

GENERAL POLICY REVIEW

65/9/1 | #7438488

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council adopts the following General Policies:

1. Expenses Reimbursement and Support for Elected Representatives General Policy
2. Audit Committee Policy & Charter

INTERESTED PARTIES:

Nil

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Council Officers have undertaken a review of Councils Governance Policies and have updated existing policies to ensure both legislative compliance and transparency.

The updated policies are;

- Expense Reimbursement and Support for Elected Representatives
- Audit Committee Policy and Charter

Changes to existing policies are marked **red** in the attachments.

COMMENT:**Audit Committee Charter**

The Audit Committee General Policy and Audit Committee Charter is presented to the Audit Committee for an annual review. The Audit Committee Policy and Audit Committee Charter is due to expire in June 2024. As part of the review minor administrative changes have been made to ensure consistency with the Queensland Treasury Audit Committee Guidelines which were updated in October 2023.

The Audit Committee reviewed this policy and charter at the February 2024 meeting and endorsed the proposed changes.

Expense Reimbursement and Support for Elected Members

This policy has been updated to include a definition of 'official council duties', allow for Councillors to choose the reimbursement method for vehicle expenses and include a new provision of an annual allowance to assist Councillors meet the cost of operating a mobile office.

OPTIONS:

That Council

Option 1: That Council adopts the General Policies.

Option 2: That Council does not adopt the General Policies.

CONSIDERATIONS:

Corporate and Operational Plans:

Focus Five – Being a Leader in Local Government

Statutory:

The Audit Committee Policy & Charter has been reviewed against Chapter 5 Part 11 Auditing of the *Local Government Regulation 2012*.

Section 249-251 of the *Local Government Regulations 2012* state that Council must adopt an Expense Reimbursement Policy.

CONSULTATION:

The Audit Committee Policy and Charter have been endorsed by the Audit Committee.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 – Expenses Reimbursement and Support for Elected Representatives
General Policy doc [#801852](#)

Attachment 2 – Audit Committee Policy & Charter ([#519266](#))



Christine Posgate
Director People & Organisational Performance

PROPOSED NEW DOCUMENT:

CAIRNS REGIONAL COUNCIL



General Policy

EXPENSES REIMBURSEMENT AND SUPPORT FOR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

Intent The purpose of this policy is to set the parameters to authorise payment of reasonable expenses incurred, or to be incurred, by Councillors and provide resources including administrative support to assist Councillors to discharge their duties and responsibilities.

Scope This policy applies to the Mayor and Councillors and is made pursuant to section 250 of *the Local Government Regulation 2012*.

PROVISIONS

Councillors are entitled to be reimbursed reasonable expenses incurred while undertaking official Council business and are to be provided with the appropriate support to assist them in undertaking their duties. A budget will be allocated each financial year for reasonable expenses to be incurred in accordance with this policy.

Resources provided to Councillors are for the sole use of Councillors while undertaking their duties and must be used responsibly and appropriately.

DEFINITION

Official Council Business/ Duties

Official Council duties are activities conducted on behalf of Council where a Councillor is required to undertake certain tasks to satisfy a legislative requirement, perform ceremonial activities or achieve business objectives of Council. Official Council duties should result in a benefit being achieved either for the Local Government and/or the local community.

This includes but is not limited to:

- Preparing, attending and participating in Council meetings, committee meetings, workshops, strategic briefings, deputations and inspections;
- Undertaking professional development opportunities;
- Attending civic functions or events;
- Attending public/community meetings, presentation dinners, annual general meetings and the like where invited as a Councillor;
- Attending community events (eg. School fetes, community group awards and presentations, fundraisers); and
- Attending networking events and business meetings when attending as a Councillor.

Participating in a event without formal invitation as a Councillor or being a representative on a board not associated with Council, is not regarded as official Council duties.

REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES

Conference and External Meetings

A Councillors travelling overseas in an official capacity or a Councillor attending a conference where they will be required to vote on behalf of Council must be approved by a full Council.

If a Councillor wants to attend a conference or external workshop/seminar they must submit a request to the Mayor for approval. The conference or external workshop/seminar must have a direct relationship to an operational area of Council and the Councillor should be able to demonstrate a benefit to the ratepayers of Cairns. Prior to attending the conference or external workshop/seminar the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) may provide input on relevance to the organisation.

Councillors are required to prepare and table a report at the relevant committee meeting or workshop⁴¹ immediately following return from the conference, external workshops/seminars and the report should include summary and outcomes / learnings.

Expenses covered when attending conference / external workshop/seminars include:

Conference registration fees

Where Councillors have received approval to attend a conference, workshop/seminar, Council will make payment on behalf of the Councillor and/or reimburse any reasonable expenses incurred by the Councillor associated with their attendance.

