. The destination for arts, culture, sport and leisure that attracts visitors and brings communities together.
5. A city that sustainably plans and manages growth while protecting its diverse landscape.
6. A thriving economy with local jobs, investment and new industries.
7. A city with an accessible and well connected transport network.
8. An efficient and effective, customer focused Council with sufficient resources to meet priorities.

A number of strategic indicators are then developed to support the Strategic Objectives. Each service, policy and activity developed or delivered by the organisation aligns with one or more

of the Council Plan objectives and helps Council to achieve the goals set out in the Council Plan.

Section 125(1) of the *Local Government Act 1989* requires Council to develop and approve a Council Plan within six months of taking office, or by 30 June the following year, whichever is later. The Local Government Act also requires Council to review the Council Plan at least annually. The annual review is an opportune time for Councillors to ensure that the Council Plan still enables them to meet the changing needs of the community and that it continues to support the achievement of their vision for the future.

5.1.2 Values and Behaviours

The City of Casey Vision identifies Council's vision for the future of the municipality and the Council Plan provides the key directions and the strategies to achieve the Vision.

The City of Casey values and behaviours reflect the leadership priorities that contribute to a well-functioning and community driven organisation. They shape the culture of the organisation and represent how Council will act in seeking to fulfill its vision for the future.

The City of Casey has identified the following seven fundamental values and behaviours:

Dream Big –
Empower Each Other –
Make Our Community Proud -

These corporate values and behaviours drive employee development and performance and are a key element of the Code of Conduct for Employees.

5.1.3 Positive Culture

The City of Casey strives to cultivate a positive culture with an open and collaborative environment.

This includes:

Good communication – an open environment where people are encouraged to ask questions and seek information.

Assuming a positive intention – encouraging good will between individuals with a shared understanding that each person is trying to act in the best interests of the organisation and the community.

Support and training – a thorough induction process, opportunities for formal education, and investment in skills and professional development through attendance at workshops and conferences.

A positive culture promotes honesty and encourages debate on important issues which can help the organisation to achieve better outcomes for the community.

Organisations with a positive culture are also more likely to retain high quality employees who can help drive the activities to assist Council in achieving its vision and the pursuit of excellence in governance.

5.2 Pillar 2: Authorising Environment

5.2.1 Clarity of roles and responsibilities

Clearly articulating the division of responsibilities between the Councillors and management helps manage expectations and avoid misunderstandings about the respective roles and accountabilities.

The key roles at the City of Casey are outlined below.

Role of Council

The Council of the City of Casey comprises eleven Councillors who are democratically elected by the community in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1989*.

The primary role of the Council is to provide leadership for the good governance of the City of Casey.

It 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;

- fostering community cohesion and encouraging active participation in civic life; and
- making all decisions impartially and in the best interests of the whole community.

Council has a statutory responsibility to represent all people that live, participate in and invest within the municipality.

The elected Council appoint and review the performance of the Chief Executive Officer of the organisation, determine Council policies and set the strategic direction of the organisation.

Role of a Councillor

A Councillor's role is to act in the best interests of the municipality, faithfully and impartially carrying out the functions, powers, authorities and discretions provided to them under the *Local Government Act 1989* to the best of their ability.

Councillors play a key role in facilitating communication with the community and encouraging engagement with the activities of Council.

Role of the Mayor

The Mayor is the elected leader of the Council and is the key formal representative of Council.

The Mayor, or Councillor acting in the position, has a key role to facilitate good relationships between Councillors, and between Councillors and the Chief Executive Officer and Executive Leadership Team. In addition to their role as a councillor, the main roles and responsibilities of the Mayor include the following:

- being a community leader and principal Council spokesperson;
- establishing partnerships and networks and actively promoting Council's interests;
- creating and maintaining political stability within the Council;
- representing Council at functions and political forums;
- leading, coordinating and providing guidance to Councillors;
- chairing Council Meetings and ensuring and encouraging participation of Councillors in decision making processes;
- having a close working relationship with the Chief Executive Officer, thereby creating and ensuring positive relationships with the organisation, leading to good planning, identification and resolution of issues;
- fostering positive relationships with various stakeholders, including government agencies and peak bodies;
- promoting a positive image of Council and a positive organisational culture.

