



## **MELTON CITY COUNCIL**

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**Minutes of the Policy Review Panel  
Meeting of the Melton City Council**

**22 April 2020**

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MINUTES OF THE POLICY REVIEW PANEL

22 APRIL 2020

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MINUTES OF THE POLICY REVIEW PANEL

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**MELTON CITY COUNCIL**

MINUTES OF THE POLICY REVIEW PANEL MEETING OF THE  
MELTON CITY COUNCIL  
HELD VIA A VIDEOCONFERENCE ON 22 APRIL 2020 AT 10:43AM

**Present:** Cr L Carli - Mayor (Chairperson)  
Cr K Majdlik  
Cr S Ramsey

**In Attendance:** Mr S Rumoro, Manager Finance  
Ms C. Denyer, Manager Legal and Governance  
Mr J Whitfield, Governance Coordinator

**1. WELCOME**

The Mayor, Cr Carl, opened the meeting and welcomed the Panel members.

**2. APOLOGIES**

Cr K. Hardy

**3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS AND / OR CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Nil.

**4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

The Panel agreed that the Minutes of the Policy Review Panel Meeting held on 19 February 2020 and, the recommendations within which were adopted by Council at the Ordinary Meeting held on 2 March 2020, be noted.

**5. OTHER BUSINESS CARRIED OVER FROM A PREVIOUS MEETING**

Nil.

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## 6. PRESENTATION OF STAFF REPORTS

### 6.1 COVID-19 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE (RATES & CHARGES) POLICY

**Responsible Officer:** Sam Rumoro - Manager Finance

**Document Author:** Sam Rumoro - Manager Finance

**Date Prepared:** 15/04/2020

#### 1. Recommendation:

That Council approve the COVID-19 Financial Assistance (Rates & Charges) Policy as attached to this report.

#### Motion

Crs Majdlik/Ramsey.

That Council approve the COVID-19 Financial Assistance (Rates & Charges) Policy as attached to this report.

CARRIED

## 2. Background

### 2.1 The Policy

This policy is to address financial hardship due to impacts of COVID-19 in a timely manner and with the appropriate level of flexibility to deal with the anticipated volume of hardship which will be experienced by the community because of this pandemic.

### 2.2 Sources/benchmarking

The policy was developed to deal with the current environment which is fluid. Council officers liaised with other Western Region Councils who are developing similar policies to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

### 2.3 Consultation

Key Council staff, Council's collection agency and Executive were consulted in the development of this Policy.

### 2.4 Communication and Implementation

Relevant Council staff and Council's collection agency will be informed about this policy. Communication has gone public to ratepayers to contact Council if they are experiencing financial hardship, further communication over the coming weeks and months is slated to encourage ratepayers to contact Council if they are experiencing financial hardship.

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**2.5 Compliance**

Policy is compliant with Section 170, 171 and 171A of the *Local Government Act 1989* which continues to apply.

**2.6 Measures of Success**

Number of ratepayers experiencing hardship due to COVID-19 is being monitored and will be reported to Executive and Council in due course. Success of policy will be measured by its ability to provide relief to ratepayers in relation to outstanding rate payments in a timely manner.

**LIST OF APPENDICES**


1. COVID-19 Financial Assistance (Rates & Charges) Policy - dated 1 April 2020

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Item 6.1 COVID-19 Financial Assistance (Rates & Charges) Policy

Appendix 1 COVID-19 Financial Assistance (Rates & Charges) Policy - dated 1 April 2020

	<b>COVID-19 Financial Assistance (Rates &amp; Charges) Policy</b>
<b>Version No.</b>	V 1.0 - 01 April 2020
<b>Endorsement:</b>	Executive – 9 April 2020 Policy Review Panel - 22 April 2020
<b>Authorisation:</b>	Council - <insert date>
<b>Review date:</b>	30 April 2021
<b>Expiry date:</b>	to be determined by the Review Date
<b>Responsible officer:</b>	Revenue Coordinator
<b>Policy owner:</b>	Manager Finance

**1. Purpose**

This policy aims to provide direction to Council's Officers when collecting and providing for debts owed to Council and to ensure Council takes into consideration the financial hardship of debtors caused by COVID-19. Council will provide assistance to those in financial hardship in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1989*, on a case-by-case basis while ensuring it does not jeopardise its ability to continue to carry out its core functions.

