MAKING THE MOST OF MEETINGS

Session overview

Meetings Basics

Meeting types and rules

Meeting Roles

Maintaining Order

Making Meetings effective

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Meeting Basics

Meeting Basics

How the governing body exercises its functions

- To make decisions on councils strategic policy direction and consider various other issues
- Decisions only made by resolution passed by a majority of councillors at properly convened meetings at which a quorum is present
- Council may delegate some functions, but not all

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Legal Requirements

Set by:

- Local Government Act
- Local Government (General) Regulation
- Model Code of Meeting Practice for Local Councils in NSW (Model Code)
- Councils Code of Meeting Practice
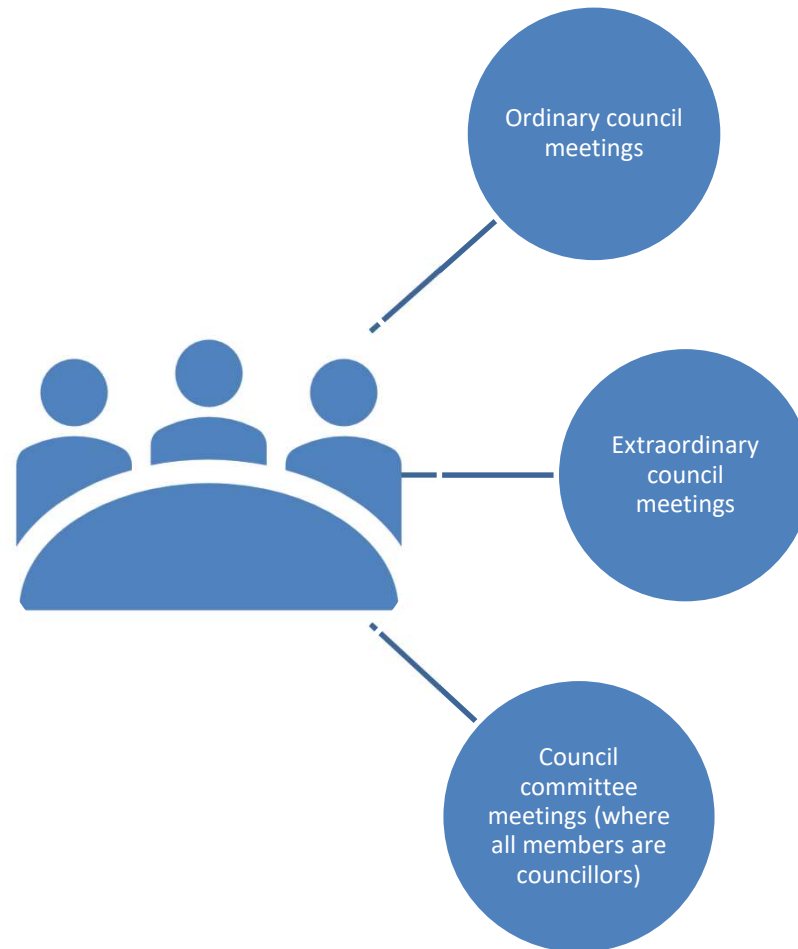 - Councils Code of Meeting Practice must incorporate mandatory provisions of the Model Code

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Meeting Principles

Meetings should be:

- Transparent
- Informed
- Inclusive
- Principled
- Trusted
- Respectful
- Effective
- Orderly

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Meeting Types and Rules

Formal Meeting Types

Ordinary council meetings

Extraordinary council meetings

Council committee meetings (where all members are councillors)

Other meeting types

Council committees where not all members are councillors/advisory committee

- Members may include non councillors eg staff, community members

Workshops and briefings

- No formal decisions
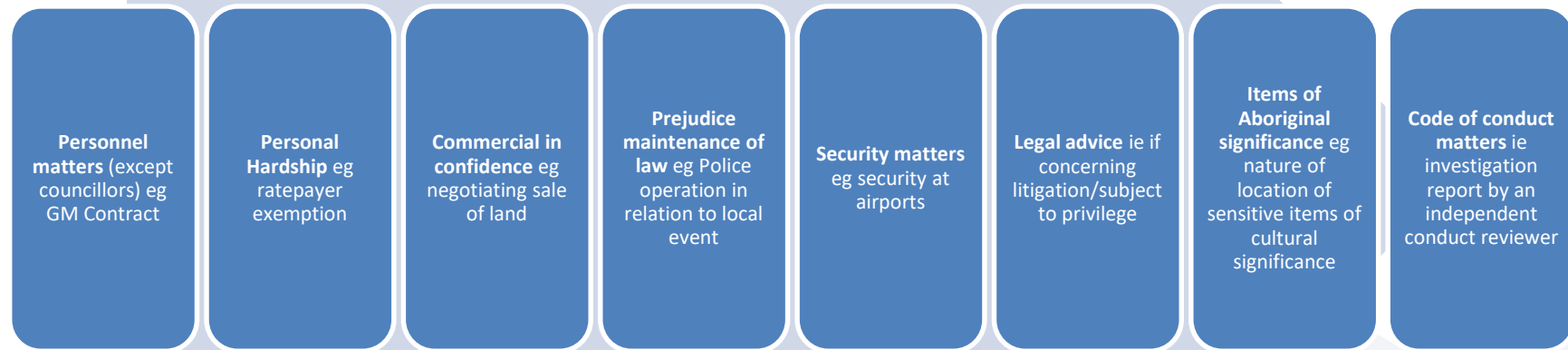- No agreement or de-facto decisions