The Mayor will take a leadership role in consultation, advice and mediation as required in accordance with Council's agreed dispute and conflict resolution process.

Role of the Deputy Mayor/s

The role of the Deputy Mayor/s, which is not a statutory position, is to give effective support to the Mayor in his/her absence by chairing meetings, attending functions and being the Council spokesperson where the Mayor is unavailable.

The Deputy Mayor/s will take a leadership role in consultation, advice and mediation as required in accordance with Council's agreed dispute and conflict resolution process.

Role of a Portfolio Holder

Councillors may be appointed to portfolios which indicate their leadership of a strategic initiative or policy area. As portfolio holders, Councillors support the Mayor of the Day and are able to gain a deeper understanding of the operational challenges and sector context which apply to a particular area. Portfolio responsibilities are allocated by Council resolution.

Role	Rationale
Mayor of the Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal spokesperson of the Council • Presides over civic ceremonies including citizenship, official openings, ministerial events
Deputy Mayor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fulfils duty of the Mayor when Mayor is unavailable
Portfolio Holder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive regular briefings on key initiatives and progress against strategic objectives • Lead in speaking notes, and media comments on portfolio issues
Ward Councillor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary contact for residents • Lead in speaking notes on ward specific issues • Undertakes formalities at events as relevant to the ward where the Mayor or Deputy is unable to attend • Recognised on plaques at official openings within wards

Role of the Chief Executive Officer

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) has a number of statutory responsibilities and is accountable to the elected council for delivering Council's strategies and services. As the head of the organisation, the CEO's role is to provide professional, relevant and timely information and support to the Council.

Section 94A of the Local Government Act 1989 identifies the CEO as being responsible for a number of activities including:

- establishing and maintaining an appropriate organisational structure;
- the day-to-day management of the Council's operations in accordance with the Council Plan;

- providing timely advice to Council; and
- appointing, directing and managing staff.

Role of the Executive Leadership Team (ELT)

The ELT provides a whole of organisation perspective to ensure strategic alignment between the organisation's operations and the achievement of the Council Plan.

This includes:

- Contributing to policy development through recommendations to Council
- Operational decision making
- Providing advice/ assistance
- Generating discussion
- Encouraging problem solving
- Leading performance management
- Interpreting and understanding the current and future operational and political environment
- Driving organisational leadership/culture

Role of a Director

Directors are responsible for overseeing the efficient operation of the departments within their Division to assist the City of Casey in achieving its vision and objectives. They play a key role in supporting the CEO and providing advice and information to the Mayor and Councillors. This includes:

- Providing advice and possible recommendations to Councillors on issues raised by community and stakeholder groups on matters relating to the Directors area of management.
- Providing guidance on matters which, for reasons of community interest and benefit, require immediate action and may be advanced under delegated authority of the Chief Executive Officer.
- Providing advice and information on emerging issues and opportunities relating to the Division.
- Providing direction and advice on matters before Council through the review and approval of reports to Council.

5.2.2 Understanding and agreement of roles

A clear understanding and agreement of roles and responsibilities as outlined above contribute to Councillors and ELT acting as an effective leadership team. It ensures each individual is aware of the boundaries of their role and of the shared areas.

At the City of Casey the Councillors and ELT have agreed that this works best when there is mutual trust, discussions rather than assumptions and good communication.

5.2.3 Working relationships

Strong and respectful working relationships are essential for Council to achieve its vision. Effective working relationships promote a positive culture and provide the organisation with the freedom to focus on opportunities and delivering great outcomes, rather than spending effort overcoming problems associated with negative relationships.

