

MAKING
the
PARTNERSHIP
WORK
RULES and
PROCEDURES

Knowledge&Skills
Building a Future



MAKING
the
PARTNERSHIP
WORK

RULES and
PROCEDURES

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Department of Education and Training, Victoria, 2003

ISBN 0 7594 0174 8 (set)

0 7594 0176 4

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Foreword

I am pleased to introduce *Making the Partnership Work: Rules and Procedures* to school councillors.

This booklet is a companion publication to *Making the Partnership Work: Roles and Responsibilities* and offers important advice on school council rules and procedures.

School councils play a key role in the effectiveness of government schools in Victoria by:

- engaging the local community in the life of the school
- setting the vision, strategic direction and identity of the school
- ensuring sound governance of the school
- reporting annually to the school community on the activities of the school.

In order to improve the quality of public education, new and different collaborations and partnerships are required within the education and training system, and more broadly with stakeholder organisations and the local community.

There is a need to enhance the genuine partnership between and among school councils, parents, schools and the community to foster improved educational outcomes and to build strong and vibrant communities. Strong partnerships between schools and their communities will support opportunities for their contribution to community building activities, school improvement and improved education provision to improve student outcomes.

I hope that this publication will be useful in this process and encourage you to share it with your school community.

Jacinta Allan, MP

Minister for Education Services



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Introduction

This booklet, *Making the Partnership Work: Rules and Procedures*, is a companion publication to *Making the Partnership Work: Roles and Responsibilities*, published in 2001.

Making the Partnership Work: Rules and Procedures provides information about a number of operational aspects of a school council and offers important advice on school council rules and procedures. Examples and guidelines are included that school councils may use as a basis for developing their own procedures.

However, where the information has a legal basis this is clearly indicated throughout the booklet. In these instances there is no scope for local variations on these matters.

The major references are:

- *Education Act 1958* (The Act)
- Education Regulations 2000 (The Regulations), available on the Victorian Legislation and Parliamentary Documents home page at www.dms.dpc.vic.gov.au/ under Victorian Statute Book/2000/Statutory Rules
- the individual school council's constituting Order
- *Financial Reporting for Schools, January 2002*, Department of Education and Training (available on SOFWeb at www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/standards/finance/publicat.htm)
- *Internal Control for Schools, May 2002*, Department of Education and Training (available on SOFWeb at www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/standards/pdf/Int_Control.pdf)
- *Making the Partnership Work: Roles and Responsibilities, 2001*, Department of Education and Training (available on SOFWeb at www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/scln/council/publicat.htm)

- *Principals' Guide to School Council Elections, 2003*, Department of Education and Training (included with Executive Memorandum No. 2003/003, 25 January 2003)
- *School Charter Guidelines* (available on SOFWeb at www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/standards/account/charter.htm)
- *Victorian Government Schools Reference Guide* (available at www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/referenceguide/ using your EduMail user name and password)
- School Community Links and Networks website on SOFWeb at www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/scln/

Guiding principles for school councils

Council members agree to observe the following principles:

- All councillors are school community representatives. While they bring a particular perspective to council, a councillor is not a representative of one section of the community. As such, all councillors should seek to make decisions after considering the views of all sections of the school community.
- Council discussions and decisions should focus on optimising the learning outcomes of students of the school.
- Council is responsible for developing and reviewing general educational school policy statements that are consistent with Department of Education and Training policies and the goals and priorities of the school charter.
- Council is accountable to the local school community and to the Department of Education and Training.
- Councillors should observe the need for confidentiality in relation to discussions of sensitive matters at school council meetings.
- Councillors should observe the need for orderly conduct of council meetings and unity of the council in the public arena.
- Councillors must undertake to declare any conflict of interest when it arises.
- Councillors should respect the decisions reached by council. Any discord that may arise from differences of opinion should be addressed, and where possible, resolved within council structures and procedures.
- Councillors should understand their responsibilities in relation to policy development in the school and respect the responsibilities of the principal as educational leader and manager of the school when implementing those policies.
- Members of the school community should feel welcome to attend school council meetings as observers except where the meeting is not open to persons other than school council members.