Economy / Discount airfare

All Councillor travel will be booked and paid for by Council. Economy class is to be used where possible although upgrade may be approved in certain conditions or at the Councillors expense. Airline tickets will not be transferable, but flight insurance will be paid to cover Councillors travelling for official Council business.

Accommodation

Councillors will be entitled to stay at hotel accommodation when it is considered necessary to attend to official Council business, or where it is not practical for the Councillor to attend an early morning commitment or return home for the night.

Meals

Councillors are entitled to be reimbursed for the cost of a meal when travelling or attending to official Council business outside the region. Provided the Councillor incurs the cost personally, and the meal was not provided as part of the registration costs of the activity / event or during a funded flight and receipts are able to be presented.

Incidental Expenses

Councillors are eligible for the following incidental expenses:

- An allowance of \$20 will be paid to cover newspapers, magazines, snacks, tea and coffee, private phone calls, and personal items whilst travelling on official Council business;
- Cab charge facility or reimbursement for public transport will be paid for Council approved Conferences and / External Meetings.

Training and Professional Development

Where the Mayor or CEO invite Councillors to attend training courses or workshops/seminars related to a Councillor's role, Council will reimburse the total costs of the course. There is no requirement for a Council resolution to approve these attendances.

Expenses covered for Training and Professional Development is identical as that detailed in Conference and External Meetings.

Discretionary Professional Development

Each Councillor can request to attend, workshops, courses, seminars and conferences that improve their skills relevant to the role of Councillor subject to budget considerations. Requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Mayor and CEO.

There is no requirement for a Council resolution to approve these attendances. Councillor must submit a request in writing, with all the relevant documentation to Mayor at least 14 days prior to the commencement date.

Vehicles

The use of a Councillors private vehicle for Council business will be reimbursed by Council, with Councillors electing one of the following two options;

- a) Councillors accept an annual payment, paid fortnightly as reimbursement for the use of private vehicles for Council business as per below table; or
- b) Reimbursement claimed based on logbook substantiation of the relevance of the travel for Council business. The amount reimbursed will be based upon the published Australian Taxation Office business use of a motor vehicle cents per kilometre rate applicable at the time of travel. Claims must be submitted on the prescribed form and submitted on a monthly basis.

Councillors must advise the Payroll which option they are selecting. Councillors may opt to change reimbursement method at the start of each financial year.

The annual vehicle allowance is as follows and will be paid fortnightly.

Division 1	\$15,000
Division 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	\$5,500
Division 8	\$8,000
Division 9	\$13,000

The Mayor will be provided with a fully maintained Council vehicle.

Definitions for use of a private vehicle:

- Official Council business – to or from official Council business to another location for official Council business
- Council private – to or from home, a private appointment or other non-Council business to a location for official Council Business
- Private – to or from home to a private appointment or a location for other non-Council business

Councillors are provided with parking exemption for Council regulated parking zones for their private vehicle used for official Council business. Councillors must be aware of the conditions of use.

Administrative Supports and Access to Council Office Facilities

Council is responsible for the provision of appropriate administrative support and facilities to ensure all Councillors are able to perform their duties and undertake Council business. Administrative support and resources are provided to Councillors for the sole purpose of legitimate Council business and should be used responsibly and appropriately.

Councillors will be provided with the following:

- Access to workstations within the Administration Building as well as kitchen amenities and restrooms;
- Council meeting rooms for usage as required and when available;
- Administrative support for Council related business;
- Use of Council landline telephone and internet access;
- Each Councillor will be provided with a mobile phone to assist Councillor in undertaking their role;
- Laptop / computer as defined by Council;
- Access to printer, photocopies, paper shredder, and/or scanner;
- Stationary and personalised letterhead including postage costs, for undertaking duties associated with their position (not campaign related); and
- Any other administrative necessities, which Council resolves, are necessary to meet the business of Council.

In addition to the above, the Mayor will be provided with a separate office and dedicated officer for administrative support.

Councillors are expected to comply with the same conditions of use, guidelines and processes for business and communication tools that apply to employees. Support for the Council supplied laptops and peripheral devices will be provided through Council's IS Service Desk (within standard business hours). If rectification requires more than phone support the Council provided laptop or peripheral devices will be returned to Spence Street office by the Councillor.

Upon receipt of a claim with relevant receipts, a maximum amount of \$600, per annum, will be reimbursed to Councillors for home communication expenditure.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Council will provide to Councillors necessary PPE and other equipment for use on official Council business as and when required.

Insurance Cover

Councillors will be covered under relevant Council insurance policies while on Council business. Specifically, insurance cover will be provided for public liability, professional indemnity, Councillors liability and personal accident and domestic and overseas travel.

Council will pay the excess (deductible) on all insurance claims, made in accordance with Legal Assistance for Councillors and Employees Policy.