The key working relationships at the City of Casey are between the:

- Mayor and Councillors
- Mayor and CEO
- Mayor and Directors
- Councillors and CEO
- Councillors and Directors
- CEO and Directors

Many Council officers hold positions that require specialised knowledge and skills and are required to provide information, advice and recommendations to the best of their professional ability. Sharing this knowledge with Councillors is a key part of ensuring that Council has the information it needs to make informed decisions.

It is important to note that Councillors cannot direct or improperly influence, or attempt to direct or improperly influence, the functions, duties, actions, recommendations or advice provided by Council officers. Improper direction and improper influence are covered under Section 76E of the *Local Government Act 1989*.

To facilitate the efficient functioning of Council, and ensure timely responses, the CEO has put in place a protocol which requires Councillors to direct all their enquiries to the CEO, the appropriate Director or Manager or specified support staff. Persistent failure to follow this protocol may be addressed through the [Councillor Code of Conduct](#).

5.2.4 Legal framework

Victoria's 79 Councils operate within a legal framework comprising two key components. The first is legislation made by Federal and State Parliaments. The other is common law (decisions of the Courts).

The principal piece of legislation covering the operations of Councils is the *Local Government Act 1989*. It defines the purposes and functions of local government, as well as providing the legal framework for establishing and administering Councils.

Some examples of other important legislation include the *Building Act 1993*, *Children and Families Act 2005*, *Country Fire Authority Act 1958*, *Disability Act 2006*, *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, *Environment Protection Act 1970*, *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*. Many other pieces of legislation apply.

Council must also comply with Regulations made by Government, for example the

The Integrity Agencies (see 5.2.5 for details) also have a significant impact on the way Councils comply with their legal obligations. In particular, the Victorian Ombudsman focusses on ensuring that Councils apply the law in a manner which is both fair and reasonable.

The appropriate use of discretion is vital to administering the law in a manner which is fair and reasonable. Whether or not discretion should be exercised in a specific situation is guided by legislation, the common law, and expectations of integrity agencies.

The City of Casey's commitment to meeting its legal obligations is achieved by, but not limited to:

1. Staying up-to-date with its legal obligations;
2. Periodically reviewing its forms and templates to ensure legal compliance;
3. Developing the legal literacy of its staff, including encouraging the appropriate use of discretion to ensure that the law is applied in a fair and reasonable manner;
4. Ensuring that customers are aware of their rights to appeal or object to a decision or proposal;
5. Actively cooperating with Integrity Agencies; and
6. Adopting innovative approaches to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of its legal compliance.

5.2.5 Integrity agencies

In Victoria there are a number of integrity agencies that ensure local government is operating in a fair and efficient manner. These include:

The Independent Broad-based Anti-Corruption Commission (IBAC) - educates the public sector and community about corruption and how to prevent it, and investigates and exposes serious corruption in the public sector.

The Victorian Ombudsman – investigates administrative actions or the conduct of staff in government departments, statutory authorities and local government.

The Local Government Investigations and Compliance Inspectorate - investigates alleged breaches of the Local Government Act 1989 by any Victorian local council.

The Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) - examines the management of resources through financial and performance audits within the public sector on behalf of Parliament and Victorians.

5.2.6 Delegations

Each day Council is required to make hundreds of decisions. In order to facilitate the smooth and efficient operations of the organisation, and to allow Council to focus on strategic matters and major developments, Section 98 of the *Local Government Act 1989* allows Council to delegate to any staff member any power, duty or function of Council under the Local Government Act or any other Act other than—

- (a) this power of delegation; and
- (b) the power to declare a rate or charge; and
- (c) the power to borrow money; and
- (d) the power to approve any expenditure not contained in a budget approved by the Council; and
- (e) any power, duty or function of the Council under section 223; and
- (f) any prescribed power.

In turn the CEO can delegate authority to an appropriately qualified staff member or contractor. However, the Chief Executive Officer must not delegate a power delegated by Council if Council has directed the Chief Executive Officer not to further delegate the power.

All decisions made under delegated authority are binding and represent a 'Council decision'.