An overview of school council processes

Following is a general overview of school council processes:

- In developing the school charter and all the school's policies, council should fully consult with the school's community.
- Council should schedule all school policies for review on an ongoing basis.
- Council should determine structures and processes for the ongoing reporting of data to council so that the material for the school's annual report is progressively developed in cooperation with the staff of the school.
- The public spokespersons for the council are normally the council president and the school principal, unless otherwise agreed.
- A set of standing orders should be developed and implemented by council.
- Council should develop a system of committees to make recommendations to council and to ensure broad involvement in issues and collaborative decision-making.

Meeting rules

There is no one set of rules. School councils need to develop a set of meeting rules with which they are comfortable and which facilitate effective meetings and decision making. These rules should be reassessed on a regular basis, perhaps at the first meeting of council following the school council elections.

Below are some rules that school councils might find useful:

- focus on issues, not on personalities
- listen to all members
- no question is too trivial
- only one person speaks at a time
- respect the opinions of all council members
- avoid using jargon and acronyms
- keep discussion simple and practical
- keep to the topic
- focus on what needs to be done in relation to the topic
- start and finish meetings on time
- maintain confidentiality where appropriate.

Standing orders

School councils should have a set of standing orders that define local rules, in particular, meeting procedures.

While standing orders are formal rules, most councils will choose to work within the spirit of the orders rather than apply them rigidly.

Issues commonly addressed in standing orders include:

- voting procedures
- open and closed meetings
- extensions of meeting times.

Councils would normally review and confirm their standing orders early in the term of the council.

Note: The Education Act, the Education Regulations and a school council's constituting Order take precedence over a school council's standing orders.

Meetings

Outlined below are some rules that apply to school council meetings.

- School councils must meet at least twice each school term.
- A quorum is not less than one half the total members of the council (the term 'total members' means the maximum number of members that could be appointed to the council under its constituting Order) and the majority of members present are not employees of the Department of Education and Training.

Department of Education and Training parents are, for the purpose of deciding on whether there is a quorum present at a meeting, counted as Department of Education and Training employees.

A quorum must be maintained throughout the meeting.

- The presiding member has a second or casting vote if the initial vote is tied.
- An abstention from voting is recorded if a member of the council or his or her immediate family has any direct pecuniary interest in a subject or matter under discussion at a council meeting. That member:
 - must not be present during the discussion unless invited to do so by the council president, and
 - must not be present when a vote is taken on the matter, and
 - may be included in the quorum for that meeting.

Membership

In the majority of cases, school councils are composed of three possible categories of membership:

- a mandated elected parent category
- a mandated elected Department of Education and Training employee category (the principal of the school is automatically one of these members), and
- an optional community member category whose members are coopted by a decision of council. Department of Education and Training employees are not eligible for membership in this category.

Community members have the same voting rights as elected members.

Reference: Details on membership categories and eligibility rules are found in the school's constituting Order.

Term of office

A councillor's term of office is normally two years.

Elections

Full details on school council elections are found in the booklet, *Principal's Guide to School Council Elections, 2003*, (included with *Executive Memorandum No. 2003/003 School Council Elections, 2003*) and in the school's own constituting Order.

School council elections are held annually, with half the positions normally becoming vacant each year.

The election process can begin anytime from the start of term 1 and must be concluded by 31 March.

The new council takes effect immediately following the declaration of the poll.

There may be non-elected members on council if the school's constituting Order provides for this. Such people, community members, are coopted onto council for their special expertise or experience.

Quorum

For the majority of schools, the quorum for a council meeting is constituted if:

- not less than one half of the total members of the council are present, and
- a majority of the members present are not employees of the Department of Education and Training.

Reference: For a more detailed explanation see the information on quorum requirements in *Making the Partnership Work: Roles and Responsibilities*, page 44.

