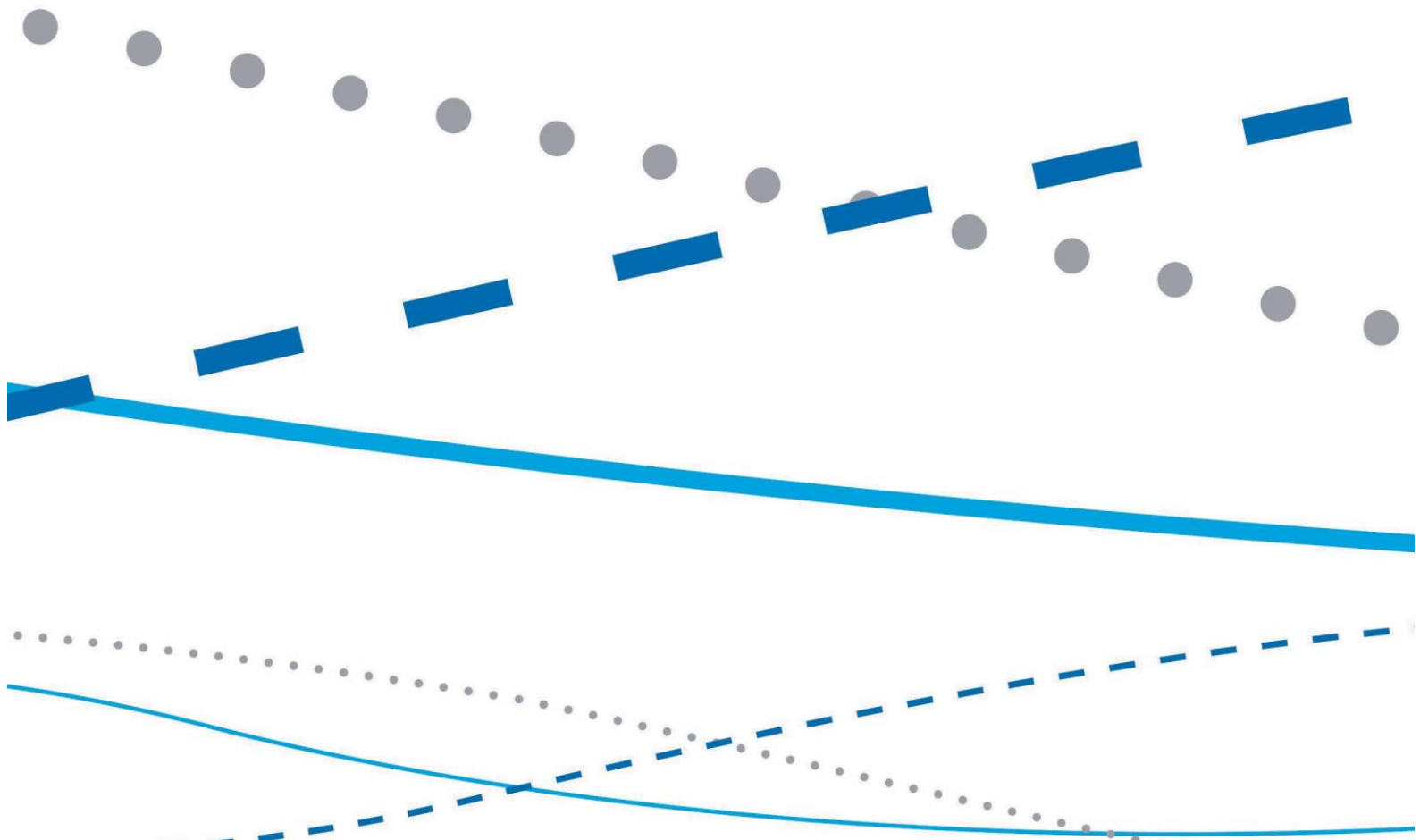




# Policy Framework

June 2024



## Aim

The purpose of this Framework is to provide guidance on the types of policies within Council, the approval authority process and instructions on how to develop/review policies – i.e. a corporate approach (Framework) to developing and reviewing Policies.

This policy framework applies to the elected Council and Council employees developing, drafting and setting policy.

## What is a Policy?

Policy is a statement of intent to guide action and decision-making. Policy sets principles or standards that apply to the practice and conduct of Council's operations, employees and Councillors.

Policy is developed and set to meet a community or organisational need. This may be in response to legislation, the community's reasonable expectations or Council's strategic intentions.