The policy will be guided by the principles of transparency, efficiency, capacity to pay and equity by treating all debtors consistently and in a fair manner.

**2. Scope**

This policy applies to ratepayers of Melton City Council in accordance with Sections 170, 171 and 171A of the *Local Government Act 1989*.

**3. Definitions**

Word/Term	Definition
Financial hardship	is a circumstance of experiencing a lack of financial means, which may be either ongoing or temporary.
Payment plan and interest hold	the total deferral of all financial responsibilities due to an event can cause a secondary bout of financial stress when the event has concluded, and bills are owed.

**4. Policy**

This policy is to address temporary financial hardship due to impacts of COVID-19. Council's existing Financial Assistance (Rates & Charges) Policy only allows for financial hardship experienced by a residential ratepayer's primary residence. This policy will apply to all rateable properties in Melton.

Council's aim is to provide assistance to ratepayers through the COVID-19 event without creating additional financial stress when the pandemic has been resolved.

Council will encourage ratepayers to set up a payment plan with Council tailored specifically to the ratepayers needs to reduce the amount of debt owing after the pandemic. ie. on a case-by-case basis. Council will hold interest on debt accumulated during the COVID-19 pandemic. The interest

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Item 6.1 COVID-19 Financial Assistance (Rates & Charges) Policy

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hold will begin from the declaration of the State of Emergency, 16 March 2020, to allow for the debt to be paid without interest. When this policy expires, Councils Financial Assistance (Rates & Charges) Policy will apply.

If the ratepayer is unable to enter in to a payment plan, Council will defer the debt accumulated during the COVID-19 pandemic and will hold interest on this debt from the declaration of the State of Emergency, 16 March 2020, to allow for the debt to be paid without interest. When this policy expires, Councils Financial Assistance (Rates & Charges) Policy will apply.

Council will make a reasonable attempt to contact a customer about their overdue account. This may include a reminder letter, account statement, rate notice, email, SMS or phone call.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Council will suspend all legal action for the collection of rates and charges.

**5. Responsibility /Accountability**

<b>5.1</b>	<b>Manager Finance</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For ensuring the policy is applied consistently.</li> <li>Determining deferrals of rates and charges under Section 170 of the <i>Local Government Act 1989</i></li> <li>Determining the waiving of interest under Section 171A of the <i>Local Government Act 1989</i></li> </ul>
<b>5.2</b>	<b>Debt Recovery Officer</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For the collection of Council's overdue rates and charges.</li> </ul>
<b>5.3</b>	<b>General Manager Corporate Services</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determining deferrals of rates and charges under Section 170 of the <i>Local Government Act 1989</i></li> <li>Determining the waiving of interest under Section 171A of the <i>Local Government Act 1989</i></li> </ul>
<b>5.4</b>	<b>Council</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determining the waiving of rates under Section 171 of the <i>Local Government Act 1989</i></li> </ul>

**6. References and links to legislation and other documents**

Name	Location
Sections 170,171,171A of the <i>Local Government Act 1989</i> (VIC)	<a href="http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/">http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/</a>

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**6.2 POLICY APPROVAL PROCESS POLICY REVIEW**

**Responsible Officer:** Christine Denyer – Manager Legal & Governance  
**Document Author:** Christine Denyer – Manager Legal & Governance  
**Date Prepared:** 15/04/2020

**1. Recommendation:**

That Council approve the amended Policy Approval Process Policy as attached to this report.

**Motion**

Crs Ramsey/Majdlik.

That Council approve the amended Policy Approval Process Policy as attached to this report.

CARRIED

**2. Background****2.1 The Policy**

The *Local Government Act 2020* commenced operation on 6 April 2020.

In addressing the requirements in the new 2020 Act, it was proposed to the Executive by Legal & Governance:

1. that most of what is required involves a review or minor changes to what is already business as usual (BAU), however noting there are some new policies or documents required. In addition to those policies that are statutorily required by the 2020 Act, all existing or new policies will generally need to reflect the 2020 Act's principles; and
2. that the Legal & Governance unit oversee the program of work required in terms of timing and responsibility.