Council will cover any costs incurred through injury, investigation, hearings or legal proceedings into the conduct of a Councillor where arising out of, or in connection with, the Councillor's performance of their Councillor functions. Where it has been found that the Councillor breached the provisions of the *Local*

Government Act 2009 or other legislation, then there will be no cover provided to the Councillor and the Councillor must reimburse Council all associated costs incurred by Council. ⁴³

Hospitality

Councillors may incur hospitality expenses while conducting official Council business, apart from civic receptions organised by Council. The Mayor particularly, may require additional reimbursement when entertaining dignitaries outside of official events.

To allow of this expense, the following amounts can be claimed:

Councillors	Up to \$500 per annum
Mayor	As per budget

To claim, the Mayor or Councillors must provide a written statement of whom they entertained and receipt of costs. Claims must be presented within 3 months of incurring the expense.

Mobile Office

Councillors are encouraged to engage with the community to fulfil their duties and by doing so may incur expenses to have a presence at shopping centres, markets etc. An allowance of \$1,000 per annum will be payable for this purpose. The allowance will be paid at the start of each financial year.

EXCLUSIONS

Councillors shall not be reimbursed for expenses incurred for spouses, partners or other family members. The exception is the Mayor's partner when performing an official duty on behalf of Council.

Alcohol is excluded from reimbursement.

Participating in a community group event without formal invitation as a Councillor or being a representative on a Board not associated with Council, is not regarded as Council business.

Councillors must not use council-provided resources such as vehicles, phones, email accounts or printers for campaigning. This applies at any time, not just during the official election period / caretaker period.

Heading	Description
Conferences / Seminars	Acceptance of costs, including travel and accommodation, associated with attending Council approved conferences or external workshops/seminars.
Discretionary Development Professional	Payment for Councillor to undertake professional development course or similar, including associated travel and accommodation expenses if applicable subject to budget considerations.
Travel as required by represent Council	Acceptance of costs associated with travel on behalf of and representing Council.
Vehicles	Annual allowance or reimbursement of mileage for use of private vehicle for official Council business.
Administrative Support / Access to Council Office Facilities	Provision within Council of office space, carparking, laptop/IT needs, printer, copier etc
Insurance Cover	Insurance coverage for public liability, professional indemnity, personal accident.
Council Memberships	Ability for Councillors at their own expense to access staff offered benefits membership such as Fitness Passport.
Support Resources	Dedicated support via Executive Support Officer - Councillors and Personal Assistant to Mayor.
Legal Assistance	Acceptance of legal assistance costs as required in support of actions against Councillors in undertaking their role.
Telecommunications	Maximum amount of \$600, per annum, will be reimbursed to Councillors for home communication expenditure.
Hospitality	Acceptance of hospitality costs in hosting dignitaries etc outside of formal Council events: Councillors - \$500 per annum Mayor – as per budget
Mobile Office Reimbursement	Allowance of \$1,000 per annum for Councillors to off-set costs associated with operating a mobile office in shopping centres, markets or similar.

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This policy remains in force for a period of no longer than six (6) months after the next quadrennial election.

Director Responsible for Review:

People and Organisational Performance

ORIGINALLY ADOPTED: 13/11/2001

CURRENT ADOPTION: 08/12/2021

DUE FOR REVISION: 08/12/2022

REVOKED/SUPERSEDED:

John Andrejic
Acting Chief Executive Officer

General Policy**EXPENSES REIMBURSEMENT AND SUPPORT FOR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES**

- Intent** The purpose of this policy is to set the parameters to authorise payment of reasonable expenses incurred, or to be incurred, by Councillors and provide resources including administrative support to assist Councillors to discharge their duties and responsibilities
- Scope** This policy applies to the Mayor and Councillors and is made pursuant to section 250 of *the Local Government Regulation 2012*.

PROVISIONS

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Discretionary Professional Development

Each Councillor can request to attend, workshops, courses, seminars and conferences that improve their skills relevant to the role of Councillor subject to budget considerations. This training is limited to \$2,500 per Councillor is each quadrennial term of office. Additional requests above this amount will be considered on a case by case basis by the Mayor and CEO. Requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Mayor and CEO.

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Insurance Cover

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Council will pay the excess (deductible) on all insurance claims, made in accordance with Legal Assistance for Councillors and Employees Policy. ⁴⁸

~~Council will pay the excess for injury claims made by a Councillor resulting from the conduct of official Council business and on any claim made under insurance cover.~~

Council will cover any costs incurred through injury, investigation, hearings or legal proceedings into the conduct of a Councillor where arising out of, or in connection with, the Councillor's performance of their Councillor functions. Where it has been found that the Councillor breached the provisions of the *Local Government Act 2009* or other legislation, then there will be no cover provided to the Councillor and the Councillor must reimburse Council all associated costs incurred by Council.