Example

Consider a council that comprises five parent members, three Department of Education and Training employees, and four community members—a total of twelve members.

Present one evening are three Department of Education and Training members, two parents and one community member.

There is **not** a quorum present.

While the number present meets the first criterion—half the maximum total number of members, it does not meet the second criterion that there be a majority of non-Department of Education and Training members.

A quorum must be maintained throughout the meeting.

Casual vacancies

Should a casual vacancy occur on council, this vacancy is filled by council coopting a person from the appropriate category to complete the unexpired portion of the term of office of the vacating member.

Reference: School council constituting Order, Section 17 Creation of casual vacancies, and Section 18 Filling of casual vacancies.

Proxies

There is no provision in the Education Act or the Education Regulations for proxies. Thus if someone has leave from the council, another person cannot attend and vote on their behalf.

Eligible members of council must be present at any meeting to be part of the decision making process.

Reference: Education Regulations 2000, regulation 28(5).

Office bearers

The Education Regulations require that there be at least two office bearers, namely the president and the executive officer.

The principal is the executive officer of school council and a voting member of council.

All cheques and negotiable instruments drawn on any account under the control of a school must be signed by the principal and the president or an office bearer nominated by the council for that purpose.

It is not appropriate for the officer who is responsible for the processing of accounts to be a signatory to school accounts even when this person is a member of school council.

The president cannot be a Department of Education and Training employee. By implication, the vice president cannot be a Department of Education and Training employee as a Department employee would not be able to preside at a school council meeting.

Some schools also have a minute secretary who may or may not be a member of council.

Summary

President: Cannot be a Department of Education and Training employee.

Vice president: By implication cannot be a Department of Education and Training employee.

Executive officer: The principal is required to fill this role.

Treasurer: Should not be filled by the bursar/office manager.

Reference: *Victorian Government Schools Reference Guide, Section 2.*

Open meetings

The Department of Education and Training expects that school council meetings would normally be open to the school community and conducted according to standard meeting requirements.

Visitors or observers can be present with the agreement of the principal and a decision of council.

Visitors have a right to speak but must do so through the presiding member.

There will be times when the council meeting, or part of the meeting, needs to be closed. For example, the meeting discussing the recommendation of a new principal is required to be a closed meeting with only council members present. Should a council member happen to be an applicant for the position then this person is also excluded from the meeting.

There should be a statement about the openness of meetings in the council's standing orders.

Code of practice

The code of practice should state the general principles governing the practices and processes of council. Specific details can be spelt out in accompanying documents, such as standing orders, which can be modified more readily.

The use of generalised statements should be avoided. For example, rather than state that "councillors must show loyalty to the college, the principal ..." it is more useful to state that "councillors will respect the vision, goals and priorities of the school charter and work for any change within the framework of the agreed council processes".

Reference: Examples of a code of practice can be found in *School Charter Guidelines* (available on SOFWeb at www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/standards/account/charter.htm)

See also Sample code of practice, page 36.

Minutes and council records

The detail contained in minutes will vary from council to council.

As a minimum school councils should record the following information:

- date of meeting
- time of the meeting
- place of the meeting
- those present
- apologies
- all decisions of council.

It is normal practice to try to reach decisions by consensus. However, if a count is taken, then the number for and against should also be recorded. Should a member of council wish to have it noted that he or she dissented from the decision it is normal to record the name of the person.

A useful way to record decisions is to record all motions, whether passed or defeated, and a brief summary of the discussion on each issue raised.

Minutes are confirmed at the next council meeting and signed by the chair as being an accurate record of the meeting.

Most councils:

- either publish their minutes, or
- prepare a report for the school community.

Council minutes are the official record of the council's deliberations.

Councils will, occasionally, need to refer back to the minutes.

The Department of Education and Training has a right to access the minutes.

It is good practice to circulate minutes to members within a week of the meeting to ensure the committee or an individual is reminded of any action that is required.

