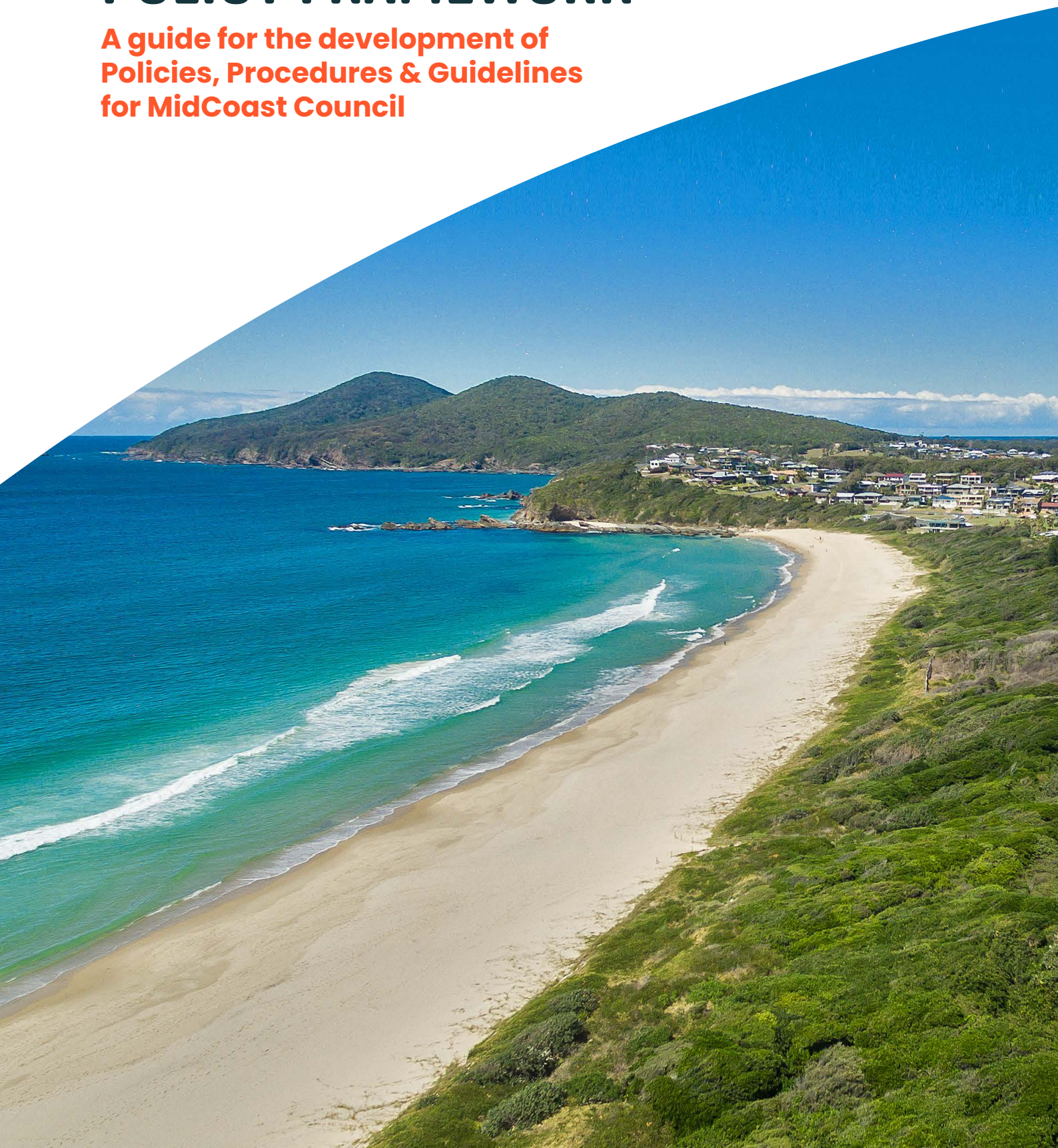
MIDCOAST
council

POLICY FRAMEWORK

A guide for the development of Policies, Procedures & Guidelines for MidCoast Council



Document control

Version No.	Date	Revision Details	Author	Approver
1.0	22 March 2017	Adopted March 2017	Manager Governance	Council Minute # 47/17
2.0	September 2018	Reviewed by Governance	Manager Governance	Draft
	31 October 2018	Adopted October 2018	Manager Governance	Council Minute # 319/18

Contents

Policy Framework....4

Objective....4

Key Terms....4

What is a Policy?....4

What is a Procedure?....5

What is a Guideline?....5

Preparing a Policy....5

Policy Template....6

Tips on Policy Writing....6

The Approval Process....6

Steps from Policy Development to Approval....7

Policy Review....9

Policy Register....9

Preparing a Procedure....10

Preparing a Guideline....10

Appendix 2 – Draft Procedure Template....13

Appendix 3 – Policy Review Flowchart....15

Appendix 4 – Policy Creation Flowchart....16

Policy Framework

Objective

The objective of this Framework is to provide a guide for the development of policy that is consistent with legal obligations, does not duplicate legislation or regulations, and provides a guide for the development of supporting documentation for policy including, procedures and guidelines.

