



# *Teacher's Notes*

An introduction to Local Government



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**The City of Joondalup encourages schools to engage with the City's Civic Program where students will learn how local government works.**

Worksheets suitable for different primary levels and online resources including a Civics video are available for teachers to use.

There are several websites which may be useful for student research prior to a visit to the Civic Centre:

**[joondalup.wa.gov.au](http://joondalup.wa.gov.au)**

**[walga.asn.au](http://walga.asn.au)**

**[dlgsc.wa.gov.au](http://dlgsc.wa.gov.au)**

**[immi.homeaffairs.gov.au](http://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au)**

**[civicsandcitizenship.edu.au](http://civicsandcitizenship.edu.au)**

The following is a summary of local government and the City of Joondalup.

# Who makes up a local government and what do they do?

**The City of Joondalup is made up of 13 Elected Members (a Mayor and 12 Councillors) who are responsible for local matters, which affect the Joondalup community.**

These include all of the services normally associated with local government such as animal control, rubbish, recycling, parks and sporting oval maintenance. In addition to these, local government is responsible for many other services, which are not always recognised as core City business. These include cultural development, sport and recreation, libraries, approvals for buildings, environmental health, street signage, local road works, coastal dune maintenance, security patrols, youth services including skate park and youth centre development, a school liaison program and many other services.

**The City of Joondalup provides:**

**Services to property:** construction and maintenance of roads, footpaths and cycle paths; land drainage and development; waste collection and disposal; litter control and street cleaning; planting and caring for street trees; numbering of building lots, street lighting and bush fire control.

**Services to the community:** provision and maintenance of playing areas and reserves; parks and gardens and facilities for sporting groups, recreation centres, swimming pools, beaches, community halls, citizenship ceremonies, public libraries and information services; environmental health services, senior citizens centres, youth services and cultural services; local security patrols and community development.

**Regulatory services:** planning of road systems, sub-divisions and town planning schemes; building approval for any construction, addition or alteration to a building; dog and cat control including registrations and the development, maintenance and control of parking.

**General administration:** the provision of general information to the public, the lodging of complaints and payment of rates.

**Processes of government:** Ordinary and Special Council and Committee meetings; Electors' meetings and the election of Council through the local government election process.

The City of Joondalup has over 610 full time employees and more than 340 casual employees who are responsible for carrying out the operations of local government and for planning future projects. Reports on future projects and on main operational issues are prepared as part of a council agenda for elected members' consideration and a decision on the matter. Elected members have the opportunity to debate the issues and then each elected member has one vote per item and the Mayor has the deciding vote in the event of a tie. The result of this vote is called a resolution and the administration staff is then bound by these resolutions and must abide by the Council's decision.

The City of Joondalup Council comprises of elected members who are the representatives of the residents and as such have a responsibility to meet with groups or individuals who wish to be heard. Many elected members have full-time jobs in addition to their Council responsibilities but still attend functions, meetings and take phone calls from residents.



## What are the boundaries of the City of Joondalup?

The City of Joondalup is made up of 22 suburbs divided into six wards, stretching from Burns Beach Road in the north to Beach Road in the south, Wanneroo Road in the east and the coastline in the west.

### How do local government Ward Councillors represent their electorates?

The City of Joondalup's suburbs are divided into six areas known as wards, with two Councillors who represent the residents in each ward. The Ward Councillors are responsible to their electorate and present the concerns and wishes of these residents to the rest of the elected members at Council meetings. Many elected members act on official working parties created to develop new projects for the City or to resolve issues. Elected members also attend public and local meetings of interest groups within their ward.

## City of Joondalup Wards

### North Ward

Burns Beach, Iluka, Kinross, Currambine, Joondalup.

### North Central Ward

Ocean Reef, Mullaloo, Heathridge, Edgewater Connolly.

### Central Ward

Kallaroo, Beldon, Craigie, Woodvale.

### South-West Ward

Hillarys, Sorrento, Padbury.

### South-East Ward

Kingsley, Greenwood.

### South Ward

Marmion, Duncraig, Warwick.







## Council meetings

### What happens at a Council meeting?

Council meetings are held monthly from February to December generally in the Council Chamber at the Joondalup Civic Centre in Boas Avenue, Joondalup. In some cases, a Special Council Meeting can be called to discuss a particular item.