These two proposals to implement the 2020 Act were endorsed by the Executive on 9 April 2020.

To this end, the Executive also endorsed a change in the Council Approval Process Policy on 16 April 2020 to include a requirement for all new/revised policies be checked by Legal & Governance prior to presentation to the Executive or the Policy Review Panel. This could be revoked upon the review of the policy in 2 years.

The biggest issues in the development of new policies and review of existing policies will be statutory compliance with the 2020 Act in terms of both *timing* and *content*.

With Legal & Governance overseeing of the 2020 Act works program, the timing is addressed.

In order to address the content it is recommended that the Policy Approval Process Policy be amended to ensure all policies will: -

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- Be compliant with the *Local Government Act 2020* including:
  - overarching Governance Principles and the Five Supporting Principles
  - provisions of the 2020 Act that might relate to the subject matter
- Consider Climate change (also part of the Overarching Governance Principles)
- Consider Gender Equity (as required by Equality and Respect 2030 Strategy and where required by the 2020 Act)
- Be compliant with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*

These amendments to the Policy Approval Process Policy was endorsed by the Executive on 16 April 2020.

**2.2 Sources/benchmarking**

The provisions of the *Local Government Act 2020* are the driver behind these recommended changes to the Policy Approval Process Policy. The opportunity was also taken to include obligations the Council has under its Equality and Respect 2030 Strategy and the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.

**2.3 Consultation**

The recommended changes to the Policy Approval Process Policy were endorsed by the Executive on 16 April 2020. This followed the endorsement on 9 April 2020 by the Executive of an overall implementation plan to meet the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020* to be led by Legal & Governance.

No other consultation took place.

**2.4 Communication and Implementation**

If adopted the Policy Approval Process Policy will be placed on Council's internet and intranet. It will be sent to Executive, Managers and Coordinators via email within a week of adoption.

**2.5 Compliance**

The purpose of the recommended amendments to the Policy Review Process Policy is to ensure compliance with the *Local Government Act 2020* and to meet Council's obligations under the Equality and Respect 2030 Strategy and the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.

The inclusion of a check of policy content by Legal & Governance will help the Council in complying with its responsibilities.

**2.6 Measures of Success**

The recommended amendments to the Policy Approval Process Policy will be successful if all new and revised policies adopted by the Council meet the requirements of the 2020 Act in terms of timing and content.

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**LIST OF APPENDICES**

1. Policy Approval Process Policy - dated 6 April 2020

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Item 6.2 Policy Approval Process Policy Review

Appendix 1 Policy Approval Process Policy - dated 6 April 2020

	<b>Policy Approval Process Policy</b>
<b>Version</b>	2.0 – 6 April 2020
<b>Endorsement</b>	Executive – 16 April 2020 Policy Review Panel – 22 April 2020
<b>Authorisation</b>	Council – <insert date>
<b>Review date</b>	30 June 2022
<b>Responsible officer</b>	Manager Legal & Governance
<b>Policy owner</b>	Governance Coordinator

**1. Purpose**

This policy outlines the requirements, accountability and responsibility for the approval, dissemination, implementation and review of policies and associated documents.

**2. Scope**

Applies across Council.

The approach to policy development, format, review, maintenance, approval and access is outlined in the Policy Development, Implementation and Review Guidelines and the Writing Policy and Procedures Guidelines.

**3. Definitions**

Word/Term	Definition
<b>Action Plan (or Management Plan)</b>	Plan that identifies the steps the Council intends to take over the next one to five years to achieve the objectives identified in Council strategy or policy. <i>Example:</i> Council's Annual Action Plan steps out how Council will deliver on the Council and Wellbeing Plan over a year.
<b>Associated documents</b>	Associated documents support the implementation of Council policy. Procedures and guidelines as defined above are included in this group as well as tool-kits, templates, forms and instructions.
<b>Council Annual Action Plan</b>	Council's annual business/operational plan that sets out the activities and initiatives Council will undertake to achieve Council Plan objectives.
<b>Council &amp; Wellbeing Plan</b>	The primary vision and strategic planning document that sets out the broad direction Council has decided on for its term of office (4 years). The Council and Wellbeing Plan contains objectives, strategies and performance indicators.
<b>Council Policy</b>	A Council Policy has at least one of the following characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It relates to or impacts on the community; ie. it has an external focus</li> <li>• Where a Council is required by legislation or statute to have a policy (eg. Child Safe Policy, Privacy Policy)</li> <li>• Is connected to or relates to the Council &amp; Wellbeing Plan; ie. it may influence the Council's strategic direction</li> </ul>