The use of an action sheet is a good way to remind councillors who is responsible for implementing certain council decisions.

Even though circulated at this time, the minutes remain only draft minutes until confirmed at the next council meeting. Notwithstanding this, a decision of council may take effect from when it was made, unless otherwise specified.

Council records, minutes and financial statements must be kept at the school and are classified as permanent records.

School council office bearers

President

The main roles of the president are to:

- be the spokesperson with the principal for the council and act with the principal as its representative on public occasions
- chair council meetings
- serve as an ex officio member of council committees, and
- be a signatory to accounts, contracts and the school charter.

In carrying out these responsibilities, the president should ensure that his or her personal opinions do not influence any decisions made about meeting and decision-making procedures.

The occasions on which the president speaks as a private individual should be clearly defined from those in which rulings are made as the president of school council. (The president, as a member of council, is entitled to a personal vote on any issue before council.)

Hints on being a good chairperson

- have a good understanding of the constitution of the council, the council code of practice (charter) and the standing orders of council
- in collaboration with the principal prepare and distribute the agenda prior to each meeting
- control the discussions during the meetings to ensure that business is expeditiously addressed. For this, the chair must understand the powers of the chair and be willing to use them discreetly to ensure that the council keeps to points at issue
- ensure that no councillor dominates a discussion and encourage all councillors to express an opinion
- before calling for a vote summarise the points made in the debate
- acknowledge the work of individuals or groups who have prepared work for council's consideration

- keep an eye on the scheduled closing time of the meeting and try to pace the discussion to complete the business by that time
- call for a specified extension of time if that is required
- ensure that councillors know the date and venue of the next meeting before officially declaring the current council meeting closed
- ensure that decisions of the council are correctly recorded. When the minutes are approved by council, the person presiding at the meeting signs the minutes to this effect.

Vice president

There is no legal requirement to elect a vice president but it is normal practice to do so. The vice president would then act as chair of council meetings in the absence of the president.

Regulation 28(2) of the Education Regulations 2000 states that: "If the President of a school council is unable to preside at a council meeting, a member of the council, other than an employee of the Department, elected by the council must preside."

Thus the vice president cannot be a Department of Education and Training employee if he or she is to preside over council in the absence of the president.

Executive officer

The principal must act as the executive officer of the council and ensure that:

- informed advice is given to council on educational and other matters
- the decisions of council are implemented
- there is liaison with the president about council business, and
- adequate support and resources are provided for the conduct of council meetings.

The executive officer is often the secretary of council and normally undertakes associated duties.

Reference: Education Regulations 2000, Regulation 33 Executive officer of council.

Secretary

The normal duties of a secretary overlap those of an executive officer to the extent that many councils do not have a secretary.

Relevant duties for a secretary are:

- maintaining a list of members, their addresses and telephone contacts
- circulating the agenda and reports among council members prior to the next council meeting
- maintaining records of proceedings of the council (minutes) and council committee meetings
- providing council with copies of relevant correspondence. Sometimes a correspondence list is necessary to accompany an agenda, but copies of the correspondence, whether routine or requiring action, should also be available at the meeting. Records of incoming correspondence must also be maintained at the school
- for outwards correspondence, the secretary is responsible for carrying out the decisions of council, maintaining records of such correspondence, and advising council at its next meeting of the action taken
- notifying councillors of all meetings and making arrangements for venues and any facilities required.

Councils should be aware that the minutes circulated prior to the next meeting are draft only, presented for any corrections by councillors before a vote adopting or endorsing those minutes of the previous meeting is taken. Business arising from those minutes should be addressed after council has adopted the minutes as a correct record.

Minute secretary

Although the secretary is normally responsible for recording meeting business, many councils appoint a minute secretary. The minute secretary could be:

- a member of council, elected by council or volunteering for this duty, or
- a person paid by council for that duty, or
- a member of the office staff by agreement.