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Director Responsible for Review:

People and Organisational Performance

ORIGINALLY ADOPTED: 13/11/2001

CURRENT ADOPTION: 08/12/2021

DUE FOR REVISION: 08/12/2022

REVOKED/SUPERSEDED:

John Andrejic
Acting Chief Executive Officer

PROPOSED NEW DOCUMENT:

CAIRNS REGIONAL COUNCIL



General Policy

AUDIT COMMITTEE

Intent To establish a policy for the creation and operation of an Audit Committee and the establishment of an Audit Committee Charter.

Scope This policy shall apply to Council, its Audit Committee, its Internal Auditor and staff subject to or responsible for the various functions of Council's corporate governance activities.

PROVISIONS

1. Council will appoint an Audit Committee which will include members other than Councillors and may from time to time alter the membership of such Committee. The composition of the committee will be in accordance with s210 of the *Local Government Regulation 2012*.
2. The Audit Committee will develop and maintain with the approval of Council, an Audit Committee Charter setting out how the Audit Committee will operate including how it will fulfil the obligations imposed by the laws, regulations and standards relating to Audit Committees. A copy of the Audit Committee Charter is attached.

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This policy is to remain in force until otherwise determined by Council.

Director Responsible for Review:

People and Organisational Performance

ORIGINALLY ADOPTED: 24/10/2002
CURRENT ADOPTION: 10/06/2020
DUE FOR REVISION: 10/06/2024
REVOKED/SUPERSEDED:

John Andrejic
Acting Chief Executive Officer

Cairns Regional Council – Audit Committee Charter

PURPOSE OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE CHARTER

The Audit Committee Charter (Charter) sets out the objectives, role, authority, responsibilities, membership, tenure and other requirements that apply to govern the Audit Committee in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2009* and the *Local Government Regulation 2012*.

OBJECTIVES OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

Under the s105 of the *Local Government Act 2009* Council must establish an efficient and effective internal audit function. Council must also establish an audit committee, the audit committee is a committee that:-

- (a) Monitors and reviews –
 - (i) The integrity of financial documents; and
 - (ii) The internal audit function; and
 - (iii) The effectiveness and objectivity of the local government's internal auditors; and
- (b) Makes recommendations to the local government about any matters that the audit committee considers need action or improvement.

The purpose of the Audit Committee is to assist the Chief Executive Officer and Council with independent advice on key Council activities. These activities include, but are not limited to, corporate governance, internal control systems, enterprise wide risk management, internal and/or external audit functions, statutory compliance and financial reporting.

The committee will always be aware of its obligations and responsibilities to act in the best interests of the Cairns Regional Council and the wider community that it serves.

The Audit Committee is an advisory body only and must keep Council informed of its activities. The Audit Committee does not replace or replicate established management responsibilities and delegations, the responsibilities of other executive management groups within Cairns Regional Council, or the reporting lines and responsibilities of either internal audit or external audit functions. The committee will provide prompt and constructive reports on its findings, particularly when issues are identified that could present a material risk or threat to Council.

AUTHORITY

The Audit Committee has no line of authority; however, the committee has full right of access to Directors through the Chief Executive Officer. The Audit Committee has the authority to make recommendations to Council, via the relevant channels, on matters within the scope responsibility as outlined in this charter.

In performing its monitoring, oversight, review and advisory role the Audit Committee is authorised to:

- Request investigations into matters within its scope of responsibility.
- Access information, records and Council employees for such purpose and subject to the relevant interaction guidelines
- Request the attendance of any employee, including executive staff, at committee meetings
- Conduct meetings with Council's internal and external auditors as necessary; and
- Seek advice from external parties as necessary.

SCOPE OF AUDIT COMMITTEE

The scope of the Audit Committee includes but is not limited to the following aspects of the Council's activities:

- Financial compliance
- Internal audit
- External audit
- Risk management and control measures
- Legal and legislative compliance
- Sustainability considerations including economic, environmental, social and governance

- Referrals by Council
- Self-development of the Audit Committee and,
- Self-assessment of the Audit Committee.

Furthermore, the Audit Committee in accordance with section 211(1)(b) of the *Local Government Regulation 2012* must review each of the following:

1. the internal audit plan for the current financial year;
2. the internal audit progress report and the actions to which recommendations relate;
3. the draft financial statements for the preceding financial year before the statement is certified and given to the Auditor General for auditing under section 212; and,
4. the Auditor General's audit report and the Auditor General's observation report about the local government's financial statements for the preceding financial year.

From time to time, the Committee will focus its attention on matters referred to it by Council within its scope of responsibility.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The committee is directly responsible and accountable to Council for the exercise of its duties and responsibilities. In carrying out its duties and responsibilities, the audit committee must always recognise that primary responsibility for management of Council rests with Council.