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Word/Term	Definition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May require consultation with the community</li> <li>• Has a Council-wide application</li> </ul> <p>Council Policies are sometimes referred to as External or Public Policies. A Council Policy is approved by the Council after endorsement by the Policy Review Panel and before that, endorsement by the Executive.</p>
<b>Council Strategy</b>	<p>Strategy takes an element of the Council and Wellbeing Plan or Council Policy and builds a framework for going forward. A Strategy is usually between 3 to 4 years.</p> <p>Examples include Council's Youth Strategy, Leisure Strategy.</p>
<b>Diversity</b>	<p>Refers to dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age and disabilities.</p>
<b>Guidelines</b>	<p>Guidelines are a document outlining best practice processes that are strongly recommended. Guidelines are written to provide information and advice on a particular subject.</p>
<b>Operational Policy</b>	<p>An Operational Policy has at least one of the following characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It relates to the internal business of the Council; operational management, administrative or staffing matters of the Council.</li> <li>• It relates to the functions of the Chief Executive (refer s94A of the <i>Local Government Act 1989</i> and after 1 July 2021 s46 of <i>Local Government Act 2020</i>)</li> <li>• It relates to the day-to-day operation of the Council</li> </ul> <p>Operational Policies are sometimes referred to as Internal or Administrative Policies.</p> <p>An Operational Policy is approved by the CEO after endorsement by the Executive.</p>
<b>Local laws</b>	<p>The highest form of local legislation. The power to enact local laws is granted by the <i>Local Government Act 1989</i> and its successor the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i>. Local laws, in this sense, have the same quality as acts of the state legislature, both being authorised by the state constitution. They must be adopted by the formalities required for the adoption of local laws.</p>
<b>Major Policy amendments</b>	<p>Major changes or amendments that alter the actual policy. These are to be submitted to either the Executive, for approval of Operational Policies or Council, for approval of Council Policies.</p>
<b>Minor Policy/procedure changes</b>	<p>Minor changes or amendments that do not alter the actual content of the policy. These do not need to be formally approved but the amended date needs to be inserted into the revised document for version control.</p>
<b>Policy</b>	<p>A statement of the Council's intent, commitment or position to achieve an objective which provides a decision-making framework for day-to-day applications. In essence, it describes what Council considers to be appropriate on a particular issue.</p>
<b>Policy owner</b>	<p>Position responsible for writing and/or reviewing the policy or procedure. Ensuring the document is kept up-to-date with any legislative or operational chain.</p>
<b>Procedure manual</b>	<p>A manual which contains supporting procedures, guidelines and other supporting documents relating to one subject matter. For example City Safe is our OH&amp;S procedure manual.</p>

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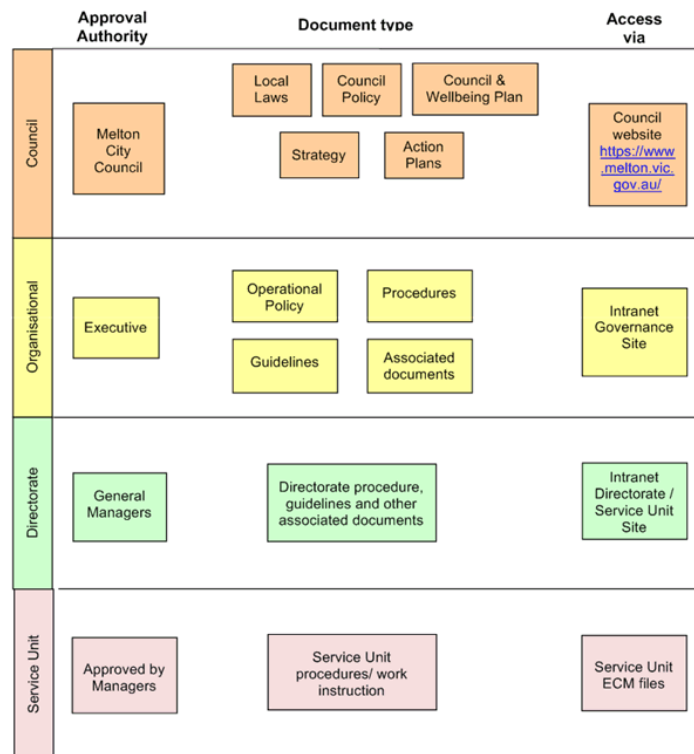
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Word/Term	Definition
<b>Responsible officer</b>	Manager with operational responsibility for the services area generating the policy/procedure.
<b>Work instruction</b>	Step-by-step instructions for the accomplishment of a task by one person are retained in the department or unit where the work is performed. Work Instructions are often referred to as Desk Procedures, Task Outlines or SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures).