Treasurer

While there is no legal requirement for a school council to have a treasurer, most councils would appoint a treasurer.

It is best that the position of council treasurer be held by a non Department of Education and Training parent or community member. The bursar/business manager should not fill that position lest accusations of a conflict of interest arise. Internal control measures should be considered in relation to the role of the business manager and financial duties.

Councils can seek relevant expertise from within the school community or coopt a skilled community member to council to carry out the role of treasurer.

Responsibilities of the treasurer include:

- ensuring that the school finances are in accordance with the guidelines of the Department of Education and Training and that relevant internal control procedures are maintained
- working with the principal and other members of the finance committee in developing budget recommendations to submit to council for approval
- presenting financial reports to the council meetings. (If possible, the bursar/business manager should also be present at council meetings to answer any specific questions relating to the monthly financial report. Alternatively, the treasurer could schedule a meeting with the bursar prior

to the monthly finance/resources committee meeting that prepares the financial reports for the next council meeting.)

Reference: *Internal Control for Schools, May 2002*, Department of Education and Training
(available on SOFWeb at www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/standards/pdf/Int_Control.pdf)

Subcommittees and working parties

Subcommittees of school council can be set up for one of two purposes:

- to assist the council with a range of its responsibilities, or
- to have specific responsibilities delegated to it.

Subcommittees:

- can only provide advice and recommendations to school council
- allow the workload to be shared among council members and non-council members
- must consist of at least three members, one of whom must be a council member
- can include members of the school community who are not council members.

A council may delegate any power or duty to a subcommittee relating to:

- the use of school grounds or buildings by a voluntary organisation, government department, municipality, person or body, provided that the school grounds or buildings are not required for ordinary school purposes or otherwise required by the council, and
- any school forest plantation under sole management, control, care or development by the council.

A council must obtain approval of the Minister for Education and Training before delegating any other than the above powers or duties.

Neither the Act nor the Regulations specify particular subcommittees that must be formed. However, few schools would operate without a finance committee.

Many schools now have committees based on their charter priorities.

Working parties are effectively subcommittees set up for specific tasks and for a set period of time. It is a matter of policy that they are covered by the same rules as those for subcommittees.

Professional development for school council members

The president and the executive officer are responsible for ensuring that new council members receive appropriate induction.

All members should be provided with access to ongoing training and development programs. To this end an annual allocation should be made in the school council's budget for training and development.

Professional development programs for school councils are available through the Department of Education and Training and the school council organisations—ASCIV (Association of School Councils in Victoria) and VICCSO (Victorian Council of School Organisations).

Formal meeting procedures

The standing orders that follow are based upon the rulings of J E Joske, *The Law and Procedures at Meetings in Australia and New Zealand*, 6th Edition, The Law Book Company.

These orders represent the normal conventions. However, each school council can adapt them to their particular circumstances. For example, the number of minutes a speaker is allowed to speak is a convention, not a given.

1. MOTIONS

- 1.1 Motions shall be expressed in precise and definite wording and should generally be affirmative in form.
- 1.2 A motion may not be put to a meeting without being seconded.

Withdrawal

- 1.3 Motions or amendments, once accepted, can only be withdrawn when the majority of those present consent. Any debate on a withdrawal motion can only address the withdrawal issue. If an amendment to an original motion is under discussion, the motion cannot be withdrawn until after that amendment has been dealt with. The seconder and the council must then also agree to withdraw the motion.

An acceptable form of negative motion

- 1.4 The only form of negative motion that may be acceptable is the formal motion: "That the question not now be put", i.e. this procedural motion will prevent a vote being taken on the original motion. If passed, the issue would then be shelved.

Terminating the debate

- 1.5 The chair may accept a procedural motion designed to either terminate debate or shelve the matter under discussion. Different types of procedural motions are:

The closure of debate: "That the matter now be put".

Proceed to the next business item: "That the meeting proceed to next business".

Adjourning the debate: "That the debate be now adjourned", e.g. till the next council meeting.