Policy can be identified in common practice (or precedented action). Policy settings may be represented in principles, commitments, statements, goals or aspirations. Policy may be supported by guideline and/or procedure documents which outline how a policy setting will be operationalised.

Council is committed to policy settings which support legislative and regulatory compliance, enable efficient and effective decision-making, and establish clear accountabilities and responsibilities.

Policy must assist decision-makers to reflect reasonable community expectations, balanced with Council's responsibilities and capabilities.

Council understands that trust in the currency, consistency and functionality of a policy setting is related to the rigour and appropriateness of its related policy development process.

## Why Have Policies?

Policies support the achievement of quality outcomes and reduce institutional risk by establishing standards and internal controls. The principles outlined in policy are shaped by:

- the legislation and regulations that govern Council (& local government);
- national standards and community expectations; and
- the values and vision Council articulates in its strategic plan.

All policies are living documents until such time as they are amended, replaced or repealed, which must all be actioned through the appropriate approval authority.

## Policy Framework

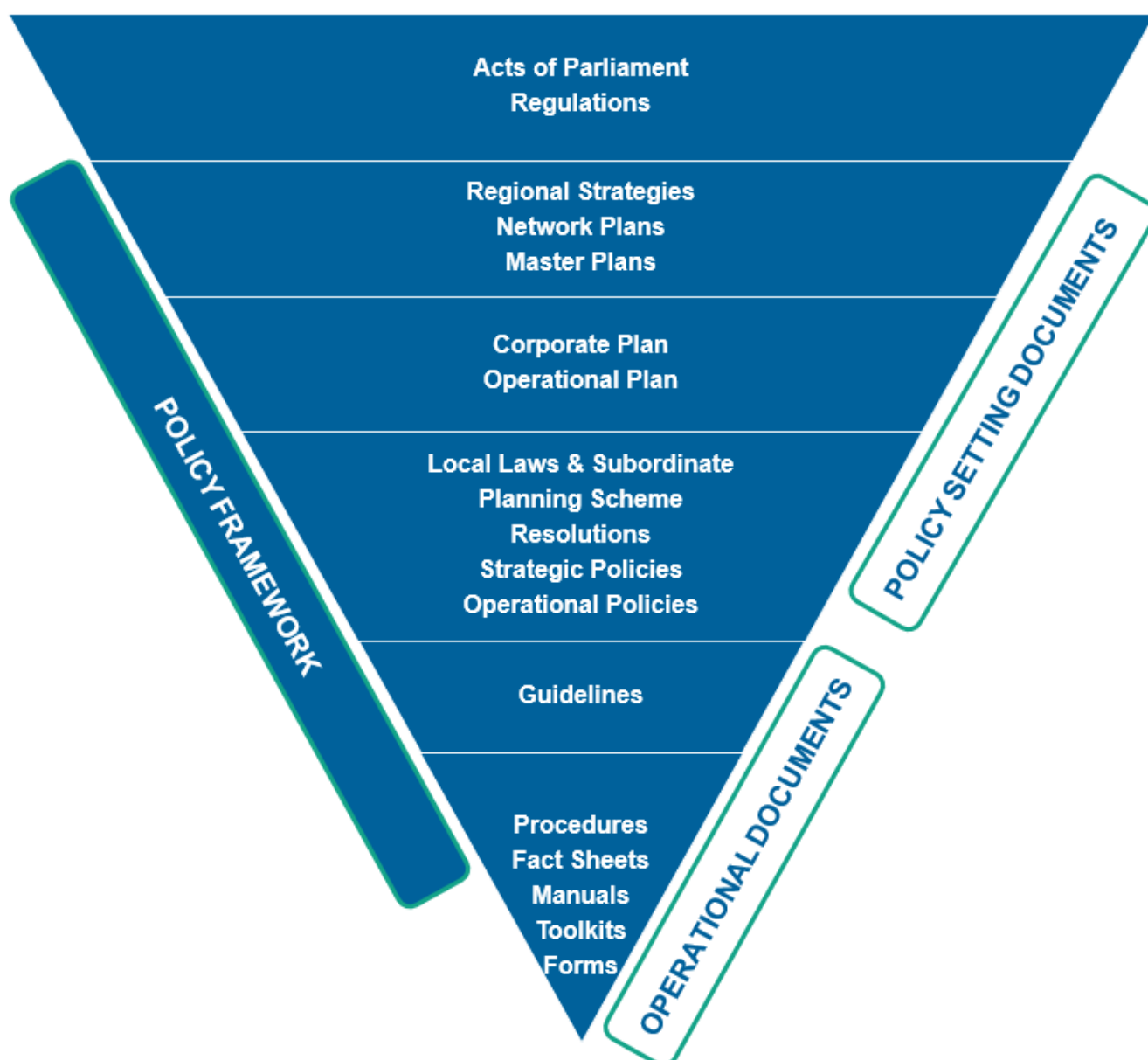
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## Document Hierarchy