5.2.7 Local Laws

Local laws are statutory instruments adopted by the Council to assist in governing the municipality. They enable Council to regulate matters to better serve the local community.

The *Local Government Act 1989* provides Councils with the power to make local laws. Where Council has an obligation under the Act or other Acts of Parliament it can make local laws.

The City of Casey has three Local Laws:

Local Law 1 (2016) - Meeting Procedures and the Use of the Common Seal Local Law. This Local Law is made for the purposes of:

- Governing the conduct of meetings of Council and Committees, as required by section 91(1) of the Local Government (LG) Act;
- Regulating and controlling the procedures regarding the conduct of meetings of Council, Special Committees and Advisory Committees, with particular regard to the notice required and the keeping of minutes;
- Regulating the use of the common seal of Council and prohibiting any unauthorised use of it, as required by section 5(3)(c) of the LG Act; and
- Providing for the administration of Council powers and functions.

City of Casey Community Local Law No. 2/2010. This Local Law is made for the purposes of the:

- Provision for peace, order and good government of the municipality

- Protection against behaviour which causes detriment to the amenity and environment of the municipal district
- Controlling activities which may interfere with the comfort and enjoyment of other persons
- Providing for the safety of road users including pedestrians
- Protection of Council and community assets
- Asset Protection Local Law 2016. This Local Law is made for the purposes of:
 - Demonstrating good government by improving Asset Protection within the municipality
 - Providing for the safety and health of the public by controlling activities associated with building and construction work in the municipality
 - Reducing the impacts of damage to public assets caused by building and construction work in the municipality
- Ensuring that persons responsible for damaging public assets are also responsible for returning the asset to its former state. •

5.3 Pillar 3: Decision Making and Accountability

5.3.1 Effective decision making

One of the most important functions undertaken by the Mayor and Councillors is to attend and participate in the decision making process at Council meetings. Councils are empowered by law to make decisions on many matters of importance to their local communities.

Decisions may be made in formally constituted council meetings, or under delegations approved by the council.

Individually neither the Mayor nor Councillors have the legal authority to act or make decisions on behalf of the council.

Decisions made at a formal Council Meeting provide the direction and authority for the ongoing operation of the Council. The decisions give direction to the CEO and are implemented by staff.

It is also at Council meetings that the Mayor and Councillors decide the policy direction of the Council and make decisions on other statutory matters.

Council is a corporate body and as such it can only make decisions by resolution, i.e. a motion has to be put to a properly convened meeting and passed by the required majority of members. A Council can only make decisions and pass resolutions about matters falling within its jurisdiction, otherwise it will be deemed to be acting “ultra vires” – acting beyond its powers.

Formal meeting procedures are followed. The Mayor chairs the meeting and has a casting vote if there is an equality of votes.

An Agenda, listing the issues and relevant reports for discussion at the meeting, is made available to the public in advance so that everyone has the opportunity to be aware of matters before Council. Copies are available through Council’s website, by visiting the Council Offices or at the Customer Service Centres.

Members of the public are encouraged to attend meetings. Meetings are only closed to the public when topics as provided for in the Local Government Act 1989 are deemed confidential in nature, such as an individual's financial circumstances, a particular staff member, proposed developments or legal matters.

In keeping with fostering good decision making and promoting transparency, the default position will be that reports be considered in Open Council.

However, where there may be topics of a confidential nature to be discussed, reports to Council will be considered in a 3 tiered approach:

- i. Report to be considered in Open Council with the report included in its entirety
- ii. Report to be considered in Open Council, with a confidential attachment circulated to Councillors including any confidential information
- iii. Report to be considered in Closed Council. Where a report is to be considered in Closed Council, the subject and the reason for confidentiality is to be listed in the agenda.

Assembly of Councillors

Councillors often attend briefings or workshops which are considered to be an 'assembly of councillors'. Under the *Local Government Act 1989*, an assembly of councillors is

- a meeting of an advisory committee of the Council if at least one Councillor is present,
- or a planned or scheduled meeting of at least half of the Councillors and one member of Council staff which considers matters that are intended or likely to be the subject of a decision of the Council or an action completed under delegation.