A motion may rule that there be only one speaker for and one against a motion except at the discretion of the chair.

The motion: "That the question lie on the table", would prevent both discussion and vote, requiring further study before presentation at a later meeting.

- 1.6 When supported by the majority of those present, the chair may terminate debate at any stage after reasonable discussion has taken place.
- 1.7 Unless a councillor indicates opposition to a motion or to propose an amendment to that motion, the motion shall immediately be put to the meeting for a decision.

Moving a motion

- 1.8 The mover of a motion shall be allowed five minutes to introduce the motion and three minutes to reply after the debate. Other speakers shall be allowed three minutes each. Extensions of time for speakers require the agreement of two-thirds of members present.
- 1.9 In order to complete the agenda, the chair may, at his/her discretion, limit the total time spent in debating a particular motion or amendment.

Right of reply

- 1.10 The right of reply can be used at the end of a debate. When the mover replies, the debate is closed.

Should amendments be proposed, the mover of the original motion has the right of reply at the end of the debate on the first amendment, but may speak to all amendments.

Notice of motion

- 1.11 All notices of motion shall be in writing and should be given at a meeting prior to the one at which they will be discussed, except for motions to rescind a previous decision which can be circulated before a meeting.

2. AMENDMENTS

- 2.1 A motion may be amended at any time during a debate by:
- striking out certain words
 - adding certain words
 - deleting certain words and adding others provided that the substance of the original motion is retained.
- 2.2 Any number of amendments to a motion may be proposed and discussed, but such amendments must relate to the matter involved in the motion and not to something else.
- 2.3 Any individual may move or second only one amendment to each motion but may speak with regard to amendments moved by others.
- 2.4 The mover or seconder of a motion may not move or second an amendment to the motion but is entitled to speak on every amendment to it and vote in favour of it.
- 2.5 The mover of an amendment has no right of reply and there is no right of reply to an amended motion.
- 2.6 Amendments shall be taken in the order in which they affect the terms of the motion and will be put before the motion is put.
- 2.7 Only one amendment shall be accepted at a time. Amendments to an amendment shall not be accepted.
- 2.8 Amendments shall only be withdrawn where the majority of those present consent.
- 2.9 If an amendment is carried, the amended motion replaces the original motion.

3. THE RIGHT TO SPEAK

- 3.1 Any person who desires to move a motion or an amendment to a motion, or who desires to take part in the discussion, should indicate his or her desire to the chair and await the chair's call to address the council.
- 3.2 When the chair proceeds to speak, the member speaking should be silent and, if having risen to speak, should resume his or her seat.
- 3.3 Only one speech on the same topic shall be allowed to each member. Each speaker will be allocated three minutes in which to present a statement. However, an amendment is regarded as a fresh topic and speakers to the original motion are allowed to speak on an amendment.

Exceptions to the 'one speech' rule

- 3.3.1 A personal explanation of a previous remark can be permitted by the chair provided no additional argument is attempted.
- 3.3.2 A member also speaking to a 'point of order' concerning the rules of procedure in debate.
- 3.3.3 When the mover of a motion exercises the right of reply.
- 3.3.4 Where the meeting decides that a particular person should be heard because a motion has been moved, seconded and carried but without debate.

Order of speakers

- 3.4 Two members should not be allowed to speak in succession for or against a motion. If, at the conclusion of one speaker's remarks, no member indicates a desire to oppose a motion, the motion may be put to the vote or adjourned to a later time.

Being silent

- 3.5 A speaker shall stop speaking when another member raises a point-of-order. The speaker cannot resume his or her speech until the point-of-order is decided by the meeting.

- 3.6 No member may speak to a topic after the chair has put it to the vote and the meeting has reached a decision.

Priority of speech

- 3.7 If two or more members indicate a desire to speak at the same time, the chair shall decide who has the priority to address the council.

4. THE CHAIR'S RULING

- 4.1 The chair's ruling on all points of order shall be final, unless there is a challenge to that ruling as accepted by the meeting.