Conflicts between documents should be avoided. Where there is a conflict between legislation or subordinate legislation and policy, the legislation or subordinate legislation prevails. Any other identified conflicts must trigger review and amendment processes.



## Policy Setting Principles

Whitsunday Regional Council policy:

- **meets a need** – to enable our transparency and accountability, good governance, risk management, legislative and legal compliance, and efficient operations.
- **is clear, consistent, accessible and complete** – provides clarity on our intentions and integrates with our broader strategic framework.
- **is evidence-based and of our values** – grounded in contemporary, best practice and our commitment to care, respect, trust, and being curious and connected.
- **prepares for our future** – outcome driven and reflective, flexible and responsive to opportunities for continuous improvement.
- **is for our region** – meaningful to our local context: for our strong community, our environment and liveability, our resilient economy and embodies our service excellence, as an outstanding organisation.
- **is people-centred** – our customers, community and employees are heard by policy processes and represented in policy settings.
- **is sustainable** – we take a balanced approach that meets the social, cultural, economic and environmental needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Whitsunday Regional Council policy is also made in consideration of the *local government principles* (Local Government Act 2009 section 4).

## Policy development principles

Whitsunday Regional Council policy development processes:

1. are initiated in response to identified **need** and well-understood problems.
2. are guided by Council's Community Engagement Framework to ensure fit-for-purpose **stakeholder engagement**.
3. are informed by full and frank advice and **decided by an appropriate authority** in a transparent and accountable manner.
4. **communicate** and publish policy positions to make them readily accessible.
5. monitor the effectiveness and efficiency of **implementation activities** to enable future reflection.
6. regularly **review** and evaluate how relevant a policy is, and how well it is achieving its purpose in the ever-changing policy environment.

## Policy categories and approval authorities

Policy type	Category	Rationale	Approval authority	Consult	Publish
<b>Strategic Policy</b>	- Assets	Policy required to meet a statutory requirement.	Council	Executive Leadership Team (ELT) as appropriate; community as appropriate	Public
	- Community				
	- Digital Information Services	Policy addresses a direct community impact.			
	- Elected Council	Policy addressing organisational issues and is of strategic significance or includes a community impact.			
	- Financial				
	- Governance				
	- People and Culture				
	- Service excellence				
<b>Operational Policy</b> (Function Driven)	- Assets	Provide direction for internal management of the day to day operations of Council.	Chief Executive Officer (CEO) on advice from ELT	Impacted groups, including Councillors or community as appropriate	Internal (public as required)
	- Digital Information Services	Policy which addresses an organisation-wide need.			
	- Financial	Gives effect to organisational practice in complying with statutory requirements.			
	- Governance	May address community facing impacts when related to service excellence.			
	- People and Culture				
	- Service excellence				
<b>Guideline</b>	- Community Administrative (sub-categories as for Organisational Policy)	For content of an operational nature. Generally supports the implementation of policies.	CEO on advice of Director or delegated as appropriate	Impacted groups	Internal

## Policy Commitment

Council employees and Councillors covered in the scope of any policy must consistently demonstrate and uphold the intent, purpose, and principles of that policy. Council policy must not require or authorise a Council employee or Councillor to act in any way that is contrary to law. Any instances of non-compliance will be managed in accordance with any relevant codes of conduct, policies and legislation dealing with conduct and/or disciplinary action.

All policy must be read and complied with in accordance with associated guidelines.

## Policy Application

### Business Area Obligation

Each business area must be able to easily locate, articulate, implement and review the Policy Framework relevant to their work (i.e. the sum of relevant policy positions, and any supporting guideline or procedure documents).

### New Policies

Before seeking to establish a new policy, consolidation with existing policies is to be considered, and amendments to existing policies be fully explored.

At initiation of a strategic or organisational policy development process, the policy holder must provide a brief report to Council's ELT to advise of proposed policy development process.

