

Module 2 – Governance and Roles

Narration script — one entry per slide

Slide 1 — Governance and Roles

Welcome to Module 2 – Governance and Roles. In Module 1 we explored what local government is and why it exists. This module goes a level deeper and examines who actually does what inside a council: the roles of individual councillors, the Council as a whole, the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, the General Manager (referred to in this module as Chief Executive Officer or CEO), and Council employees. For anyone considering election, understanding these roles properly is essential — not just in theory, but in practice, because a huge number of governance problems in local government don't come from bad intentions, they come from people genuinely misunderstanding where authority sits and who is responsible for what. Throughout this module there is one key principle to hold onto: Council governs. The CEO manages. Employees implement. If you take nothing else away from this module, take those six words — they will give you a strong foundation for everything that follows.

Slide 2 — Before You Begin

This module introduces one of the most important concepts in local government: role clarity. It sets out the different responsibilities of elected members, the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, the CEO and Council employees, and — just as importantly — where those responsibilities stop. Understanding these boundaries supports effective governance, better decision-making, and genuinely healthier working relationships across the whole organisation.

Slide 3 — Council Governs, CEO Manages, Employees Implement

If you remember only one slide from this entire presentation, remember this one. Council governs. CEO manages. Employees implement. Council sets direction — it decides what the community's priorities are, approves plans, adopts policies, and makes the big decisions. The CEO manages the organisation and turns those decisions into action, running the day-to-day business of Council. Employees provide professional advice, deliver services, and implement decisions on the ground — whether that's fixing a pothole, assessing a planning application, or running a community program. Almost every governance problem you'll hear about in local government traces back to one of these three roles stepping into another's territory. Keep the boundaries clear, and most of the rest takes care of itself.

Slide 4 — Governance Versus Management

Governance and management are not the same thing, and confusing the two is one of the most common traps for new councillors. Governance is about direction: Council decides what outcomes it wants — a safer town centre, better recreational facilities, stronger local economic development — and sets the strategy and policy to get there. Management is about delivery: the CEO and the organisation work out how those outcomes are actually achieved, day to day, within the resources available. Council focuses on long-term direction, priorities, and performance. The CEO focuses on the operational detail of getting there. Councillors who drift into management — telling employees how to do their jobs rather than what outcome they want — undermine both their own governance role and the CEO's ability to manage effectively.

Slide 5 — How Council Works

Everything begins with the community. Residents elect councillors to represent them and make decisions on their behalf. Those councillors, once elected, collectively form Council — not as individuals acting alone, but as a governing body. Council in turn appoints the CEO, who leads the organisation and is accountable to Council for its performance. The CEO then leads Council employees, who provide the professional advice and deliver the services residents actually experience day to day — roads, planning approvals, waste collection, community programs. Each level in this chain has a distinct role and a distinct set of responsibilities, and successful governance depends on every level respecting the boundaries of the level next to it, rather than reaching past it.

Slide 6 — The Role of the Mayor

The Mayor is the leader of the Council and, in most communities, the most publicly visible elected representative. The Mayor chairs Council meetings, provides leadership to elected members, and acts as Council's principal spokesperson — the public face of Council's position on issues. The Mayor also plays an important role in promoting good governance and constructive relationships around the Council table, setting the tone for how councillors work together. What the Mayor is not, though, is the person managing the organisation. Operational leadership remains firmly the responsibility of the CEO, and a Mayor who starts directing employees or operations is stepping outside the governance role and into management.

Slide 7 — The Role of the Deputy Mayor

The Deputy Mayor supports the Mayor and provides continuity of leadership when the Mayor is unavailable or otherwise occupied. When required, the Deputy Mayor performs the functions of the Mayor and helps represent Council and the community at events, meetings, or in the media. Like every other councillor, the Deputy Mayor's role sits within governance, not management — the position carries additional representative responsibility, but not any additional authority over employees or operations.

Slide 8 — Councillors Acting Individually

Individual councillors play an important role in connecting with the community day to day. They listen to concerns. They communicate with residents. They advocate for local issues and represent the views of the people who elected them. This is genuinely valuable work, and one of the most rewarding parts of the role. But it's worth being clear-eyed about its limits: individual councillors generally do not have the authority to direct employees, commit Council resources, or make decisions on Council's behalf, no matter how reasonable the request seems in the moment. Those powers sit with Council as a whole. Understanding this distinction early helps manage community expectations honestly, and protects both the councillor and the organisation from governance problems down the track.