The responsibilities of the Audit Committee can be summarised as addressing the following areas:

- Financial Statements
- Risk Management
- Internal Control
- Performance Management
- Internal Audit
- External Audit
- Legal and Compliance

These responsibilities have been devised to not only satisfy the statutory obligations under the *Local Government Act 2009* and associated regulations but to promote and enhance a service excellence culture across Cairns Regional Council. They include:

- To ensure that a regular review of Council's accounting policies and practices has been conducted in the light of all legislation applicable to Local Government, Australian Accounting Standards and generally accepted accounting principles.
- To ensure the effectiveness of operating mechanisms and frameworks to encompass all financial and non-financial internal control and risk management functions. Monitors the work undertaken in addressing Council's strategic risks and if required seek a more detailed review on specific risks.
- To administer Council's Internal Audit function and ensuring activities are completed with objectivity and independence. In particular monitor the implementation of the annual internal audit plan through the Internal Audit Matrix and accepted audit recommendations.
- Provide effective liaison and facilitate communication between management, internal and external audit and Council. Also monitor the judicious implementation of audit advice and/or recommendations by management.
- To satisfy itself as regards the integrity and prudence of management control systems including the review of policies and/or practices.
- Ensuring effective managerial processes are operating to monitor compliance with statutory and regulatory constraints to foster a culture of ethical and legal behaviour throughout the organisation.
- To ensure a regular review and assessment is conducted of the adequacy of management reporting to the Council in terms of the quantity, quality and timing of information necessary to

understand and report internally and externally on the Council's risks, operations and financial condition.

- To report any matter identified during the course of carrying out its duties that the Audit Committee considers should be brought to the attention of the Council.

To perform or undertake on behalf of the Council any such other tasks or actions as the Council may from time to time authorise.

COMPOSITION, INDEPENDENCE & CONFLICT OF INTEREST

MEMBERSHIP

Section 210 of the *Local Government Regulation 2012* states that the Audit Committee must consist of at least 3 and no more than 6 members and of these members two must be Councillors. The membership of the audit committee will be as follows.

The Audit Committee will comprise of two, but no more than two (2), Councillors appointed by the local government. Membership to be no more than 6 (six) members and at least 1 (one) member who has significant experience and skills in financial matters. Each member will have full voting rights. At least one member is to have significant experience, skills and tertiary qualifications in financial matters. Council has resolved that there shall be two external members on Audit Committee.

The Mayor and another Councillor will be appointed to the Audit Committee. An alternate Committee member will also be appointed to attend in the absence of one of the Councillors.

Members, including the Chair, are appointed by Cairns Regional Council.

A minimum of two (2) members will be external to the agency. External members are appointed based on personal qualities and skills and proxies are not permitted if the external member is unable to attend meetings. The appointment of the external members will be a decision of the full Council.

Council has resolved that to enhance the independence and expertise of its audit process, it will appoint two of the external members to the organisation to fill the positions of Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of its Audit Committee.

SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE OF AUDIT COMMITTEE

Council will appoint at least one (1) member which will have financial expertise as described in the Queensland Treasury publication, *Audit Committee Guidelines – Improving Accountability and Performance*.

The desired core personal attributes of individual members include:

- An ability to think strategically, ask relevant questions, evaluate answers, and continue to probe for information until completely satisfied with the answers provided.
- The desire to always encourage openness and transparency.
- An ability to think independently, objectively and have an inquiring mind,
- Strong ethical values, including a thoughtful approach to ethical issues that might be faced.
- A sense of integrity and an ability to give direct and honest opinions.

Given the nature and responsibility of an audit committee, collectively the members would have the following key skills and experience:

- Thorough understanding of accounting and auditing standards including a high level of competency in financial reporting and analysis complex financial reports supported by relevant recognised qualifications.
- Strong leadership and stakeholder management including the ability to manage relationships with the agency's assurance providers including internal and external audit.
- A high level of understanding of governance frameworks including accountability requirements, performance management, service delivery, legislative and policy requirements.
- A high level of understanding in the application of risk management frameworks including identification, monitoring and management.
- A high level of understanding in the application of internal control principles and processes

including the key elements of control effectiveness and methodologies of assessment.

- A high level of knowledge in effective project governance and management including information and communication technology (ICT) project management and emerging technology.
- A thorough understanding of the core activities of the agency and the industry and environment in which it operates including its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

It is the function and responsibility of the Chairperson to oversee Audit Committee meeting agendas from issues arising from Council's audit process which fall within the scope of the Committee's Charter, in concert with other appointees.