### Policy Naming

Policy names must be concise and plainly state the relevant policy topic. The first word of the name should be the most commonly searched term related to the policy topic.

### New Policy or Policy Amendment Triggers

Policy must not be triggered by ad hoc reactions to isolated incidents, complaints or issues. New policy or policy amendments may be triggered by:

- legislative change
- Council objectives changing
- changing or emerging community needs or expectations
- patterns of need emerging from incidents, complaints or issues presenting
- reviews

- governance review or audit recommendations (for example: Audit and Risk Committee, Crime and Corruption Commission, Office of the Information Commission, etc.)
- identification of a policy gap and associated risk
- development in best practice
- identified policy document conflicts
- formalisation of common practice, to increase transparency, consistency, and accountability, or
- making a policy setting more inclusive and accessible.

## Policy Review Frequency and Process

Policies must be reviewed on a regular basis. Comprehensive reviews must be scheduled to occur at least every 4 years.

A review may be triggered ahead of a scheduled review based on a policy risk assessment of the following factors:

- risk to compliance or statutory requirements
- risk to finances
- risk to health and safety
- risk to Council employees
- risk to operational effectiveness and efficiency
- risk to achieving strategic objectives
- risk to reputation
- related to another identified strategic risk
- high likelihood of a material or non-material change being required due to the presence of a policy amendment trigger listed in this policy, and urgency.

At initiation of a strategic or organisational policy comprehensive review, the policy holder must provide a brief report to Council's ELT to advise of proposed review.

Following a comprehensive review, the policy holder must update or confirm the currency of the policy and bring a report to the approving authority for consideration and re-endorsement or approval.



## Policy Review

### Policy Monitoring and Reporting

Council's ELT will receive periodic reports from the Governance Team on the status of Council's strategic and organisational policies, including upcoming scheduled reviews.

### Policy Review

The review schedule for this policy will be informed by the standard set within.

### Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Council	Endorsement authority for setting the Policy Framework (this document) and for all material changes to this policy framework. Able to endorse non-material changes.
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	Approval authority for any non-material change to this policy framework.
Executive Leadership Team (ELT)	Provides advice to the CEO and/or Council on setting this policy framework and any proposed material changes to this policy.
Director Corporate Services	Policy Framework sponsor. Approval authority for any minor non-material changes to this policy framework.
Manager Governance and Administration	Policy Framework holder. Provides advice to the Policy Framework Sponsor on this policy Framework.
Governance Team	Leads this policy framework's development, including communication, implementation, review and reporting.  Offers advice, training and toolkits on policy development, drafting and setting to the organisation.
All Council employees	Are responsible for ensuring policy development, drafting and setting is compliant with this Policy Framework, and associated guidelines and procedures.



## Measurements of Success

Measure	Outcome Sought
All policies are compliant with this Policy Framework within 4 years of endorsement of this Policy Framework.	Policy set consistency
All strategic and organisational policies are current or have an approved review schedule within 4 years of endorsement of this Policy Framework.	Policy set currency
All strategic and organisational policies are on the appropriate policy register once approved or endorsed within a reasonable timeframe.	Policy set functionality

## Definitions

For otherwise undefined terms, the plain English meaning informs interpretation.

Term	Definition
Council employee	The CEO, senior contract employees, contract employees, award employees, casual employees, part-time employees, contractors, contingent workers, agency casual and volunteers.
Guideline	A guiding document with content of an operational nature.
Non-material change	An amendment of an administrative nature that will not impact the intent or application of the policy.
Minor non-material changes	Purely administrative updates, such as title updates due to an approved restructure, or minor amendments to reflect legislative updates which do not impact the intent or application of the policy.
Material change	An amendment of a substantive nature that will impact the intent or application of the policy.
Plan	A document which describes in detail the action that Council will take to deliver services to the community in specific focus areas.
Policy	Policy is a statement of intent to guide action and decision-making.
Policy Holder	Responsible for project management and resourcing in relation to the policy's development, implementation and review. Usually a Manager level position able to advise the Policy Sponsor.
Policy Sponsor	Advocate for the policy's development, implementation, and review. Usually a Director level position able to introduce discussion of the policy as required with the ELT.

Policy Framework	The sum of relevant policy positions, and any supporting guideline and procedure documents, on one topic.
Procedure	A document which breaks down the steps of an operational process in more detail than a guideline.
Strategy	A document which describes a high-level strategy that is subject specific, aligning to Council's vision, and is focused on Council related activity.