Council meetings are attended by elected members, senior employees and are open to the general public. The meetings are “declared open” and chaired by the Mayor (or if the Mayor is unavailable the Deputy Mayor). An agenda for each meeting is prepared and the elected members are familiar with the content as it has been explained to them during a Briefing Session the previous week. Full details on the procedures involved in Council Meetings and Briefing Sessions is available on the City’s website at; [joondalup.wa.gov.au](http://joondalup.wa.gov.au)

### Meeting Procedures

The *Meeting Procedures Local Law 2013* is a document which sets out the rules which apply during Council meetings, to ensure the orderly and efficient conduct of meetings dealing with Council business.

The following is a very general summary of how a Council meeting is conducted:

- **Open and Welcome** – the Mayor declares the Council meeting officially open and welcomes those persons present.
- **Declarations of Financial Interest / Proximity Interest / Interest that may affect Impartiality** – elected members who have a financial or proximity interest in an item being voted must declare their interest and then excuse themselves from the council chamber when the item is being debated and voted on. Elected members who have an impartiality interest in an item may participate and vote on the item being discussed.
- **Public Question Time** – a minimum of 15 minutes is allocated for members of the public to ask verbal questions about any matter relating to the local government.
- **Public Statement Time** – 15 minutes is allocated for members of the public to make statements for up to two minutes per person about any matter relating to the local government.
- **Apologies and Leave of Absence** – the Mayor announces those elected members who are unable to attend the meeting due to illness, personal reasons or because they are on an approved leave of absence from Council duties.

- **Confirmation of Minutes** – the Mayor asks the elected members to confirm that the minutes (written record) from the previous Council meeting are a true and accurate record of that meeting. The Mayor achieves this by asking for the minutes to be accepted. The elected members will either agree that the minutes are correct, or may amend the minutes if they believe they are incorrect. A vote is required to be taken to accept the minutes.
- **Announcements by the Presiding Member without discussion** – the Mayor is the Presiding member at Council meetings, at this juncture of the meeting announcements are made relating to highlights for the month or other matters pertinent to the business of the City of Joondlaup.
- **Identification of matters for which the meeting may be closed to the public** – some reports can be deemed confidential in accordance with the limited provisions of the *Local Government Act 1995* and are discussed “behind closed doors” requiring the public to leave the meeting.
- **Petitions** – a petition is a document required to be signed by at least 25 electors of the district, asking Council to take action on a matter which concerns them. Petitions are formally presented to Council and then forwarded to officers to advise whether the actions requested can be undertaken.
- **Reports** – the role of Council is to make decisions on matters which affect the local government. Officers prepare reports which provide a recommended course of action, and these reports are submitted to Council for a decision and voted on.
- **Report of the Chief Executive Officer** – the Chief Executive Officer can also submit reports to Council for a decision.
- **Urgent Business** – where a matter cannot be delayed to the next meeting, the Presiding Member may allow the matter to be discussed and voted on.
- **Motions of which previous notice has been given** – this item enables elected members, by prior notice, to raise issues at a Council meeting, for a decision to be made.
- **Announcements of Notices of Motion for the next meeting** – this allows elected members to indicate their intention to submit a ‘Notice of Motion’ in relation to a particular issue to be discussed at the next Ordinary Council meeting.
- **Closure** – the official time that the meeting ended.



## **How can the public be involved in Council Meetings?**

The general public are invited to attend any Council meeting and watch the proceedings from the public gallery section of the council chamber. Council agendas for the meetings are available on the City's website from 5.00pm on the Friday prior to a Council meeting, and hardcopies available prior to the meeting at the City's libraries and administration centre.

Should members of the public wish to provide written questions prior to a meeting or ask a question at a meeting there is a strict protocol, which must be followed:

### **Submission of written questions prior to the Council Meeting / Briefing Session:**

To enable prompt and detailed responses to questions, members of the public are encouraged to lodge up to five questions in writing by 9.00am on the Monday prior to the meeting. Answers to written questions received, where practicable, will be provided in hard copy form at the relevant meeting.

### **Public Question Time at the Council Meeting / Briefing Session:**

Members of the public wanting to make a public question at a Council meeting provide their name on a register. This register is referred to by the Mayor during public question time.