It is important to note that an assembly of councillors does not have any decision making authority though requires Councillors and staff to disclose Conflicts of Interest in accordance with the Act. .

Access to information

The City of Casey encourages thorough debate and evidence based decision making to deliver great outcomes for the community. The CEO ensures that Councillors are briefed on complex or contentious issues. In order to fulfill their role to the best of their ability Councillors are provided access to a range of information. The provision of information is guided by the [Councillor Access to Council Information Policy](#).

Councillors must at all times adhere to the provisions of the *Local Government Act 1989* relating to confidentiality and/or inappropriate use of information. Section 77 of the Act makes it unlawful for a Councillor or former Councillor to release information that the person knows, or should reasonably know, is confidential information.

5.3.2 Effective management

Management structure

The CEO is responsible for putting in place a management structure that meets the goals and needs of Council with a focus on the efficient and effective use of human resources.

The City of Casey has four divisions, 22 departments.

Council's management structure is available on the City of Casey website.

Service delivery

Council has a comprehensive suite of Customer Service Commitments for its major services. The service commitments inform the community of what they can expect when dealing with Council.

The full suite of Customer Service Commitments is available on Council's website or by calling into one of Council's Customer Service Centres.

In addition to the Customer Service Commitments, Council adopted a Customer Focus Strategy in July 2015 which seeks to position the City of Casey for the future and identify ways to work smarter.

There are five strategic themes that form the Strategy, including:

- Understand and engage with our customer
- Provide services in easy, accessible, consistent and timely ways
- Collect, assess, measure and simplify what we do
- Equip our staff with the skill, knowledge and attitude to serve
- Deliver on our promise

The Customer Focus Strategy provides a framework to support transformational change across Council, to apply customer 'thinking' processes and culture, and to build 'ownership' across all functions of Council. While achieving this, the Strategy aims to identify opportunities to improve efficiency (reduce the cost to serve) while also providing a more effective service by improving the customer experience.

In order to provide consistent and effective communication with customers, Council commits to ensuring forms and letters are legislatively compliant and provide customers with relevant information on issues such as privacy, opportunity to object and other relevant requirements (see 5.2.4 for details).

Complaints

The City of Casey is committed to having a Complaint Handling Procedure that reflects the needs, expectations, and rights of customers. Council's Complaint Handling Procedure provides a framework to ensure concerns and complaints are addressed promptly and fairly with outcomes which will assist Council to improve its services for the future.

For some issues, complaints and appeals are governed by other processes outside the jurisdiction of Council. Where this is the case, complainants will be referred to the appropriate process or authority. This includes decisions and processes relating to:

- Privacy and health records
- Freedom of Information
- Protected disclosures
- Decisions made under legislation which provides for separate avenues of appeal (e.g. infringements issued by Local Laws and decisions under the Building Act)

- Decisions made at Council and Special Committee meetings

- Complaints against Councillors•

5.3.3 Risk Management

Council is responsible for providing a wide and diverse range of services to its community. All of these activities involve some form of risk, which must be managed to ensure that aims and objectives are achieved, services are delivered and that opportunities to deliver better and more cost effective services are realised. If Council is not aware of, or has not adequately assessed or managed some risks, it could result in financial loss, threats to public or employee safety or lead to substantial adverse publicity.

The City of Casey has a comprehensive risk management program embedded within all service and functional areas of Council.

Risk management is not a stand-alone function that is separate from the main activities and processes of the organisation. It is an integral part of all organisational processes, including strategic planning, project and change management processes.

Council regularly reviews and considers both its operational and strategic risks to ensure that these are being appropriately managed, mitigated or accepted.

The City of Casey has a publicly available Risk Management Policy which clearly documents the organisation's commitment to risk management principles.

5.3.4 Fiduciary responsibility

The City of Casey is responsible for the sound financial management of public money and takes this responsibility very seriously.

