Ashfield Council

Review and Evaluation of Policy

August 2011

This policy will be reviewed triennally by: Governance

Next review date: August 2014

Document Title:	Evaluation and Periodic Review of Ashfield Council Policy
Summary:	The policy provides a framework and methodology for the review and evaluation of Council's policies when required.
Record Number:	*****
Date of Issue:	July 2011
Approval:	General Manager
Version Control:	Version 1
Contact Officer:	Governance Manager
Relevant References:	'What is Policy Evaluation", Magenta Book, Cabinet Office, Government of the United Kingdom
Main Legislative or Regulatory References:	Not applicable
Applicable Delegation of Authority:	As per delegations register
Related Ashfield Council Policy:	N/A
Related Ashfield Council Procedure:	Procedure for Policy Development

Policy Background

Evaluation is an important step for determining the extent to which a policy has met or is meeting its objectives within many different settings and amongst a variety of affected stakeholders.

Policy Purpose

This policy is to provide a basic evaluation and review methodology for Ashfield Council when evaluating, on a periodic basis, the effectiveness of various policies.

This policy covers all policies whether annual, biennial or triennial and applies to all staff of Ashfield Council.

Policy Objectives

There are five overarching objectives for this policy review process which are to -

1. Ensure that Council policy reflects current legislative and regulatory requirements,
2. Reaffirm, where possible, current practice is similar to similar activities within the Local Government sector,
3. Meet the functional and operational requirements of Council staff in executing policy,
4. Be responsive and reflective of the needs of Council's stakeholders and ratepayers,
5. Be relevant to the local government context in which Ashfield Council operates and strive for industry leading edge/best practice in policy development.

Evaluation uses a range of methods to systematically investigate whether a policy works in practice and to determine the merit, worth, or value in terms of any improvement which could be made. Evaluation and review of policies should also enable -

a) clarity of intent
b) simplicity of communication and interpretation by others
c) responsiveness to the need for change where required
d) minimisation and timeliness of the review process

Implementation

Evaluation by asking questions and testing responses is a critical feature of reviewing policy. Questions such as: What impact, if any, does a policy or programme have in terms of specific outcomes for the people for whom it is meant to apply ? . Does it actually meet the needs of small business, ratepayers or Council staff for the purpose intended? A second consideration is process evaluation, which asks *how*, *why* and *under what conditions* does a policy work, or fail to work? Are there gaps, circumstances or reasons why it cannot be applied? These considerations form the basis for a simple critique to enable policies to be evaluated in a timely and relevant manner. For reference, a format for review is attached to this paper.

Procedure for Review/Evaluation

There are four stages to the policy review process which are outlined in the Table below. Essentially it is considered that since the process is intended to cover existing policies, the focus is on reviewing the effectiveness of these policies over time.

	Stage	Activity / Action
1	*Initial Desk Review*	For the initial stage, the review should commence with an examination of changes to legislation, regulations, Council resolutions, circulars, memoranda, best practice guides for possible impact on existing policy.
2	*Consultation*	The second stage should include consultation with the relevant line staff, managers, community representatives as applicable. Liaison with other local government staff, DLG and other government organisations may also be included in this stage. Consultation may also involve the use of survey methods and formal interview/feedback techniques.
3	*Draft Revision*	A preliminary draft revision incorporating stages 1 and 2 should be made available to staff and stakeholders for final review.
4	*Revision, Promotion & Dissemination*	The revised policy should be disseminated and replace existing copies of policy wherever these are positioned (website, intranet, printed copies). **Public Exhibition:** should it be determined due to legislation or significant changes in policy, the document will be placed on public exhibition as per Council policy.

In order to provide a framework for evaluation of policy in a succinct, timely and targeted process, the following questions should be considered within the review process:

Format for Review -
Council Mission and Objectives

- Is the policy consistent with the core values and principles, mission and strategic plan of Ashfield Council ?

- Does the policy comply with Council's Strategic Plan, practice notes from the Division of Local Government (DLG), Council Resolutions or any other relevant consideration?

- Have practices been adopted that are no longer consistent with the policy statement ?

- Does the policy contradict other policies of Council or DLG ?

- Have there been deviations from the policy over past years since the policy was initiated ?

Legislation
- Does the policy comply with current legislation or related regulations ?

- Are there ambiguities in the policy statement? Are there questions arising from this policy ? (If yes, perhaps the policy needs rewording for greater clarity).

Approach and direction
- Are there any contradictions within the policy statement ? (for example, different times frames for the same licence in different sections of the document)

- Is language within the policy statement current (in terms of usage, terminology and practice)?

Practice
- Is the policy consistent with current technology (where applicable) ?

- Is the policy consistently interpreted by staff and end-users ?

- Are the related procedures/forms/licences relevant and up-to-date ?

- Should the scope (ie to whom and what it applies) be modified ?

- Are there any instances where the policy has been difficult to apply or unable to be applied in a particular circumstance ?

Financial
- Have there been any unforeseen financial impacts of the policy ?

- Is the policy within budget planning ?

These questions are not exclusive and should be supplemented where appropriate with tailored content specific queries for consideration in any review.

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