Disagreement with the chair's ruling

- 4.2 When a motion to disagree with the chair's ruling has been proposed and seconded, the chair shall leave the chair until the motion has been decided by the meeting. The mover only shall speak to the motion; the chair then may explain the reasons for his or her ruling; the motion to disagree with the chair's ruling shall then be put to the vote by the temporary chair.

5. VOTING

- 5.1 Motions shall be put by the chair by asking members to indicate their approval or otherwise by a show of hands.
- 5.2 The chair's decision as to which question has the majority shall be based on the voting of the majority of the members present at the meeting.

Chair's vote

- 5.3 The chair shall have both a deliberative and a casting vote, the latter being exercised in the event of an equal number of votes being cast by members present.
- 5.4 The chair may refuse to exercise a casting vote. Thus the proposal before the chair shall be deemed to be rejected in its current form.

Stages of a meeting

1. OPENING THE MEETING

At the scheduled time of commencement, the chair should check that a quorum is present. If there is a quorum, call those present to order and declare the meeting open, welcoming members and any observers or visitors. The meeting remains open or in session until the chair either adjourns or closes the meeting or unless there ceases to be a quorum present.

Have the secretary note those present and record the apologies.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

If the minutes have been circulated prior to the meeting they can be 'taken as read'. If they are only provided at the meeting, the minutes should be read.

Motion: That the minutes of the meeting of be confirmed.

or

That the minutes of the meeting of with the following amendment(s) be confirmed.

Once the motion is passed, the chairperson should sign and date the minutes at the end of the official copy.

3. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

If there is likely to be a lengthy discussion of a particular item, it is probably better to postpone discussion of that item until general business.

4. CONFIRMING THE AGENDA

General business items and the order in which they will be addressed is usually decided at this point. Although councillors have the right to suggest additional items at this time, only urgent additional items should be included.

5. CORRESPONDENCE

Councillors should have been provided with a list of correspondence accompanying the agenda and, if possible, with a summary note about each item.

The correspondence itself should have been tabled prior to the meeting so that a councillor might read any item of business. Alternatively, the correspondence may be circulated during the meeting in which case it is appropriate to postpone discussion until later in the meeting.

For the purpose of decision-making, the president and executive officer should have noted those items that need the attention or decision of council.

Motion: That the inwards correspondence be received and the outwards correspondence endorsed.

6. REPORTS

Ideally all reports are submitted in writing in time to be circulated with the agenda.

Principal's report as executive officer

This would generally include:

- a written report on progress with the school charter and other policy implementation, or on school issues that may be of interest to the council. Like all reports this is normally circulated with the agenda
- councillors are asked if they have any questions to raise about the report so that the principal can respond
- the principal may have made recommendations for a council decision or for a matter to be referred to a council committee. Any recommendation can only be adopted by a council vote. Councillors also have a right to suggest a motion on any item raised in the report. However, items that involve lengthy discussion are best referred to a council committee or noted as business for the next meeting so that they appear on that agenda.

Motion: That the report be received and recommendations adopted.

(Note: The person making a report can move that the report be received.)

Financial report (treasurer)

Call on the treasurer to present the month's financial statements.

The following CASES (Computerised Administrative Systems Environment in Schools) reports can provide the required financial information.

Suggested CASES reports	Menu	Financial information
Statement of receipts and payments	1,6,6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Official bank account balance• Summary of receipts for the month• Summary of payments for the month• Total commitments
General ledger trial balance—level 1	1,6,5	Investment balance (each account)
Annual revenue budget summary	1,8,1	Annual revenue budget summary
Annual expenditure budget summary	1,8,2	Annual expenditure budget summary
Cash payments journal	1,6,4	List of payments to be ratified
Outstanding invoices	4,7,2	List of accounts to be passed for payment

Note: It is recommended that an *SGB Management Report*, a web-based report updated each fortnight, is also tabled at school council/finance committee meetings. This report provides a balance of funds relating to salaries.

