POLICY FRAMEWORK

Document Owner:	Council
Responsible Department:	Executive Services
Responsible Section:	Governance and Integrity
Responsible Officer:	Manager Governance and Integrity
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Policy Statement

Policies, Operational Directives and Operational Procedures help Walgett Shire Council (Council) achieve its goals, ensure compliance with legislation, guide decision-making, manage risks, and provide a roadmap for innovative operations and positive outcomes for local communities. Governance documents protect the Council and Its Officers from non-compliance and define and shape culture by communicating an organisation's values, what officers can expect from the Council (benefits), what the Council expects from its officers (Code of Conduct), and what the community can expect from the Council.

Chapter 1: Purpose, Objectives and Scope

1. Purpose

1.1. This document intends to establish a Policy Framework, standards and principles for developing, approving, implementing, managing, and reviewing Council's governance documents (policies, operational directives, and related operational procedures).

2. Objective

2.1. The objectives of the Council's Policy Framework are to:

a. develop a suite of governance documents that are easily accessed, written clearly in easy-to-understand language and reflect governance best practices;

b. set a hierarchy of governance documents;

c. achieve compliance with legislation and other regulatory requirements;

d. enable Council to consistently achieve its strategic objectives, make decisions, manage risks, be effectively resourced, innovate and maximise quality and efficiency across all operations;

e. provide appropriate quality assurance and monitoring processes for Policy and Operational Directive development, amendment and review and de-activating or removing policies and directives that are no longer relevant; and

f. increase community, officer and organisational satisfaction by ensuring the framework is person-centred, supports cultural safety and wellness, outlines the principles, roles and responsibilities of quality governance and includes measures of success and indicators of poor-quality governance.

1.2. The governance of Council is underpinned by Council's Policy Framework, which outlines how Council operates fairly, responsibly, and transparently. Council's Policy Framework intends to guide people.

1.3. The framework will provide a consistent, logical structure, principles, and critical considerations for managing the Council's Policy Register (the official source of the Council's governance documentation), policies, and directive documents.

2. Scope

2.1. Council's Policy Framework applies to the Mayor, Councillors, Council Committees, the General Manager, and Council officers (employees, contractors, subcontractors and volunteers) to ensure that Council is accountable, fair, and transparent in its relationship with the community.

2.2. For the purpose of the Policy Framework, Council must comply with various legislation.

Chapter 2: definitions

Term	Meaning
Council Officer	An elected member of Council or any other person authorised in writing by Council or General Manager to undertake duties for Council (including Council's General Manager, Councillors, employees, contractors, subcontractors and volunteers).
Document Owner	The Document Owner is either the Council or the General Manager and indicates the approval process for the document. Documents owned by the Council can only be amended by a formal Council resolution. Documents owned by the General Manager may be amended in accordance with the direction of the General Manager.
Governance Document Suite	A collection of mandatory documents including Australian Law (legislation and associated Regulations), a By-law, an Office of Local Government (OLG) Guideline, Circular, or Code under section 23A of the *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW), a Policy, an Operational Directive or an Operational Procedure.
Legislation	An Act or Regulation created by the Parliaments of New South Wales and/or the Commonwealth of Australia.
Operational Directive	A Council-wide inward-facing operational document that describes how the Council implements mandatory standards, required practices, or policies through a series of prescribed actions or tasks. Operational Directives deal directly with the staff and facilities of the Council and must be performed to achieve a specific intent or outcome. These directives are approved and adopted by the General Manager or their delegate. Operational Directives are lawful directions issued to staff, contractors, subcontractors, and volunteers, and must be followed at all times. Compliance with these directives is mandatory to ensure the proper functioning and governance of the Council, and failure to adhere to them may result in disciplinary action or other appropriate measures.

Operational Procedure	Refers to a document typically established by directors or managers that provides detailed direction toward best practices. It outlines how an officer should perform a series of sequential steps and sub-steps to achieve a specific task or outcome. Operational Procedures must be followed at all times unless authorisation for an adjustment is granted by the General Manager or relevant director. Procedures promote collaboration and collegiality, encouraging the seeking of informed second opinions from experienced colleagues. While they provide clear guidance, Operational Procedures are flexible, allowing for discretion and judgment when comparing and evaluating possible courses of action, particularly in decision-making processes where various options need to be considered.
Policy	A high-level, Council-wide, strategic document that is generally outward-facing and deals with how the Council will work within the community. It contains an overarching statement or mandatory principle that guides Council's intentions or objectives through decision-making. Policies are mandatory and must be followed by all Council Officers, and they have been approved and adopted by the Council.
Rescind	The retraction, removal, or deletion of a document in the Policy Suite deemed to be obsolete.
Responsible Officer	The responsible Council officer(s) assigned to draft, amend, or review a document.
Support Document	All documents, information, and records, regardless of their form, medium or author, that officers use to implement, evidence, or review "good practice" and trace actions, steps, decisions, outcomes, and recommendations for improving processes.