TERM OF APPOINTMENT

Maximum appointment period will be for a total of 6 years, being 2 terms each of 3 years. However, Council may resolve to extend this appointment period by up to 12 months at Council's discretion as to mitigate the risk associated with all committee members' tenure expiring at the same time.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST

All matters discussed at Audit Committee meetings together with all material provided to members of the committee is of a confidential nature. All material provided to the committee is to be stamped "Confidential". Audit committee members must not use Council information for any personal gain or benefit to their immediate family or in any manner that would be contrary to law or detrimental to the welfare and goodwill of the agency. This requirement extends to any employment an audit committee member may subsequently undertake in the private sector or in a private capacity.

Additionally, members must:

- not take or retain any material containing any Confidential Information after the end of their tenure on the audit committee, and
- immediately deliver up to the agency, at the agency's request, all material in their possession or control containing the Confidential Information.

All members of the Audit Committee are to refrain from making any public comment or issuing any information, in any form, concerning the Committee or the matters of interest to the Committee without the authority of the Mayor.

Members are required to declare any interests that could constitute a real, potential or apparent conflict of interest with respect to participation on the committee. The declaration must be made on appointment to the committee and in relation to specific agenda items at the outset of each committee meeting and be updated as necessary. Conflicts of interest should be recorded so that there is transparency, accountability, and public defensibility about the interests of audit committee members.

MEETINGS OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

TIMINGS OF MEETINGS

The audit committee of a local government must meet at least twice each year and in accordance with s211 of the *Local Government Regulation 2012* review each of the following matters:

- the internal audit plan for the internal audit for the current financial year;
- the internal audit progress report for the internal audit for the preceding financial year including the recommendations in the report and the actions to which the recommendations relate;
- a draft of the local government's financial statement for the preceding financial year before the statement is certified and given to the auditor-general under section 212 of the *Local Government Regulation 2012*;
- the auditor-general's audit report and auditor-general's observation report about the local government's financial statement for the preceding financial year;

Special meetings of the Audit Committee may be convened as required after consultation with the Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer. The internal and external auditors may request a meeting if they consider one is necessary.

AGENDA

The Chairperson shall determine the agenda in conjunction with Council staff and circulating it to the members prior to each meeting and attending to all meeting arrangements. The format of Audit Committee meetings shall be:

- Statutory elements (financial statements; Internal and External Audit reporting)
- Potential or emergent strategic risks
- Compliance / governance reporting on a for noting basis.

At a meeting of the audit committee a quorum is at least half of the number of members of the committee and either the chairperson presides; or if the chairperson is absent, the member chosen by the members present as chairperson for the meeting presides.

Council shall provide administrative support to minute proceedings of all meetings.

ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

The Chief Executive Officer would ordinarily be present at all meetings and other executives (e.g. Director of Finance and Business Services Chief Financial Officer and Director People and Organisational Performance) may sit with the Audit Committee on matters of relevance to their particular duties. Council staff do not have a vote.

Internal auditor and external auditor would normally make presentations to the Audit Committee at its meetings.

The Councillors, Executive Team, managers and other staff of the Council are to be made aware they are able to raise matters with the Chairperson of the Audit Committee for discussion by the Committee but only after reference to the Chief Executive Officer.

Minor matters concerning the internal audit activities may be raised by the Chairperson of the Audit Committee with the Chief Executive Officer from time to time. The Chief Executive Officer should deal with the issues as considered appropriate.

All matters of significance concerning Internal Audit activities will be reported to Council, together with a covering report from the Chair.

COUNCIL REPORTING

All audit reports will be tabled at Audit Committee meetings for review and recommendation to Council.

It is expected that regular reports will be received on matters to be defined by the Audit Committee but are likely to include:

- external audit reports;
- Council's organisational structure and its systems and procedures for carrying out its functions and duties under the Act;
- the risks to which Council's operations are exposed;
- internal control measures adopted by Cairns Regional Council for managing the risks that have been identified; and
- Annual Financial Reporting Plan and Assurance Map.

All members of the Audit Committee are to receive the latest monthly financial statements of the Council prior to the Audit Committee meetings together with a commentary on the result for the month. These reports are provided on a confidential basis.

These activities as well as responsibilities of Asset Committee will be tracked via Audit Committee Activity Matrix and reported at each Audit Committee Meeting.

The Chairperson of the Audit Committee is to be available to address the Council on any concern they may have on any Audit Committee reports presented to Council or issues regarding the Audit Committee.

The minutes of each Audit Committee meeting, as soon as practicable after a meeting, will be tabled with Council together with a report identifying any recommendations arising from the audit committee.

ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE

The audit committee will assess its performance and achievements against this charter on an annual basis.

General Policy**AUDIT COMMITTEE**

- Intent** To establish a policy for the creation and operation of an Audit Committee and the establishment of an Audit Committee Charter.
- Scope** This policy shall apply to Council, its Audit Committee, its Internal Auditor and staff subject to or responsible for the various functions of Council's corporate governance activities.

