

Policy and Procedure

Narration Script

Huon Valley Council | Candidate and Councillor Knowledge Series

Slide	Title
1	Title — Policy and Procedure
2	Before You Begin
3	The Regulatory Hierarchy
4	Policy or Procedure?
5	Who Approves What
6	The Policies Council Must Have
7	How a Policy Is Developed
8	What Council Does With It
9	What a Policy Looks Like
10	Procedures
11	Keeping the Portfolio Current
12	What Councillors Do
13	Five Things to Remember
	Total

Slide 1 — Title — Policy and Procedure

Welcome to Policy and Procedure, part of the Huon Valley Council Candidate and Councillor Knowledge Series.

Council holds a portfolio of policies covering everything from rates to risk to conflicts of interest. Approving those policies is one of the few things the Act gives to councillors directly, and it is done at almost every Council meeting.

This module covers what a policy is, what a procedure is, who approves each, and how a policy gets to the Council table.

Slide 2 — Before You Begin

Councillors approve policies. Councillors do not approve procedures. Almost everything in this module follows from that one line.

It is a statutory function. Section 28(2) requires councillors, acting collectively, to determine and monitor the application of policies, plans and programs for the provision of services and facilities, the management of assets, and the fair treatment of employees.

Implementation sits elsewhere. The Chief Executive Officer has primary responsibility to implement Council's policies, and to develop the procedures that carry them out.

One policy governs all the others. The Policy and Procedure Development and Review Policy sets out how every other policy is developed, approved, published and reviewed. It is the policy about policies, and it was revised in February 2026 to define the policy and procedure distinction clearly and to set out how councillors are engaged.

Slide 3 — The Regulatory Hierarchy

Council operates within a hierarchy, and each level sits beneath the one above it and cannot contradict it.

At the top, legislation — Acts of Parliament, State and Commonwealth. Council cannot override them, and every policy must comply. Beneath that, regulations made under those Acts, the Meeting Procedures Regulations being the example councillors know best.

Then Council policies. High level, external facing, approved by Council, setting the strategic direction and the principles that guide how Council operates and serves the community.

Then Council procedures. Internal facing and instructive, setting out how a policy is implemented, and approved by the Chief Executive Officer rather than by Council.

And at the base, guidelines and standard operating procedures — the working detail. Guides, manuals, templates, forms.

One thing sits outside this hierarchy entirely. By-laws are local law made under a separate statutory process, and this Policy expressly does not apply to them, or to delegations of authority.

Slide 4 — Policy or Procedure?

The distinction between a policy and a procedure is not a matter of style or length. It determines who approves the document.

A policy is a high level document containing a statement of principle that aligns with legislative requirements. It records councillors' collective setting of the strategic direction and the principles for decision making that guide how Council operates.

A procedure is a written statement providing step-by-step instruction as to how a policy will be implemented. Instructive and prescriptive, aimed at the employees doing the work.

One is external facing and one is internal facing. That is a useful shorthand. A policy tells the community what Council stands for and how it will decide. A procedure tells employees what to do on Tuesday.

Every procedure has a parent. Every procedure should fall within the ambit of a head policy, and the procedure template requires that head policy to be named on the face of the document. A procedure floating free of any policy is a sign something has gone wrong.

And policy is a wide term here. It includes a code, a strategy or a plan — so the Strategic Plan, the Annual Plan and the Code for Tenders and Contracts are all policies in this sense, and all come to Council.

Slide 5 — Who Approves What

Four roles, and the boundaries between them are set by the Act rather than by preference.

Councillors, acting collectively, determine and monitor the application of policies under section 28(2). All policies are approved and adopted by Council, new ones and reviews alike. Councillors also ensure Council has a comprehensive suite of policies, and that all of them align with the Strategic Plan.

The Chief Executive Officer implements Council's policies and develops the procedures and supporting documents that do it. Under section 63(2) they develop human resource practices in accordance with Council's policies, so employees receive fair and equitable treatment. And they approve all procedures.

The Executive Leadership Team identifies the strategic opportunity or operational need for a new or revised policy, and workshops it before it is submitted to Council.

The Audit Panel reviews the currency, implementation and performance of Council's policies and recommends improvements.

And here the boundary needs stating precisely, because it is easily blurred. It is not the Audit Panel's role to review or approve policies. Its role is to assess and monitor the performance of the operational implementation of policies and procedures, and to recommend improvements. Approval belongs to Council, and only to Council.

Slide 6 — The Policies Council Must Have

Some policies are not optional. The Act requires them, and other legislation adds more.

Under the Act, Council must develop, monitor and implement the Strategic Plan and Annual Plan, the long-term financial management plan and the long-term strategic asset management plan, and the financial management strategy with the asset management policy and strategy. The Strategic Planning module covers how they fit together.

Four more sit alongside them: a Dispute Resolution Policy, a Councillor Expenses Policy, a Rates and Charges Policy, and the Code for Tenders and Contracts. That last one is worth noting because it is a code, a fusion of policy and procedure that the Act specifically requires.

Then other legislation. Council must develop and monitor further policies where another Act requires it — the clearest example being the Dog Management Policy under the Dog Control Act, which carries its own consultation requirements. The Minister for Local Government may also direct Council to have a policy.

And everything beyond that is Council's own choice. In addition to the statutory requirements, Council may voluntarily adopt a policy or procedure to provide guidance and consistency in its decision making and its application of the law.

Slide 7 — How a Policy Is Developed

A policy is developed in five steps, and councillors appear twice in them.

First, identify the need. Council considers the legislative requirements, the recommendations in the accompanying report, whether an existing policy could be revised instead of creating a new one, and whether there is a gap where no policy exists.