This Framework also provides for public access through a register of policy that is current and is available electronically.

Key Terms

A policy is a set of guiding principles used to set direction within the organisation.

A procedure is a series of steps to be followed as a consistent approach to accomplish an end result. It is how to ensure the policy objectives are achieved.

A guideline provides additional information specific to a section of Council that supports the direction set by Policy and Procedure.

What is a Policy?

Policies outline Council's position on a particular issue.

A policy can be described as a general plan of action that shows the overall intention or stance that Council intends to take on a matter. The underlying principle for developing a policy is to provide a consistent approach to a matter or issue that forms the basis of a standard response or decision making.

A policy is general in nature, has broad application and helps to ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations, contract requirements and delegation of authority by the Council and General Manager.

Policies promote operational efficiencies and reduces corporate risk. Policies should not contain requirements. Procedures, guidelines, processes, directives, work instructions, and the like flow from policies and the requirements of any policy are specified in those documents.

Policies have either an external focus and are endorsed by Council by resolution (referred to in this document, as *Council Policy*) or have an internal operational focus and are endorsed by the Executive with the General Manager's approval (referred to in this document, as *Administrative Policy*).

A Council policy is a statement of principles that govern the activities of Council in its relationship with the public. Policies should clearly state Council's position on an issue and provide adequate guidance to ensure consistency in decision making. This consistency should reduce risk and/or waste associated with the process/issue that may occur through inconsistent practices.

Administrative policy aims to provide greater efficiencies in terms of decision making by the General Manager and staff exercising delegations relating to operational activity.

When developing a policy, the author must ensure that the policy is consistent with current delegations from Council and the General Manager. Administrative Policy also aims to

provide some consistency to service provision over time so that it is not persuaded by the changing nature of the political body.

What is a Procedure?

A procedure is a particular way of accomplishing something such as the “How-To” document that accompanies a policy.

A procedure is a written and approved specification for execution of some activity, often composed of steps, using established methods or forms designed to achieve a uniform approach to comply with applicable policies or directives.

A procedure should be a series of steps to be followed as a consistent and repeatable approach or cycle to accomplish an end result. Procedures provide a platform for implementing the consistency needed to decrease process variation, which increases procedural control. Decreasing process variation is how we eliminate inefficiency and increase performance.

A single policy may have a number of related procedures.

What is a Guideline?

A guideline is a document that contains additional information about acceptable methods for implementing requirements found in policies and procedures that have been approved by the Executive Team or Council. Guidelines do not necessarily mandate the actions that are to be taken; rather they offer a suggested process or steps to follow. Guidelines may be more appropriate to use than a formal procedure in a work environment where a degree of flexibility is required to ensure the efficient and effective operation of that work area.

Preparing a Policy

Policy should satisfy the following criteria:

- It is a governing principle that mandates or constrains actions;
- It has cross organisation application;
- It changes infrequently and sets a course for the foreseeable future;
- It helps ensure compliance, enhance Council outcomes or reduces corporate risk; and
- Is reviewed and endorsed by the Executive for approval by the General Manager, if Administrative, or by Council itself.

The policy statement needs to be short, and it should clearly state Council's intent. It may only need a few points, as related documents and/or procedures should provide the detail of how the policy is to be implemented and the relevant workflows.

The development of policy is a cyclical process whereby a need for a policy is identified, a draft is prepared, approval gained and the policy implemented. A regular review process is to be established and this process is then repeated when the policy is reviewed. Review timeframes are defined within the policy.

Policy Template

A policy template has been designed to provide a standard format when writing policies.

The template is divided into nine sections as listed below:

1. **Policy Objective** – Detail the objectives of this policy. Eg: To provide a solid governance framework in relation to ……..

2. **Policy Statement** – Council's position in relation to the policy matter.

3. **Coverage** – to whom the policy direction applies. Eg: all staff, all members of a team, Councillors, etc

4. **Strategic Plan Link** - Demonstrate links to the Community Strategic Plan.

5. **Policy Content** – Provides the detail, actions and references any procedures

6. **Definitions** – terminology explanation.

7. **References & Related Documents** – supporting documents and reading material.