3.1 Hierarchy of Council Documents



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**4. Policy**

- 4.1 All policies (and associated documents) shall be developed, implemented and reviewed in accordance with Council's Writing Policy and Procedure Guidelines.
- 4.2 All policies (and associated documents) must be consistent with and have appropriate reference to the:
- Federal and State Legislation (where applicable)
  - Melton City Council Local Laws (where applicable)
  - Meet regulatory and compliance requirements.
- 4.3 In developing a policy, consideration must be given to all implementation issues to ensure that the intent of the policy is achievable and that outcomes or compliance can be measured.
- 4.4 All policies will:
- Have Council or Operational application
  - Be prepared in a consistent corporate style using the Policy Template
  - Be written concisely, in plain English and clearly expressed (refer to Councils Writing Style Guide)
  - Be compliant with the *Local Government Act 2020* including:
    - overarching Governance Principles and the Five Supporting Principles
    - provisions of the 2020 Act that might relate to the subject matter
  - Consider Climate change (also part of the Overarching Governance Principles)
  - Consider Gender Equity (as required by Equality and Respect 2030 Strategy and where required by the 2020 Act)
  - Consider diversity issues
  - Be compliant with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
  - Clarify individual officer responsibilities
  - Be assigned a 'Responsible Officer' and a 'Policy Owner'
  - Be reviewed at a maximum of four years, or earlier, if new legislation or exceptional circumstances make it appropriate
- 4.5 All procedures and guidelines will:
- Be prepared in a consistent corporate style using the Procedure/Guidelines template
  - Be written concisely, in plain English and clearly expressed (refer to Councils Writing Style Guide)
  - Clarify individual officer responsibilities
  - Be assigned a 'Responsible Officer' and a 'Policy Owner'
  - Be reviewed at a maximum of two years, or earlier if required.

**5. Responsibility**

<b>5.1</b>	<p><b>Melton City Council (Councillors)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authorisation of Council Policies.</li> </ul>
<b>5.2</b>	<p><b>Policy Review Panel</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council advisory committee with oversight of Council Policies. The Panel is made up of four Councillors, with the Manager Legal &amp; Governance and the Governance Coordinator as Council officers with ex officio status.</li> </ul>
<b>5.3</b>	<p><b>Chief Executive</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Under the <i>Local Government Act 1989 (Vic)</i> the Chief Executive is responsible for administration of council operations. They have the authority to authorise Operational (including administrative) Policy and associated documents including procedures, guidelines, templates, forms, tool-kits and checklists.</li> </ul>
<b>5.4</b>	<p><b>Occupational Health and Safety (OH&amp;S) Committee</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Endorse all OH&amp;S policies and associated documents.</li> </ul>
<b>5.5</b>	<p><b>Governance Coordinator</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Executive officer for Council Policy Review Panel</li> <li>• Coordination and implementation of the Policy Approval Process Framework</li> <li>• Reviews draft policies for compliance with this Policy</li> <li>• Provides advice in policy development and approval processes</li> <li>• Manages the Governance intranet site</li> <li>• Manages centralised repository of all current and approved policy documents in ECM</li> </ul>
<b>5.6</b>	<p><b>Responsible Officer</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsible for ensuring that all policies and associated documents they endorse comply with this policy and have undergone the appropriate level of consultation.</li> </ul>
<b>5.7</b>	<p><b>Policy Owner</b></p> <p>Responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing and/or reviewing policy and associated documents assigned to them in accordance with this policy</li> <li>• ensuring appropriate consultation is conducted with stakeholders and that their feedback is considered and incorporated as appropriate</li> <li>• keeping documents up-to-date with any legislative or operational changes.</li> </ul>
<b>5.8</b>	<p><b>Council employees</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compliance with all Council and organisational policies and associated documents.</li> </ul>