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Meeting rules

Quorum

Agenda

Motions

Voting

Recission motions/alterations

Public attendance

Closing Meetings

Personnel matters (except councillors) eg GM Contract

Personal Hardship eg ratepayer exemption

Commercial in confidence eg negotiating sale of land

Prejudice maintenance of law eg Police operation in relation to local event

Security matters eg security at airports

Legal advice ie if concerning litigation/subject to privilege

Items of Aboriginal significance eg nature of location of sensitive items of cultural significance

Code of conduct matters ie investigation report by an independent conduct reviewer

In most cases, explanation needs to be given of why open discussion would not be in the public interest

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Role of Mayor

Chairs meetings

Has a second
or casting vote,
if votes are tied

Ensures
meetings rules
are kept

Calls result of
each vote

Ensures
motions are
lawful

Manages time

Keeps order

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Role of General Manager and Staff

General Manager

- May attend, advise on meeting procedures and answer questions
- May note vote
- Is responsible for preparation of draft minutes

Staff

- Can attend to provide information and answer technical questions (via general manager)
- Entitled to reasonable notice to answer questions

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Maintaining Order

Menti Question

WHAT DOES AN EFFECTIVE COUNCIL MEETING LOOK AND FEEL LIKE?

Keeping order in meetings

Respect Chair

Maintain orderly conduct

Rights to speak (formal meetings)

Questions to other councillors – ask via chair

A councillor can move to dissent on a point of order, must be put to council

Disorder in Meetings

Disorder includes:

- Contravention of the Act or Regulation
- Motions with unlawful purpose
- Assault or threat of assault
- Insulting, making personal reflections, suggesting improper motives
- Behaviour inconsistent with maintaining order, or that brings council into disrepute

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Meeting mayhem

Rats in the Ranks, 1996 © National Film and Sound Archive – Film Australia Collection

Menti Question

HOW COULD ORDER HAVE BEEN MAINTAINED MORE EFFECTIVELY?

Menti Poll

WAS THE ADJOURNMENT A GOOD WAY TO DEAL WITH THE SITUATION?

YES OR NO?

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Menti Question

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS INDIVIDUAL COUNCILLORS CAN DO TO AVOID THIS SORT OF SITUATION?

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MAKING
MEETINGS
EFFECTIVE

Be prepared

Agenda, business papers and previous minutes provided in advance of meeting

Attend briefings and ask before the meeting if you need more information, or information in a different form to be able to understand it

Be familiar with these before you get to the meeting

Ask key Questions

What is the impact on the community and councils finances?

What are the community interests?

How does it align with the strategic direction?

What are the demographic, environmental, social impacts?
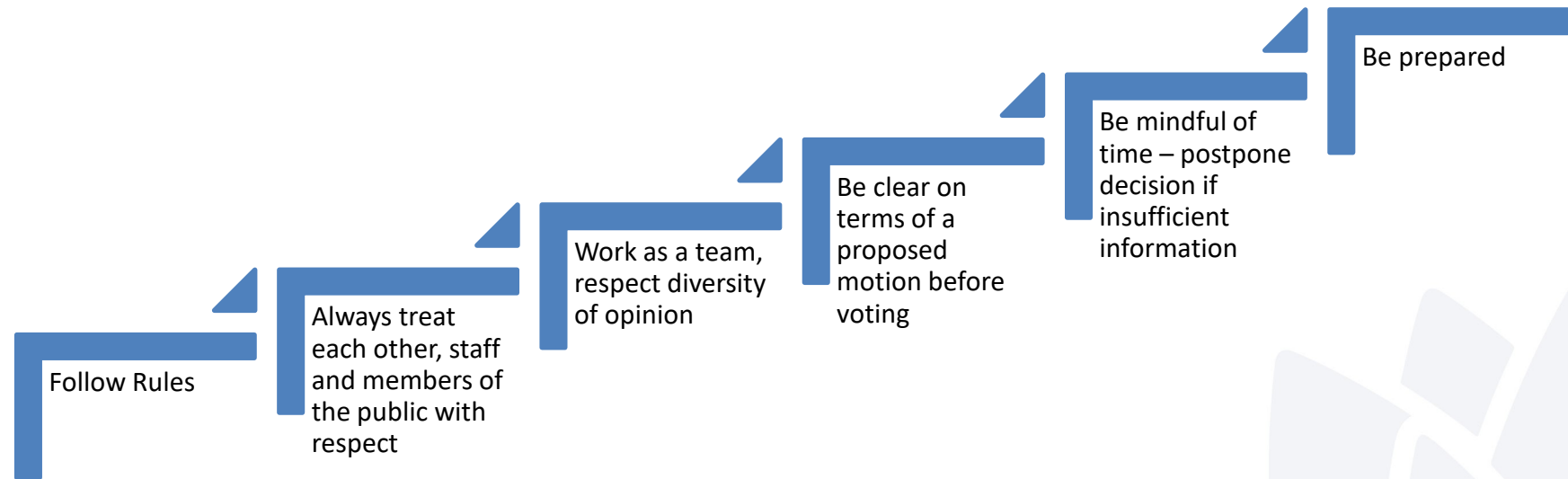
Does it provide value for money?