PROVISIONS

1. Council will appoint an Audit Committee which will include members other than Councillors and may from time to time alter the membership of such Committee. The composition of the committee will be in accordance with s210 of the *Local Government Regulation 2012*.
2. The Audit Committee will develop and maintain with the approval of Council, an Audit Committee Charter setting out how the Audit Committee will operate including how it will fulfil the obligations imposed by the laws, regulations and standards relating to Audit Committees. A copy of the Audit Committee Charter is attached.

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This policy is to remain in force until otherwise determined by Council.

Director Responsible for Review:

People and Organisational Performance

ORIGINALLY ADOPTED: 24/10/2002
CURRENT ADOPTION: 10/06/2020
DUE FOR REVISION: 10/06/2024
REVOKED/SUPERSEDED:

Mica Martin
Chief Executive Officer

Cairns Regional Council – Audit Committee Charter

PURPOSE OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE CHARTER

~~The purpose of this charter is to outline the function and operation of the Audit Committee.~~ The Audit Committee Charter (Charter) sets out the ~~committee's~~ objectives, role, authority, responsibilities, membership, tenure and other requirements that apply to govern the Audit Committee in accordance with the Local Government Act 2009 and the Local Government Regulation 2012~~administrative matters (composition, tenure, meeting operation and reporting arrangements).~~

OBJECTIVES OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

~~Council is required to establish an Audit Committee u~~nder the s105 of the *Local Government Act 2009* Council must establish an efficient and effective internal audit function. Council must also establish an audit committee, the audit committee is a committee that:-

- (a) Monitors and reviews –
 - (i) The integrity of financial documents; and
 - (ii) The internal audit function; and
 - (iii) The effectiveness and objectivity of the local government's internal auditors; and
- (b) Makes recommendations to the local government about any matters that the audit committee considers need action or improvement.

~~The purpose of The the~~ The Audit Committee is to assist provides the Chief Executive Officer and Council with independent advice on key Council activities. These activities include, but are not limited to, corporate governance, internal control systems, enterprise wide risk management, internal and/or external audit functions, statutory compliance and financial reporting.

The committee will always be aware of its obligations and responsibilities to act in the best interests of the Cairns Regional Council and the wider community that it serves.

The Audit Committee is an advisory body only and must keep Council informed of its activities. The Audit Committee does not replace or replicate established management responsibilities and delegations, the responsibilities of other executive management groups within Cairns Regional Council, or the reporting lines and responsibilities of either internal audit or external audit functions. The committee will provide prompt and constructive reports on its findings, particularly when issues are identified that could present a material risk or threat to Council.

AUTHORITY

The Audit Committee has no line of authority; however, the committee has full right of access to Directors through the Chief Executive Officer~~executive powers~~. The Audit Committee has the authority to make recommendations to Council, via the relevant channels, on matters within the scope responsibility as outlined in this charter.

In performing its monitoring, oversight, review and advisory role the Audit Committee is authorised to:

- ~~Conduct or authorise~~ Request investigations into matters within its scope of responsibility.
- Access information, records and Council employees for such purpose and subject to the relevant interaction guidelines
- Request the attendance of any employee, including executive staff, at committee meetings
- Conduct meetings with Council's internal and external auditors as necessary; and
- Seek advise from external parties as necessary.

SCOPE OF AUDIT COMMITTEE

The scope of the Audit Committee includes but is not limited to the following aspects of the

Council's activities:

- [Financial compliance](#)
- [Internal audit](#)
- [External audit](#)
- [Risk management and control measures](#)
- [Legal and legislative compliance](#)
- [Sustainability considerations including economic, environmental, social and governance](#)
- [Referrals by Council](#)
- [Self-development of the Audit Committee and,](#)
- [Self-assessment of the Audit Committee.](#)

Furthermore, the Audit Committee in accordance with section 211(1)(b) of the *Local Government Regulation 2012* must review each of the following:

1. [the internal audit plan for the current financial year;](#)
2. [the internal audit progress report and the actions to which recommendations relate;](#)
3. [the draft financial statements for the preceding financial year before the statement is certified and given to the Auditor General for auditing under section 212; and,](#)
4. [the Auditor General's audit report and the Auditor General's observation report about the local government's financial statements for the preceding financial year.](#)

From time to time, the Committee will focus its attention on matters referred to it by Council within its scope of responsibility.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The committee is directly responsible and accountable to Council for the exercise of its duties and responsibilities. In carrying out its duties and responsibilities, the audit committee must always recognise that primary responsibility for management of Council rests with Council.