After the presentation, ask for any questions from the council and then call for a motion to accept the report.

Motion: That the statement of receipts and expenditure for the period to as circulated be accepted and that accounts be ratified or approved for payment.

Other committee reports

Reports from other committee/working parties are received as appropriate, for example:

- finance/resources/education/curriculum
- buildings and grounds/environment
- charter monitoring/management and accountability
- parents and friends.

Allow general discussion on each report and then put each recommendation to the council.

After dealing with the recommendations from a report, a motion along the following lines is put:

Motion: That the report be received and the recommendations (or the recommendations as amended) be adopted.

Note: Any discussion of a report should not be a re-hash of the general discussions that took place in the committee meeting. Attention should focus on the recommendations.

7. GENERAL BUSINESS

Each item is dealt with in the order agreed earlier.

The aim is for a decision to be reached about each item or for the matter to be deferred to a later meeting when recommendations have been formulated for consideration.

Any decision of council must be recorded as a motion of council.

8. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

Extension of time

If business has not been concluded by the scheduled closing time for the meeting, the chair should ask the councillors whether they wish to defer the rest of business until the next meeting or to extend the meeting by a specified length of time. A motion is necessary if council wants to extend the meeting time for that evening.

Next meeting dates

Dates for committee/working party meetings during the next month should be announced before the meeting is closed.

The date of the next council meeting should be confirmed.

Closing the meeting

Whether concluding at the scheduled time or after an extension of time, the meeting can only be closed formally by a statement to that effect by the chair.

The time of closing the meeting should also be recorded in the minutes.

Sample school council code of practice

AUTHORITY

The council of St Andrews Place Secondary College acknowledges that it must act within and with reference to the *Education Act 1958*, the Education Regulations 2000, Orders made under the Act, Ministerial and Department guidelines and directions, and other statewide policies and guidelines.

Under the Regulations, this council is required to meet at least twice in each school term.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Council members agree to observe the following principles:

- All councillors are school community representatives. While they bring a particular perspective to council, a councillor is not a representative of one section of the community. As such, all councillors will seek to make decisions considering all sections of the school community.
- Council discussions and decisions will focus on improving the conditions that will optimise the learning outcomes of students of this school.
- Council will be responsible for developing and reviewing specific policy statements for the school, consistent with Department of Education and Training policies, and the goals and priorities of the school charter.
- Council will be accountable to the local school community and to the Department of Education and Training.
- Councillors will observe the need for confidentiality, where appropriate, in relation to topics that are discussed by council.
- Councillors will observe the need for orderly conduct of council meetings and for the unity of council in the public arena.
- Councillors will undertake to declare any conflict of interest when it arises.

- Councillors will respect the decisions reached by council. Any discord that may arise from these differences of opinion will be addressed and resolved, where possible, within council structures and procedures.
- Councillors will understand their responsibilities in relation to policy development in the school and respect the responsibilities of the principal as leader and manager of the school when implementing those policies.

COUNCIL PROCESSES

- In developing the school charter and all school policies of the school, council should fully consult with the school's community.
- Councils should schedule all school policies for review on an ongoing basis.
- Council will prepare a schedule and determine structures and processes for the ongoing reporting of data to council so that the material for the school's annual report is progressively developed in cooperation with the staff of the school.
- The public spokespersons for the council are normally the council president and the school principal, unless otherwise agreed.
- A set of standing orders will be developed by council.
- Council should develop a system of committees to make recommendations to council and to ensure broad involvement in issues and collaborative decision-making.

Making the Partnership Work: Rules and Procedures

School councillors need to understand the rules and procedures that govern the operation of school councils in Victoria.

This booklet provides information to assist school councils in their operation and processes as well as suggestions and hints to help school councillors with their role. It explains how standing orders operate, outlines the roles of school council office bearers and provides information about the stages of a meeting and formal meeting procedures.

For further information

www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/scln/