8. **Responsible Officer** (position)

9. **Attachments**

Tips on Policy Writing

Avoid writing statements that lead to an activity that is not under Council's power.

A policy should be a document that can stand the test of time. References to current events or scenarios are to be avoided.

If figures are to be used, write the full word for the figure then its numeric form in brackets. ie; ten thousand dollars ($10,000)

Use concise plain English for ease of understanding by the reader. Short point form sentences are easier to read than paragraphs of instructions.

Have the document checked for clarity, logic and relevance.

Consider the preparation of procedures or guidelines to accompany the policy, this may occur at the same time as writing of the policy or may be prepared later if a number of procedures support the overriding policy position.

Consider using numbered dot points (Clauses) where possible so reference to specific clauses can be easily made.

The Approval Process

The approval process will be determined by the type of policy being developed. Outlined in the table below is a brief description of each type of policy and the approval process required:

Policy Type	Description	Consultation	Approval	Review
Council	Relate primarily to Council's intent regarding service, functions or activities and have an external/ community focus.	Key external stakeholders Management Team Executive Team Elected Council Public exhibition (where relevant)	Recommended by Management Team and/or Executive Team Approved by Council	Term of Council unless otherwise stated
Administrative	Relate primarily to operational issues, focus on internal functions and activities, and is intended for use within the organisation.	Management Team Executive Team Consultative committee (if staff related)	Endorsed by Executive Team Approved by GM	Variable as noted in Policy

Steps from Policy Development to Approval

1. Identify the need, undertake research and prepare a draft policy:

    a) Research the policy subject matter to ensure all relevant factors are captured including legislation

    b) Identify internal sources of information, asking if there are similar documents already in existence

    c) Identify external sources of information. Other councils or like industries may have similar documentation already in use. Seek industry best practice. The Office of Local Government may provide a model policy.

    d) Consult key stakeholders. Gather information for a first draft from a number of sources to gain different perspectives for a more balanced document

    e) Circulate the draft document to:

        i) Colleagues with experience/knowledge in the area covered by the policy for feedback, and

        ii) Key stakeholders

2. Refer document to Extended MANEX for general and organisational policy direction and feedback

3. Make any required changes to your final draft

4. Consult and release the draft for comment and feedback:

    a) If a Council Policy:

i) Seek the concurrence of Extended MANEX

ii) Seek endorsement of MANEX

iii) Workshop with Councillors (including Policy Working Group) where relevant

iv) Submit a report to Council seeking adoption and /or placing on public exhibition to seek community feedback where required.

b) If an Administrative Policy:

i) If the policy affects staff, request the consideration of the Consultative Committee

ii) Seek the concurrence of Extended MANEX

iii) Seek the concurrence of MANEX

5. Consider inclusion of feedback or comment received and prepare a response based on acceptance or rejection of feedback

6. Seeking approval following consultation:

a) If a Council Policy:

i) Prepare a report for consideration including response to feedback or comment received

ii) Seek Council's adoption by resolution

b) If an Administrative Policy:

i) If no significant changes are required following consultation, submit the policy to MANEX for endorsement and the General Manager's approval

ii) If changes are required, advise those staff groups with whom you have consulted and submit the policy to MANEX for endorsement and the General Manager's approval

7. Following approval Governance will include in the Policy Register and publish online

8. Implement staff training and/or information dissemination through:

a) Training/education sessions to specific groups or individual staff

b) Email or intranet post all users/key stakeholders with a brief overview of the policy and how it impacts them

c) Raising the policy as an agenda item at various meetings

d) Publishing policies on the intranet (if Administrative) or internet (if Council)

e) Publishing a media release (if Council)

f) Where appropriate develop an E-learning module to be disseminated to staff

Policy Review

Policy should be reviewed within prescribed timeframes (see above).

The purpose for policy review is to:

1. Ensure that Council policy reflects current legislative and regulatory requirements,

2. Reaffirm, where possible, current practice is similar 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 stakeholders, and

5. Be relevant to the local government context in which MidCoast Council operates and strive for industry leading edge and best practice.

Version Control is included in the policy template and reflects policy review and amendments.

Policy Register

Council will maintain a Policy Register which will ensure that all policy data is searchable to facilitate currency (review dates) and that changes to legislation that impact policy are managed appropriately. The register will record the following items:

- Name of the Policy
- Policy Code / Number
- Adoption Date
- Minute Number
- Last Review Date
- Review Timeframe
- Next Scheduled Review
- Related Legislation
- Associated Policies / Documents
- Responsible Department
- Version Control
- Published on Internet / Intranet
- Stored Locations

Preparing a Procedure

Procedures set out the steps required to implement the policy. Procedures should specify the method of performing a task, such as who does what, when, how and what records will be kept.