The responsibilities of the Audit Committee can be summarised as addressing the following areas:

- Financial Statements
- Risk Management
- Internal Control
- Performance Management
- Internal Audit
- External Audit
- Legal and Compliance

These responsibilities have been devised to not only satisfy the statutory obligations under the *Local Government Act 2009* and associated regulations but to promote and enhance a service excellence culture across Cairns Regional Council. They include:

- To ensure that a regular review of Council's accounting policies and practices has been conducted in the light of all legislation applicable to Local Government, Australian Accounting Standards and generally accepted accounting principles.
- To ensure the effectiveness of operating mechanisms and frameworks to encompass all financial and non-financial internal control and risk management functions. Monitors the work undertaken in addressing Council's strategic risks and if required seek a more detailed review on specific risks.

- To administer Council's Internal Audit function and ensuring activities are completed with objectivity and independence. In particular monitor the implementation of the annual internal audit plan through the Internal Audit Matrix and accepted audit recommendations.
- Provide effective liaison and facilitate communication between management, internal and external audit and Council. Also monitor the judicious implementation of audit advice and/or recommendations by management.
- To satisfy itself as regards the integrity and prudence of management control systems including the review of policies and/or practices.
- Ensuring effective managerial processes are operating to monitor compliance with statutory and regulatory constraints to foster a culture of ethical and legal behaviour throughout the organisation.
- To ensure a regular review and assessment is conducted of the adequacy of management reporting to the Council in terms of the quantity, quality and timing of information necessary to understand and report internally and externally on the Council's risks, operations and financial condition.
- To report any matter identified during the course of carrying out its duties that the Audit Committee considers should be brought to the attention of the Council.

To perform or undertake on behalf of the Council any such other tasks or actions as the Council may from time to time authorise.

COMPOSITION, INDEPENDENCE & CONFLICT OF INTEREST

MEMBERSHIP

Section 210 of the *Local Government Regulation 2012* states that the Audit Committee must consist of at least 3 and no more than 6 members and of these members two must be Councillors. The membership of the audit committee will be as follows.

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SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE OF AUDIT COMMITTEE

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The desired core personal attributes of individual members include:

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Given the nature and responsibility of an audit committee, collectively the members would have the following key skills and experience:

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- A high level of understanding in the application of risk management frameworks including identification, monitoring and management.
- A high level of understanding in the application of internal control principles and processes including the key elements of control effectiveness and methodologies of assessment.
- A high level of knowledge in effective project governance and management including information and communication technology (ICT) project management and emerging technology.
- A thorough understanding of the core activities of the agency and the industry and environment in which it operates including its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

~~Eligibility criteria will require external members to have significant knowledge and experience in at least one of the following areas:~~

- ~~Organisational Development/Strategy~~
- ~~Financial Management~~

- [Legal Compliance](#)
- [Audit Functions/Operations](#)

It is the function and responsibility of the Chairperson to [oversee develop](#) Audit Committee meeting agendas from issues arising from Council's audit process which fall within the scope of the Committee's Charter, in concert with other appointees.

TERM OF APPOINTMENT

Maximum appointment period will be for a total of 6 years, being 2 terms each of 3 years. However, Council may resolve to extend this appointment period by up to 12 months at Council's discretion as to mitigate the risk associated with all committee members' tenure expiring at the same time.

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Special meetings of the Audit Committee may be convened as required after consultation with the Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer. The internal and external auditors may request a meeting if they consider one is necessary.

AGENDA

The Chairperson shall determine the agenda in conjunction with Council staff and circulating it to the members prior to each meeting and attending to all meeting arrangements. The format of Audit Committee meetings shall be:

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Council shall provide administrative support to minute proceedings of all meetings.

ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

The Chief Executive Officer would ordinarily be present at all meetings and other executives (e.g. Director of Finance and Business Services Chief Financial Officer and Director People and Organisational Performance) may sit with the Audit Committee on matters of relevance to their particular duties. Council staff do not have a vote.

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All matters of significance concerning Internal Audit activities will be reported to Council, together with a covering report from the Chair.

COUNCIL REPORTING

All audit reports will be tabled at Audit Committee meetings for review and recommendation to Council.

It is expected that regular reports will be received on matters to be defined by the Audit Committee but are likely to include:

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- internal control measures adopted by Cairns Regional Council for managing the risks that have been identified; and
- Annual Financial Reporting Plan and Assurance Map.

All members of the Audit Committee are to receive the latest monthly financial statements of the Council prior to the Audit Committee meetings together with a commentary on the result for the month. These reports are provided on a confidential basis.

These activities as well as responsibilities of Asset Committee will be tracked via Audit Committee Activity Matrix and reported at each Audit Committee Meeting.

The Chairperson of the Audit Committee is to be available to address the Council on any concern they may have on any Audit Committee reports presented to Council or issues regarding the Audit Committee.

The minutes of each Audit Committee meeting, as soon as practicable after a meeting, will be tabled with Council together with a report identifying any recommendations arising from the audit committee.

ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE

The audit committee will assess its performance and achievements against this charter on an annual basis.