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6. References and links to other documents

Name	Location
<i>Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006</i>	<a href="http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au">www.legislation.vic.gov.au</a>
Equality and Respect 2030 Strategy	<a href="https://www.melton.vic.gov.au/Services/Health-safety-and-wellbeing/Health-and-Wellbeing/Equality-and-Respect">https://www.melton.vic.gov.au/Services/Health-safety-and-wellbeing/Health-and-Wellbeing/Equality-and-Respect</a>
<i>Local Government Act 1989</i>	<a href="http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au">www.legislation.vic.gov.au</a>
<i>Local Government Act 2020</i>	<a href="http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au">www.legislation.vic.gov.au</a>
Policy Development, Implementation and Review Guidelines	Policy Intranet
Writing Policy and Procedures Guidelines	Policy Intranet
Councils Writing Style Guide	Policy Intranet
Version Control Procedures	Policy Intranet
Policy Template	Policy Intranet
Procedure/Guidelines Template	Policy Intranet

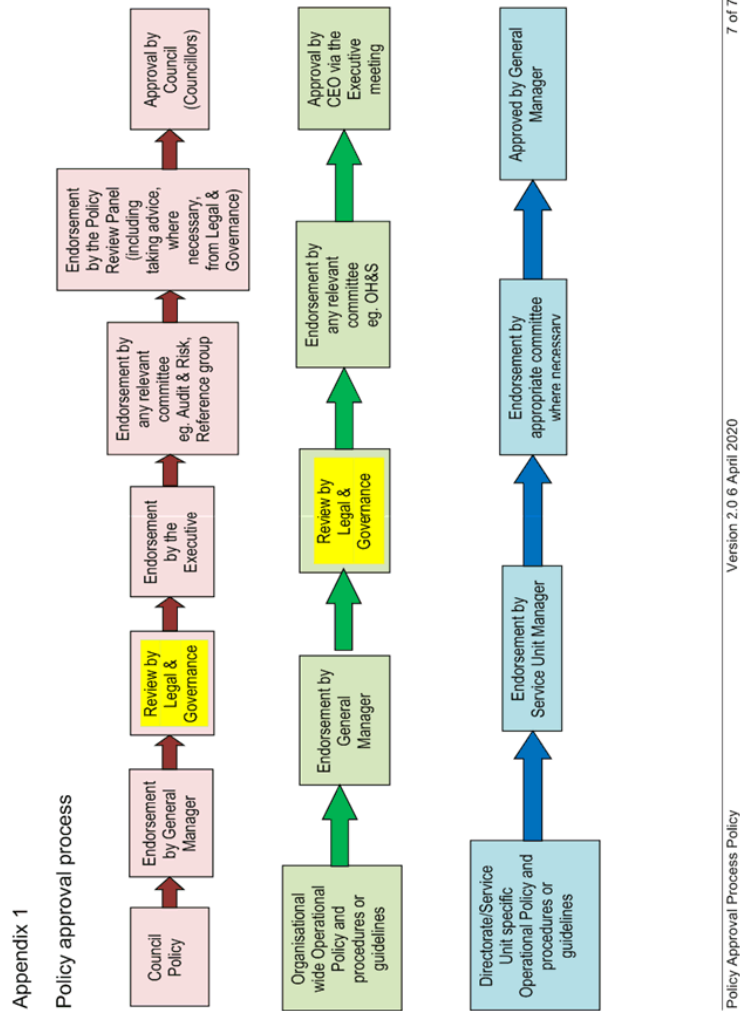


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**7. GENERAL BUSINESS**

Nil.

**8. CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS**

Nil.

**9. NEXT MEETING**

Wednesday 24 June 2020 at 10:00am

**10. CLOSE OF BUSINESS**

The meeting closed at 11:18am.

Confirmed

Dated this

.....CHAIRPERSON