The organisation is committed to the principles of sound financial management set out in section 136 of the *Local Government Act 1989* which states that Council must:

- manage financial risks faced by the Council prudently, having regard to economic circumstances;
- pursue spending and rating policies that are consistent with a reasonable degree of stability in the level of the rates burden;
- ensure that decisions are made and actions are taken having regard to their financial effects on future generations; and
- ensure full, accurate and timely disclosure of financial information relating to the Council.

The risks referred to above include risks relating to—

- the level of Council debt;
- the commercial or entrepreneurial activities of the Council;
- the management and maintenance of assets;
- the management of current and future liabilities;
- changes in the structure of the rates and charges base.

Council conducts community consultation prior to the adoption of the annual budget to ensure that the community has the opportunity to provide input and shape the way that their rates work for them.

Council's financial documents are publicly available on Council's website and include the:

- Approved current annual Budget
- Approved Capital Works Program - which provides a list of all proposed capital works projects over the next five years
- Approved Strategic Resource Plan - a high-level planning and general direction document which covers the financial and non-financial resources required by Council to achieve its strategic objectives.
- Special Charge Scheme Policy- including annual review of interest rate charge
- Asset Service Level & Financial Forecasts Policy
- Rating Strategy

5.3.5 Transparency and disclosure

It's important that the community has confidence in Council's decision making and ability to plan for the future. One way that the local government sector helps to encourage confidence is by making information available for public inspection.

Under Regulation 12 of the Local Government (General) Regulations 2015, Council is required to make a comprehensive amount of information available for public inspection including:

- Details of overseas or interstate travel (with the exception of interstate travel by land for less than 3 days) undertaken in an official capacity by Councillors or any member of Council staff in the previous 12 months. This information must include the names of the Councillors or members of Council staff and the date, destination, purpose and total cost to the Council of the travel, including accommodation costs.
- Agendas for and minutes of ordinary and special meetings held in the previous 12 months kept under section 93 of the Act except if the minutes relate to parts of meetings which have been closed to members of the public under section 89 of the Act.
- Minutes of meetings of special committees established under section 86 of the Act and held in the previous 12 months except if the minutes relate to parts of meetings which have been closed to members of the public under section 89 of the Act.
- A register of delegations kept under sections 87 and 98 of the Act, including the dates on which the last reviews under sections 86(6) and 98(6) of the Act took place.
- Submissions received in accordance with section 223 of the Act during the previous 12 months.

- Details of all property, finance and operating leases involving land, buildings, plant, computer equipment or vehicles entered into by the Council as lessor or lessee, including the name of the other party to the lease and the terms and the value of the lease.
- A register of authorised officers appointed under section 224 of the Act.
- A list of donations and grants made by the Council during the financial year, including the names of persons or bodies which have received a donation or grant and the amount of each donation or grant.

Officers prepare reports to assist Councillors in making decisions on behalf of the community. As much as possible Council makes these reports available to the community so that they can see the evidence base which Councillors are using to make decisions. Members of the public are also encouraged to attend Council meetings to listen to the debate, and the responses to any questions asked by Councillors, which often provide further information.

Council is not able to make all reports available to the public. Some reports are confidential and dealt with in closed Council. This information can only be released to the public by resolution of Council. Closed Council reports cover matters such as:

- personnel matters;
- the personal hardship of any resident or ratepayer;
- industrial matters;
- contractual matters;
- proposed developments;
- legal advice;
- matters affecting the security of Council property;
- any other matter which the Council or special committee considers would prejudice the Council or any person.

5.3.6 Accountability

An important aspect of good governance is accountability. Council holds itself accountable to the community through regular reporting, community consultation and open and transparent decision making processes. For further information on Council's performance reporting and commitment to transparency please see 'Transparency and disclosure' and 'Performance Management'.

Councillors and Council officers are also held accountable for their actions through their respective Codes of Conduct. The Councillor Code of Conduct, the Code of Conduct for Employees and the Code of Conduct for Volunteers are available on Council's website.

