



4/011 Electronic Meetings and Electronic Attendance Policy

Objective

The objective of this policy is to provide the framework for electronic meeting requests, electronic attendance at meetings, and the requirements expected from Council and Committee members participating in meetings remotely, including appropriate equipment and location.

Content

This policy applies to electronic participation of Elected Members in Ordinary Council Meetings, Special Council Meetings, Committee Meetings, Agenda Feedback Sessions, Confidential Briefings, and Council Workshops.

Electronic Attendance by Elected Members

In accordance with Regulation 14C(2) of the Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996 an Elected Member may attend a meeting electronically in circumstances where a public health emergency, state of emergency, or natural disaster has arisen. A member of a council or committee may participate in a meeting through electronic means if they are unable or deem it unsuitable to attend the meeting in person due to the above-mentioned conditions. In all circumstances, electronic attendance must be authorised by the Presiding Member.

Alternatively, An Elected member may attend a meeting electronically if they have been authorised by the Presiding Member. An Elected member must not attend more than 50% of the meetings electronically in the year prior (50% rule) or for recently elected members no more than 50% of the meetings electronically since their election.

The 50% cap only applies to Ordinary Council Meetings, Special Council Meetings and Committee Meetings. There is no limit to the number of meetings that can be attended electronically due to a public health emergency, state of emergency or a natural disaster.

Requesting to Attend a Meeting Electronically

Requests to attend a meeting, briefing, or workshop, must be sent via email to the Presiding Member, the CEO and governance@porthedland.wa.gov.au. The request must include the preferred location for attending and the equipment to be used. It is recommended to submit the request at least two business days in advance.



The Town's Governance team will record electronic attendance in the Attendance Register and advise the Presiding Member or Council on the eligibility of the request. This will be determined on the percentage of meetings the person has attended electronically as per the 50% rule.

Upon receiving a request, the Presiding Member will approve or deny in writing via email. If the requirements for electronic attendance, as outlined in this policy, are met but the Presiding Member declines approval, the Elected Member has the option to seek approval from the Council at the relevant meeting.

The Presiding Member is not permitted to request electronic attendance for an Ordinary Council Meeting or Special Council Meeting, unless the meeting is being conducted electronically under Regulation 14D(2). The Presiding Member must request electronic attendance at Agenda Feedback Sessions, Confidential Briefings or Council Workshops. The request must be made to the CEO and governance@porthedland.wa.gov.au.

Requirements for Approval of Electronic Attendance

Suitable Location

The member attending the meeting electronically must be in a quiet and private indoor location. They must have the option to 'go behind closed doors' to reduce noise and maintain privacy.

Suitable Networks and Equipment

Elected Members must use a reliable network and suitable equipment.

Acceptable networks include private home internet or WiFi, or a trusted personal mobile device's hotspot. Public WiFi networks in places like cafes, airports, restaurants are not acceptable due to cyber security risks and potential for an unstable connection.

Suitable equipment includes Town of Port Hedland provided devices, personal computers or laptops with a video camera. Mobile phones are not suitable for electronic attendance. Fully charged headphones are to be used where possible.

If an Elected Member has an unstable connection during a meeting, resulting in disruptions or difficulties, particularly in casting clear votes, the Presiding Member will request the Elected Member to leave the meeting or the connection will be terminated.

Software for Electronic Attendance

Governance will be responsible for establishing and maintaining electronic attendance.



Declarations for Maintaining Confidentiality During the Meeting

If a member attending a meeting electronically is required to participate in a closed or confidential session, they must declare their ability to maintain confidentiality during that part of the meeting.

This declaration must be made before the meeting transitions behind closed doors and will be recorded in the meeting minutes and stated as follows:

"I, [Member Name], declare that I am able to maintain confidentiality during the closed part of this meeting. If I am no longer able to maintain confidentiality, I will excuse myself from the meeting."

If the member makes this declaration but later finds themselves unable to maintain confidentiality, they must leave the meeting or the closed session.

Electronic Meetings

Under Regulation 14D(2)(c) The Council can permit electronic meetings to take place outside of emergency situations. The Council must consider and agree on the appropriate circumstances that warrant an electronic meeting, while involving the CEO in the decision-making process. The Council must consider appropriate equipment and location for remote attendance of all members, following the guidelines outlined in this policy.

Council is not allowed to approve a meeting under subregulation (2)(c) if doing so would exceed the 50% rule.

Definitions

"Agenda Feedback Session" is a non-statutory meeting held by Council to ask questions, receive presentations and seek clarification on officer reports presented within the draft Ordinary Council Meeting agenda.

"CEO" means Town of Port Hedland Chief Executive Officer.

"Committee Meetings" is any meeting in which a delegation has been officially documented

"Confidential Briefing" is a non-statutory briefing providing updates to elected members on strategically significant issues and projects

"Elected Member" is an individual who has been elected and currently holds a valid position, as defined by the Local Government Act 1995, as a council member of the Town of Port Hedland



“Workshop” is a non-statutory meeting of Council, which may be called upon from time to time, for the purpose of raising and discussing matters that are issue-specific with a strategic and/or community-wide significance

“50% Rule” is that an elected member must not exceed attending more than 50% of the meetings electronically in the preceding year. Additionally, no more than half of the statutory meetings in the preceding year may be conducted electronically.

Relevant legislation	<i>Local Government Act 1995</i> <i>Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996</i>
Delegated authority	
Business unit	Governance
Directorate	Corporate & Performance

<i>Governance to complete this section</i>			
Version Control	Version No.	Resolution No.	Adoption date
	V01	CM202223/076	28 June 2023
Review frequency	2 Yearly		

Document Control Statement – The electronic reference copy of this Policy is maintained by the Governance Team. Any printed copy may not be up to date and you are advised to check the electronic copy at <http://www.porthedland.wa.gov.au/documents/public-documents/policies> to ensure that you have the current version. Alternatively, you may contact the Governance Team.