Second, draft it properly — the Council-approved template, the applicable legislation, consistency with Council's strategies and plans, and plain English wherever possible without losing the technical meaning.

Third, engage the community where required. Relevant stakeholders are identified and engagement undertaken where the legislation requires it and in accordance with Council's Communication and Engagement Policy. Not every policy needs community engagement, but some are legally required to have it.

Fourth, engage councillors, and this is the step worth paying attention to. Draft new policies and draft reviews are uploaded to the Councillor SharePoint site, followed by discussion at Councillor workshops, before the policy is formally presented for approval at a Council meeting.

And fifth, publish it. Under section 70G all policies go on Council's website and are available free of charge at the Customer Service Centre.

Slide 8 — What Council Does With It

When a policy reaches the Council table, the Policy sets out four things Council can do with it.

Approve it as recommended, and it is adopted as presented. Approve it pending further amendment, adopting it subject to changes Council specifies.

Defer it until further consideration. That often means back to a Councillor workshop, and it is a real outcome rather than a theoretical one — the Risk Management Policy was deferred to a workshop with the Audit Panel invited before it came back and was adopted.

Or not approve it. Council is not obliged to adopt what is put in front of it, and a recommendation is advice rather than instruction. The Motions and Decision Making modules cover how to move an amendment or an alternative properly.

And two things must accompany the approval. Every policy must include a delegation to the Chief Executive Officer to generate the procedures implementing it, unless primary responsibility rests with councillors themselves under the relevant legislation. And Council must direct that the policy be published.

Slide 9 — What a Policy Looks Like

Council's policy template sets a standard structure, and knowing it makes any policy quicker to read.

It opens with front matter — version and approval date, source of approval by resolution number, legislative reference, delegations, Strategic Plan reference, review date, and the responsible department. That table alone answers most questions a councillor might have.

Then the substance. Background and purpose. Legislative context. Definitions. The policy statement, which is the operative part. Principles. And application — who and what it covers, and expressly what it does not.

Then the handover. Every policy carries a clause delegating the Chief Executive Officer primary responsibility to develop the procedures implementing it, establish operational frameworks, and define delegated authority.

Then complaints, and a roles and responsibilities table.

And a length discipline sits over all of it. Following an Audit Panel recommendation, policies are to remain high level strategic documents of no more than ten pages wherever practicable, with operational detail moved into the related procedure.

Slide 10 — Procedures

Procedures follow a parallel process, but Council is not part of it, and that is the point of them.

The Chief Executive Officer identifies the need — whether an existing procedure can be amended, whether a new policy requires a new one, and feedback from employees about gaps in administrative capacity.

They are drafted to their own template, which requires the procedure to name the umbrella policy it sits under, reference the relevant legislation, be written in practical plain English, and include a review schedule.

They are approved by the Chief Executive Officer, not by Council. Procedures do not come to a Council meeting for adoption, and councillors should not expect to see them there.

They are published to employees on the Council intranet as a minimum. And they are available to the public on request, subject to the Right to Information Act and the Personal Information Protection Act, in accordance with Council's Access to Information Policy.

Slide 11 — Keeping the Portfolio Current

A policy portfolio is not something that gets finished. It is maintained, and the Policy builds that in.

Every policy is reviewed at least every four years, or earlier on legislative change or significant operational need. That review comes to Council, because reviewing an existing policy needs Council approval just as adopting a new one does.

Policies are simplified as they are reviewed. Following an Audit Panel recommendation in November 2025, the goal is for policies to be high level documents of no more than ten pages wherever practicable, with the operational elements moved into the related procedure.

Gaps get filled. Where no policy exists for a subject that needs one, a new policy is developed rather than a procedure being written to paper over the gap. And some policies get revoked — where a subject is better handled as a procedure under an existing head policy, the standalone policy goes and the material moves.

Why it matters is set out plainly in Council's own report. An incomplete or non-compliant policy portfolio risks community trust, invites complaints and external investigation, and can compromise Council's capacity to meet its strategic goals.

Slide 12 — What Councillors Do

Policy is one of the few areas where councillors decide directly rather than monitor, so it is worth knowing the role well.

Ensure the portfolio is complete. Councillors ensure Council has a comprehensive suite of policies in accordance with the Act and other applicable legislation. If a required policy is missing, that is a Council problem first.

Ensure alignment. Councillors ensure all policies align with Council's Strategic Plan, which is the same traceability discipline the Strategic Planning module describes.

Engage early rather than late. Drafts are shared with Councillors for comment and feedback and then may go to a workshop before they reach a meeting. That is where a policy can still be shaped, and it is a far better use of the opportunity than moving amendments on the floor.

At the meeting all four outcomes are available — approve, approve pending amendment, defer, or not approve. A recommendation is advice, not instruction.

And stay out of the procedure. Procedures belong to the Chief Executive Officer. A councillor pushing operational detail into a policy is doing someone else's job and blurring the line the Act draws. If the concern is how something will work in practice, the right question is whether the policy sets the right principle.

Slide 13 — Five Things to Remember

Five things to take away.

One. Councillors approve policies all of them, new ones and reviews of existing ones, under section 28(2) of the Act. Nobody else can.

Two. Councillors do not approve procedures. Those belong to the Chief Executive Officer, and they do not come to a Council meeting.

Three. The Audit Panel does not approve policies either. Its role is to review their currency, implementation and performance, and to recommend improvements.

Four. Policies stay high level ten pages or fewer where practicable, with the operational detail in the procedure beneath.

Five. Policies are developed in conjunction with Councillors. Drafts are circulated to Councillors for comment and may go to a workshop before they reach the chamber, and that is the point at which a policy can still be shaped.