Slide 9 — Councillors Acting Collectively

This is one of the most important governance concepts for any candidate to understand, so it's worth stating plainly: individual councillors have influence. Council has authority. Most formal authority in local government is exercised only when Council meets and makes a decision collectively — not by any one councillor acting alone, however senior or experienced. Councillors are elected individually, but they govern collectively. Candidates who make promises or commitments during an election period must understand that these are

of no effect unless adopted by a majority of the Council, ideally consensus with the full Council if this can be achieved. Effective councillors learn how to influence outcomes, collaborate with colleagues, debate respectfully — including disagreeing respectfully — and ultimately contribute to a decision made by the whole Council, even when that decision doesn't go the way they personally argued for.

Slide 10 — The Chief Executive Officer

The CEO occupies a genuinely unique position in local government: they are Council's only direct employee, appointed by Council itself, and accountable to Council for the performance of the entire organisation. From that position, the CEO leads the organisation, is responsible for implementing Council's decisions, and manages the people, finances, systems, and assets needed to get the job done. The CEO also provides professional advice to Council to support good decision-making — bringing technical expertise and organisational knowledge to the table before Council decides. A useful shorthand for the relationship is this: Council decides what. The CEO determines how. Councillors who understand that distinction tend to have far more productive relationships with their CEO.

Slide 11 — The Council–CEO Relationship

The relationship between Council and the CEO is often described as the single most important relationship in local government, and it's hard to overstate how much a council's effectiveness depends on it working well. Council relies on the CEO for accurate professional advice, organisational leadership, and the operational implementation of its decisions. The CEO, in turn, relies on Council for clear strategic direction and timely decision-making, without which even the best-run organisation can drift. Trust, communication, mutual respect, and clearly understood role boundaries are the foundations that make this relationship work. When it breaks down, it's rarely one dramatic event — more often it's a slow erosion of trust from small boundary breaches on either side, which is exactly why role clarity matters so much.

Slide 12 — Council Employees

Council employees provide professional expertise and deliver services to the community — preparing reports, providing technical advice, managing projects, delivering services, and implementing Council's decisions. One thing worth being explicit about: employees are expected to give frank and fearless advice. That means honest, professional advice based on evidence and their expertise — even when that advice isn't what a councillor wants to hear, and even when it points against a councillor's preferred option. That's not employees being difficult; it's employees doing their job properly, and councillors should genuinely want that kind of advice rather than advice that's been softened to avoid an awkward conversation. Once Council has made a decision, employees' role shifts to working constructively with councillors to help bring their ideas to life wherever they can — except, importantly, where doing so would be unlawful, in which case that advice needs to be given just as frankly. Employees are accountable through the organisational structure and ultimately to the CEO, not to individual councillors.

Slide 13 — Councillors and Employees

Healthy governance depends on positive, respectful relationships between councillors and employees, and that relationship works best when both sides understand what's expected of them. Councillors should ask questions, seek information, and genuinely engage with the

professional advice they're given — including advice that doesn't support the outcome they were hoping for. It's worth being honest about this: sometimes a councillor's preferred idea won't be supported by employees' advice, or won't be lawful to implement as proposed, and that's not a personal slight — it's the system working as intended, and getting upset about it doesn't change the advice. Councillors should not direct employees, allocate their work, manage them, or create competing instructions that put employees in an impossible position. Employees report through the organisational structure to the CEO. Maintaining these boundaries, on both sides, supports accountability, protects employees, and leads to better outcomes for the whole community. Councillors must not contact employees directly other than with the consent of the CEO or the employee's Director.

Slide 14 — Strategic Leadership

Good councillors think strategically, which means consistently considering long-term community outcomes rather than only the issue directly in front of them this week. That means thinking about future infrastructure needs before they become urgent problems. Financial sustainability, so today's decisions don't create tomorrow's debt. Community wellbeing across the whole population, not just the loudest voices. Environmental resilience, and the economic opportunities that will matter in ten or twenty years, not just this term. Local government governance, at its best, is about stewardship — making decisions today that leave the community in a genuinely better position for future generations, even when that means choices that aren't the easiest or most popular right now.

Slide 15 — Five Things to Remember

Before finishing, there are five key messages worth carrying forward from this module. First: Council governs — it holds the collective governing authority and makes the strategic decisions. Second: the CEO manages — leading the organisation and turning Council's decisions into action. Third: employees implement — delivering services and advice, including frank and honest advice, even when it's not what councillors want to hear. Fourth: authority is exercised collectively, through Council as a whole, not by individual councillors acting alone, however well-intentioned. And fifth: role clarity supports good governance — when everyone stays within their own role and genuinely respects everyone else's, local government works the way it's meant to. These five principles are the foundation for everything else in this series.

Slide 16 — Next Module

In the next module, we'll shift focus to the Huon Valley itself — the Council area, the communities that make it up, the services Council delivers, and the strategic framework that connects community priorities to Council's day-to-day decision-making. Understanding the community you're representing is just as essential to good governance as understanding your role within it, so this next module builds directly on everything covered here. Thank you for watching.