



<b>Circular Details</b>	21-35 / 29 October 2021 / A796782
<b>Previous Circular</b>	21-02 <i>Temporary exemption from the requirement for councillors to attend meetings in person</i>
<b>Who should read this</b>	Mayors / Councillors / General Managers / Joint Organisation Executive Officers / Council governance staff
<b>Contact</b>	Council Governance Team / 02 4428 4100 / <a href="mailto:olg@olg.nsw.gov.au">olg@olg.nsw.gov.au</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Council to Implement

## 2021 Model Code of Meeting Practice for Local Councils in NSW

### What's new or changing

- Following extensive consultation, the new *Model Code of Meeting Practice for Local Councils in NSW* (Model Meeting Code) has been finalised.
- The new Model Meeting Code has been published in the Government Gazette and is expected to be prescribed under the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021* (the Regulation) on or before **Friday 19 November 2021**. The new Model Meeting Code is available on the Office of Local Government's (OLG) website [here](#).
- The new Model Meeting Code contains new provisions that allow councils to permit individual councillors to attend meetings by audio-visual link and to hold meetings by audio-visual link in the event of natural disasters or public health emergencies. The provisions governing attendance at meetings by audio-visual link are non-mandatory. Councils can choose not to adopt them or to adapt them to meet their own needs.
- Amendments have also been made to the provisions governing the webcasting of meetings and disorder at meetings to reflect amendments to the Regulation since the previous iteration of the Model Meeting Code was prescribed.
- An amendment has also been made to the Model Meeting Code implementing recommendation 6 in ICAC's report in relation to its investigation of the former Canterbury City Council (Operation Dasha). ICAC recommended that the Model Meeting Code be amended to require that council business papers include a reminder to councillors of their oath or affirmation of office, and their conflict of interest disclosure obligations.
- A Word version of the new Model Meeting Code is available on OLG's website showing the amendments in track changes.
- The repeal date for section 237 of the Regulation which exempts councils from the requirement under clause 5.2 of the previous iteration of the Model Meeting Code for councillors to be personally present at meetings in order to participate in them has been extended to **30 June 2022**. This is to allow councils additional time to exhibit and adopt new codes of meeting practice containing provisions allowing attendance by audio-visual link at meetings. If councils have not adopted a new meeting code that allows councillors to attend meetings by audio-visual link, they will not be permitted to do so after that date.

## What this will mean for your council

- Councils must adopt a code of meeting practice that incorporates the mandatory provisions of the Model Meeting Code within 12 months of the local government elections. A council's adopted meeting code must not contain provisions that are inconsistent with the mandatory provisions.
- A council's adopted meeting code may also incorporate the non-mandatory provisions of the Model Meeting Code and any other supplementary provisions adopted by the council.
- Councils and committees of councils of which all the members are councillors must conduct their meetings in accordance with the code of meeting practice adopted by the council.
- Under section 361 of the *Local Government Act 1993*, before adopting a new code of meeting practice, councils must first exhibit a draft of the code of meeting practice for at least 28 days and provide members of the community at least 42 days in which to comment on the draft code. This requirement does not apply to joint organisations.

## Key points

- The Model Meeting Code has two elements:
  - mandatory provisions (indicated in black font)
  - non-mandatory provisions (indicated in red font) covering areas of meeting practice that are common to most councils but where there may be a need for some variation in practice between councils based on local circumstances. The non-mandatory provisions also operate to set a benchmark based on what OLG sees as best practice for the relevant area of practice.
- The Model Meeting Code also applies to meetings of the boards of joint organisations and county councils. The provisions that are specific to meetings of boards of joint organisations are indicated in blue font.
- In adopting the Model Meeting Code, joint organisations should adapt it to substitute the terms "board" for "council", "chairperson" for "mayor", "voting representative" for "councillor" and "executive officer" for "general manager".
- In adopting the Model Meeting Code, county councils should adapt it to substitute the term "chairperson" for "mayor" and "member" for "councillor".

## Where to go for further information

- The new Model Meeting Code is available on OLG's website [here](#).
- For more information, contact the Council Governance Team by telephone on 02 4428 4100 or by email at [olg@olg.nsw.gov.au](mailto:olg@olg.nsw.gov.au).



**William Power**

**Acting Coordinator General, Planning Delivery and Local Government**