

Councillor guide: Integrity, confidentiality and probity

Dos and don'ts for financial decision-making

Councillors and Council officers play a critical governance role within local government, ensuring that Council's financial decision-making is fair, transparent, and defensible. This includes decisions relating to procurements, contracts, grants, funding allocations, sponsorships, property transactions, and other financial decision-making.

Actions, both inside and outside formal meetings, must be impartial, transparent, and able to withstand scrutiny. Probity applies at all times, not just when a matter is before Council.

Dos for financial decision-making

Act with integrity and independence

- Independently and objectively discharge your role across the full lifecycle of financial matters.
- Act honestly, fairly and in the public interest at all times.
- Base decisions on the merits of the matter and the information presented.
- Maintain independence from personal, political, financial or other external influences.
- Treat all stakeholders consistently, respectfully and without favour.

Declare and manage conflicts of interest

- Declare actual, potential or perceived conflicts as soon as they arise.
- Refrain from involvement in discussions or decisions where required.
- Ensure conflicts are recorded and managed in accordance with Council requirements.
- Seek advice early if you are unsure –early disclosure protects you and Council.

Maintain proper boundaries

- Be aware of direct approaches from tenderers, applicants, lobbyists or complainants.
- Use formal Council processes and approved channels of engagement.
- Avoid creating real or perceived pressure on officers or advisors.

Protect confidential information

- Keep confidential information secure and limit access to a genuine "need to know".
- Respect the confidentiality of briefings, closed sessions, procurements, complaints and investigations.
- Store and dispose of sensitive information appropriately.
- Be mindful that emails, teams messages/records and notes may be subject to FOI or review.

Informed and responsible decision making

- Do seek clarification where information is unclear, incomplete or complex.
- Do ask questions through appropriate and transparent channels to support informed decision-making.
- Do satisfy yourself that you understand the rationale, risks and consequences of decisions before making a decision.

Be alert to informal risks

- Be cautious in informal settings (community events, social functions, site visits).
- Avoid "business as usual" conversations that could give unfair advantage or create perceptions of influence.
- Take particular care with social media, commentary and public statements.

Seek advice and escalate early

- Seek guidance from Council's governance, legal, risk, procurement or probity advisors when uncertain
- Raise concerns promptly, issues are easier to manage when identified early.
- Support a culture of transparency, accountability and good governance.



Don'ts for financial decision-making

Don't improperly influence processes

- Don't advocate for or against specific suppliers, applicants or individuals.
- Don't attempt to influence evaluations, assessments or officer recommendations.
- Don't apply pressure, directly or indirectly, to Council officers.
- Don't participate in decisions where you have a conflict.

Don't compromise independent decision-making

- Don't hold private meetings or discussions with tenderers or applicants outside approved processes.
- Don't indicate support, opposition or probable outcomes before a formal Council decision is made.
- Don't make statements or comments that could reasonably be interpreted as pre-judging a decision.
- Don't comment in a way that could undermine Council processes or public confidence.
- Don't blur the line between governance and operational roles.

Key reminders

- Probity is about fair, transparent and defensible decision-making.
- Councillors are accountable not only for what they do, but how it is perceived.
- When in doubt: declare, document and seek advice.

If you are planning a procurement, program or high-risk decision-making process or need independent probity support, RSM can help.



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Don't circumvent approved processes

- Don't seek to bypass, shortcut or deviate from approved Council processes or controls.
- Don't ask officers to "handle something informally" outside documented procedures.

Don't misuse confidential information

- Don't disclose confidential or sensitive information obtained through your role to any unauthorised person, including family, friends, colleagues or the media.
- Don't use non-public information for personal, political or financial advantage.
- Don't share confidential information or documents unless authorised and required as part of Council processes.

Understanding perception and bias risks

- Don't dismiss concerns because intentions are good.
- Don't underestimate how actions may appear to the public, the market or the media.
- Remember: perceived bias can be as damaging as actual bias