Public question time is limited to the legislative minimum of 15 minutes and may be extended by resolution of Council for two 10 minute extensions. However, the time allocated for public question time (including extensions) is not to exceed 35 minutes in total.

Public question time is limited to two verbal questions per person. With respect to Briefing Sessions, questions must relate to items listed on the Briefing Session agenda, whereas questions at Council meetings may pertain to any matters related to the City of Joondalup regarding day to day operations, provision of services and the like.

The Mayor will call those members of the public who have registered to ask their public question/s first, if time permits, the Mayor will call upon other members of the public to ask further questions.

The procedure to ask a public question during the meeting is as follows:

- Members of the public are requested to come forward to the lectern as directed by the Presiding Member (referring to the public questions registration list).
- Give their name and address.
- Ask their question.
- Time permitting the Presiding Member calls upon any other members of the public who did not register, to come forward if they have a question.

Public question time is declared closed following the expiration of the allocated time period or where there are no further questions.

### **The Mayor shall decide to:**

- Accept or reject the question as his / her decision is final
- Respond to the question or nominate the relevant City Director to respond to the question
- Due to the complexity of the question, take it on notice with a written response provided as soon as possible, and included in the agenda of the next Briefing Session or Council meeting, whichever applicable.

### **Public Statement Time:**

The City encourages public participation in its decision-making process, encouraging residents/ratepayers to make public statements at Council meetings or Briefing Sessions.

In person public statements to a Briefing Session must relate to a matter listed on the Briefing Session Agenda. In person public statements to a Council meeting can relate to any matter the City has responsibility for.

A maximum of two minutes per public statement is allocated for each person, to a maximum of 15 minutes for public statement time.

## **Special meetings of council**

In cases where a decision of Council is required to be made outside the timeframe of Ordinary Council meetings, it may be necessary for a Special Meeting of Council to be called.





## Commonly asked questions

### Can anyone become an Elected Member?

Candidates must be over 18 years of age, not have a criminal record, be an Australian citizen, and a resident or owner/occupier of property in the City of Joondalup.

### Are the Mayor and Councillors paid?

The Mayor is paid a Mayoral allowance as the role requires a full-time commitment. Similarly, the Deputy Mayor receives a Deputy Mayoral allowance based on a percentage of the Mayoral allowance. The Mayor and Councillors are paid meeting fees on a monthly basis to acknowledge the number of Committee and Council meetings and civic functions they are required to attend.

### What is a ward and how many are there in Joondalup?

A ward is a physical land area containing several suburbs, which divides up a local government so that there is fair representation by elected members. The City of Joondalup is made up of six wards.

### How does Council get its money?

Council receives revenue from rates (land taxes received from property owners in the City), state and federal government grants, fines (such as parking, library and dog registrations) and entry fees (such as attending recreation programs).

### What do Elected Members discuss at meetings and how often do they meet?

Elected members discuss all reports put forward by the administration staff including the development of roads or buildings and proposals for new projects. Council meetings are held once a month on the third Tuesday evening of the month. With elected members participating in a Briefing Session on the Tuesday prior to a Council meeting.

### Can a Councillor be fired and what happens if they resign?

A Councillor can only be dismissed if one of the following happens:

- They fail to attend three consecutive ordinary meetings.
- They become a Member of Parliament.
- They are convicted of a serious local government offence or crime that will require a prison sentence.

If a Councillor resigns or is dismissed, an extraordinary election is held to replace them in their ward. The only exception to this additional election is if the resignation is within three ordinary meetings of the next election.

### How often are elections held?

Council elections are held every two years, although elected members are elected for a four year term. This means that every two years one Councillor from each ward is up for re-election. In the City of Joondalup, the Mayor is also elected by the residents of Joondalup as part of the general election. In many other local government authorities the Mayor is chosen by the Councillors themselves. The City of Joondalup holds postal elections.

### Who can vote?

Anyone who is over 18 years of age, an Australian citizen and a resident or owner / occupier of property in the City of Joondalup can vote. Residents can only vote once and only for one of the candidates within their ward. Votes are mailed in and officially counted and monitored by the Western Australian Electoral Commission.





T: 08 9400 4000  
F: 08 9300 1383  
Boas Avenue Joondalup WA 6027  
PO Box 21 Joondalup WA 6919

[joondalup.wa.gov.au](http://joondalup.wa.gov.au)



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alternative formats upon request.