Councillors and senior Council officers have also made a commitment to regular compliance education and training. Resources are available to which provide Councillors and all relevant officers with the information they require to perform their duties in a compliant and transparent way and to ensure the integrity and reputation of Council as a whole.

5.3.7 Performance Management

Just as it's important for Council to have a vision for the future and a plan on how we'll get there, it's also important for Council to report to the community on progress against the Council Plan.

Each quarter Council provides the community with an update on its performance against each key direction of the Council Plan, including major initiatives and strategic indicators. A quarterly financial report on the standard financial statements is also completed in line with the quarterly report to the community to provide an update on Council's financial performance. These reports are included in the Council agenda and can also be accessed on Council's website.

In addition to the Quarterly Report to the Community, Council prepares a comprehensive annual report. The Annual Report also includes the performance statement which Council is required under section 132 of the *Local Government Act 1989* to prepare. The Performance Statement includes key strategic activities, performance measures and targets included in the Budget, results, and an explanation where there has been a substantial failure to achieve the target.

Council is also required to participate in the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework (LGPRF). The LGPRF ensures that all councils are measuring and reporting on their performance in a consistent way.

The framework is made up of measures and a governance and management checklist which together build a comprehensive picture of council performance. The LGPRF enables the community, councils and the Government to benchmark and compare similar councils.

Audit Program and the Audit and Ethics Committee

The Audit and Ethics Committee is charged with monitoring, reviewing and advising the Council on the standard of its financial control, risk management and corporate governance. The Audit and Ethics Committee membership comprises five people appointed by Council. Two members are Councillors and the remaining three committee members are community members, one of who will be appointed as the chairperson.

Council engages an independent internal auditor to conduct internal audits on specific focus areas within the organisation. The audits identify areas of improvement to assist Council to improve performance and manage risk. The results of the audits are reported to, and monitored by, Council's Audit and Ethics Committee.

Council also participates in a range of external audits run by the Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO). These fall into two categories – financial audits and performance audits. The *Local Government Act 1989* requires Council to prepare a financial report and submit it to the Auditor-General for audit each financial year. Council also participates in a range of performance audits as required.

When Council participates in an external audit, the Audit and Ethics Committee play a key role in understanding the major focus areas of the audit, monitoring matters arising from the audit and monitoring the implementation of the external auditor's recommendations which are adopted by the Council.

Council's participation in audit programs demonstrates its commitment to

accountability and provides the community with confidence that the organisation is using resources in an efficient and effective manner.

5.3.8 Community Engagement Framework

The City of Casey is committed to community consultation as a way of ensuring Council provides services and programs in line with the needs and preferences of the community. Council's community consultation program allows people to become involved in Council's decision-making processes so they can help shape decisions that affect them and their community.

Community consultation is any process that the City of Casey undertakes to involve the public in decision-making by communicating with them by email, post, social media, phone or in person to find out their views about a particular issue, service or Council matter prior to making decisions.

Examples of community consultation include asking the community for feedback on Council policies, service delivery performance or involving the community in the progress or review of specific projects or developments. A full list of current community consultation opportunities is available on Council's website.

One of the most fundamental roles of all councils is to advocate on behalf of their communities for the improvements, services and funds they need, where these are the responsibility of the state and federal governments or other third parties.

The City of Casey has affirmed its commitment to advocating on behalf of its residents to ensure the development of critical infrastructure requirements to adequately support the growing Casey community and plan for future growth areas. Council's current advocacy priorities can be found on the website.

6. Administrative Updates

It is recognised that, from time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this document. Where an update does not materially alter this document, such a change may be made administratively. Examples include a change to the name of a Council department, a change to the name of a Federal or State Government department, and a minor update to legislation which does not have a material impact. However, any change or update which materially alters this document must be by resolution of Council.

7. Review

This Charter will be reviewed in line with the election of the Council. The next review is due 30 June 2021.