Chapter 3: Policy statement

3. Hierarchy

3.1. Council's Governance Document Suite operates in the following hierarchy (from highest to lowest):

    a. Legislation;

    b. OLG guidelines, codes, circulars, and practice notes for functions that Council carries out under the *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW);

    c. Policies that prescribe mandatory obligations about Council's strategies and operations and approval responsibilities contained in Council's Delegations Register, including standards for interacting with and serving the community and other high-level strategic decisions.

    d. Operational Directives that prescribe mandatory obligations and operational procedures, responsibilities, or a series of Council functions; these focus on standards of practice for Council employees, contractors, and volunteers, ensuring consistent and efficient operations in line with Council objectives.

    e. Operational Procedures (work instructions) that explain in detail how to implement, manage, and review work tasks, steps, and sub-steps from start to finish;

f. Support documents (guides, plans, flowcharts, checklists, tutorials, maps, diagrams, photos, screenshots, illustrations, videos, notes, templates or supporting evidence) provide further information or improve clarity for how Council officers perform a task or step.

3.2. Where, there is an inconsistency between documents that are at different levels of the hierarchy; the higher-level document will prevail to the extent of any inconsistency.

3.3. If there is any inconsistency between peer level documents, the approval authority for those documents will decide the appropriate interpretation.

4. Principles

4.1. Council requires Council's Governance Document Suite to:

a. be concise, written in plain English, and logically sequenced;

b. articulate Policy separately from Operational Directives and Operational Procedures;

c. provide a discernible distinction between strategic governance and operational management;

d. mitigate all relevant risks to the extent possible and articulate expectations, responsibilities and consequences for actions and decisions;

e. uphold and be consistent with:

   i.   applicable legislation and standards;

   ii. any document higher in the Governance Document Suite hierarchy;

   iii. Council's strategic plan, vision, and values;

   iv. the principles and requirements set out in Council's Code of Conduct;

   v.   community expectations.

4.2. The development, implementation, management, and review of all documents in the Council's Governance Document Suite must:

   i.   be systemic and systematic;

   ii. identify the department which is primarily responsible for administration and scheduled review;

   iii. be appropriately consultative; and

   iv. be informed by principles of continuous improvement and sector best practices.

a. A schedule, annexure, or another appendage to a document in Council's Governance Document Suite forms part of that document.

b. Proposed Council Policies must, after resolution of Council, be placed on public exhibition for a period of not less than 28 days. Council must consider any submissions made before a Policy can be adopted.

c. Adopted Council Policies must be published on Council's website and recorded in Council's Policy Register. These policies are:

   i.   In force from the time specified as the 'effective date'; and

   ii. remain in force until the document is rescinded by decision of Council or superseded by another inconsistent policy.

d. Adopted Operational Directives must be published on Council's Intranet and recorded in Council's Policy Register. The Council Officers to whom the Operational Directives apply must receive regular instruction and guidance to support their effective implementation. This instruction may include workshops, informational sessions, or written guidelines that clarify expectations, processes, and responsibilities to ensure all staff, contractors, and volunteers are familiar with the requirements of the Directive.

e. These Directives are:

    i. In force from the time specified as the 'effective date'; and

    ii. Remain in force until the document is rescinded by the decision of the General Manager or superseded by another policy or directive.

5. Approval Authorities

5.1. Council Policy is established by a resolution of the Council.

5.2. Operational Directives and Operational Procedures are established by directive of the General Manager or their delegate.

6. Implementation and review

6.1. Once a policy is adopted, it:

a. Is in force from the document's, resolution's, or approval's stated "effective date", if stated;

b. Is in force from the date immediately following the approval or adoption if no effective date is stated; and

c. Remains in force until the document is rescinded, superseded, or suspended.

6.2. The General Manager must ensure that each Council Policy and Operational Directive is reviewed within 12 months following an Ordinary Council Election to examine whether the document remains relevant, current, and effective.

6.3. Circumstances that may also trigger the development of a new document or review of an existing document may include:

a. legislative, audit or other external needs;

b. changes to Council's strategic direction or structure;

c. content gaps or overlaps;

d. mitigation of specific risks; or

e. scheduled reviews.

6.4. Any amendment of an existing Policy deemed minor and administrative (i.e. changing position title, legislative details, organisation references or correcting typographical errors) may be implemented by the General Manager and do not require a resolution of Council.

6.5. Any amendment of an existing Policy that changes its intent or constitutes significant re-wording must be submitted to Council for resolution.

6.6. Details about Policy reviews and amendments (minor or significant) will be recorded in the "History" of the Policy document.

Related Policy/Procedure

Not applicable.

History

Minute Number	Meeting Date	Description of Change
	22 October 2024	Adopted by resolution of Council