Does it comply with legislation and council policy?

How will performance be measured?

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Top Tips

Follow Rules

Always treat each other, staff and members of the public with respect

Work as a team, respect diversity of opinion

Be clear on terms of a proposed motion before voting

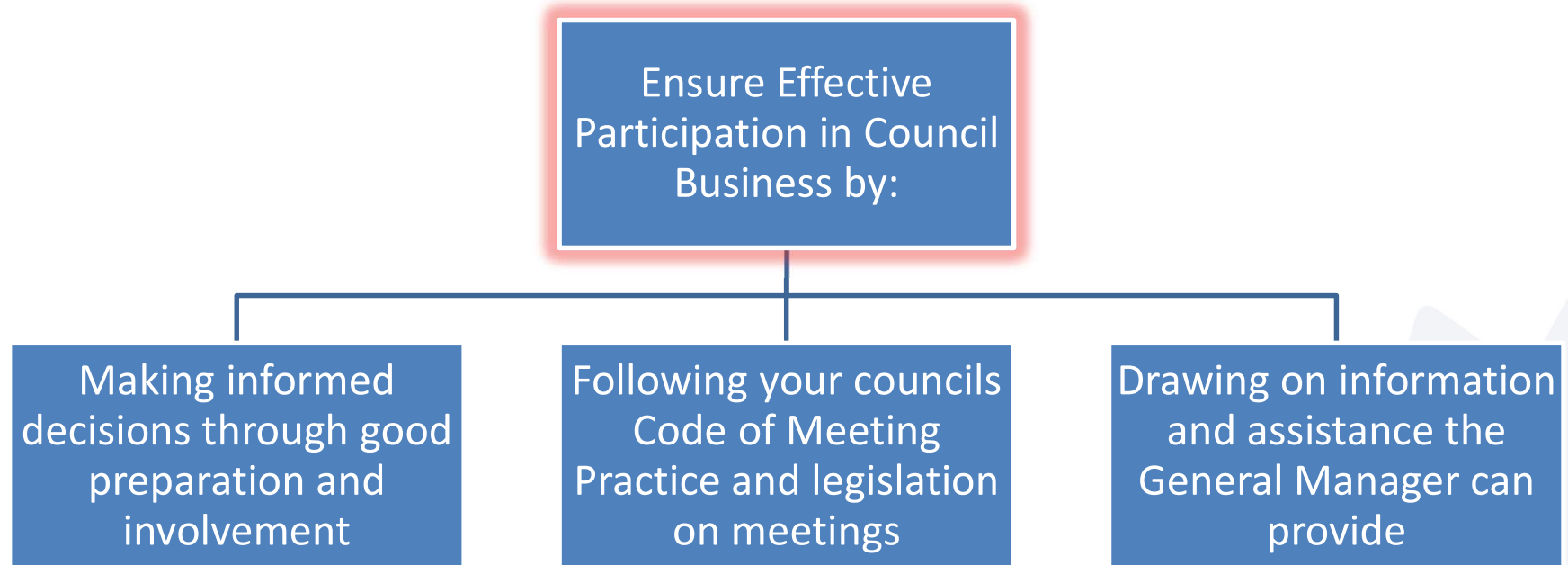Be mindful of time – postpone decision if insufficient information

Be prepared

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Summary

Ensure Effective Participation in Council Business by:

- Making informed decisions through good preparation and involvement
- Following your councils Code of Meeting Practice and legislation on meetings
- Drawing on information and assistance the General Manager can provide

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Questions