A procedure is a series of specific statements that describe the steps required to turn a policy or legislation into action. They are designed to ensure that critical processes and systems operate consistently and effectively across the organisation. They can be in written or graphic format. A flowchart is an effective tool for outlining procedure.

Procedure writing should be undertaken by people who are familiar with the activities and functions to be documented. Procedures relating to a specific policy should be referred to in the related documents sections of the policy template. This will ensure that people are aware of the processes relating to the policy.

A procedure template has been designed to provide a standard format when writing procedures.

The template is divided into five sections as listed below:

1. Purpose – a brief statement about the need for the procedure and what it gives guidance to completing.

2. Related Documents – supporting documents and reading material including the overarching Policy

3. Process – A systematic list of related activities, who should complete them, in what sequence and what timeframe.

4. Review and Revision – the standard is between one and two (1 and 2) years.

5. Responsible Officer (position)

For a procedure that supports Council policy, the approval process should be by the Executive Team on the endorsement of the relevant Manager. While the procedure does not require Council approval, as it is the operational mechanism by which Council policy is implemented, it may accompany the report regarding the Policy seeking endorsement.

For a procedure that supports Administrative policy, the approval process will vary depending on the scope of the procedure, but approval should occur close to the staff undertaking the activity. That is, in most cases by the relevant Manager.

Where the procedure impacts all staff the process for policy development to adoption is considered appropriate and it is likely that the procedure will accompany the policy where change is significant.

Preparing a Guideline

Guidelines are prepared, often to support a policy and procedure, where additional information is required for staff in a special circumstance, situation or location.

Guidelines are generally prepared to support policy or procedure where the specific topic has a level of complexity where a set procedure cannot cover all of the possible scenarios. It should provide additional information for staff to consider where a step in a procedure is not a yes or no consideration.

Appendix 1 – Policy Template

Name of Policy:	Gifts & Benefits		
Policy Code:			
Adoption by Council	23 November 2016	**Minute No.**	
Last Review Date:	23 November 2016		
Review Timeframe:	4 Years		
Next Scheduled Review Date:	November 2020		
Related Legislation:	Local Government Act 1993		
Associated Policies/Documents:	Code of Conduct		
Responsible Department:	Corporate & Business Services		

Policy Objective

Detail the objectives of this policy. *eg: To provide a solid governance framework in relation to …….*

Policy Statement

Make a statement about Councils intent/commitment. *eg: Council shall manage …..*

Coverage of the Policy

Describe who is covered by this policy. *eg: all staff, all members of a team, Councillors, etc*

Strategic Plan Link

Demonstrate links to the Community Strategic Plan. *eg: Direction 5 – Governance and Partnerships – Objective 1 – Ensure sound local governance practice.*

Policy Content

Provide the detail of the policy, any actions or procedures to follow.

Definitions

List the terminology covered in the policy and provide definitions. For example;

Complaint *is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction made about standard of service provided by Council or the actions or lack of actions by Council or its workforce.*

Service Request *is defined as a request for the provision of a service or product*

References and Related Documents

Provide a list of supporting documents and reading material.

Responsible Officer (Position)

Which officer in Council is responsible for the policy *eg: Manager Governance*

Attachments

Add any required attachments for the Policy

Appendix 2 – Draft Procedure Template

Name of Procedure:	
Procedure Code:	
Approval by Manex / Manager	**Date:** **By:**
Last Review Date:	
Review Timeframe:	
Next Scheduled Review Date:	
Related Legislation:	
Associated Policies/Documents:	
Responsible Department:	

Purpose

Detail the purpose of this procedure. *eg: To provide a consistent approach and guidance for engineering staff in relation to …….*

Related Documents

List other related supporting documents and reading material including the overarching Policy where applicable. *eg: Policy, Guidance notes, Legislation, Forms, etc …..*

Process

Provide the details of the process. *Include steps in the process and a flow chart of the process where possible. Example shown below*

Review and Revision

The standard is to review between one and two years. *eg: This procedure is to be reviewed every two years.*

Responsible Officer / Department / Section

List the responsible officer, department or section for the process.

Attachments

List and attach and forms or supplementary information

The information below is to provide some guidance for procedure development and should be deleted once complete

Preparing a Procedure

Procedures set out the steps required to implement the policy. Procedures should specify the method of performing a task, such as who does what, when, how and what records will be kept.

A procedure is a series of specific statements that describe the steps required to turn a policy or legislation into action. They are designed to ensure that critical processes and systems

operate consistently and effectively across the organisation. They can be in written or graphic format. A flowchart is an effective tool for outlining procedure.

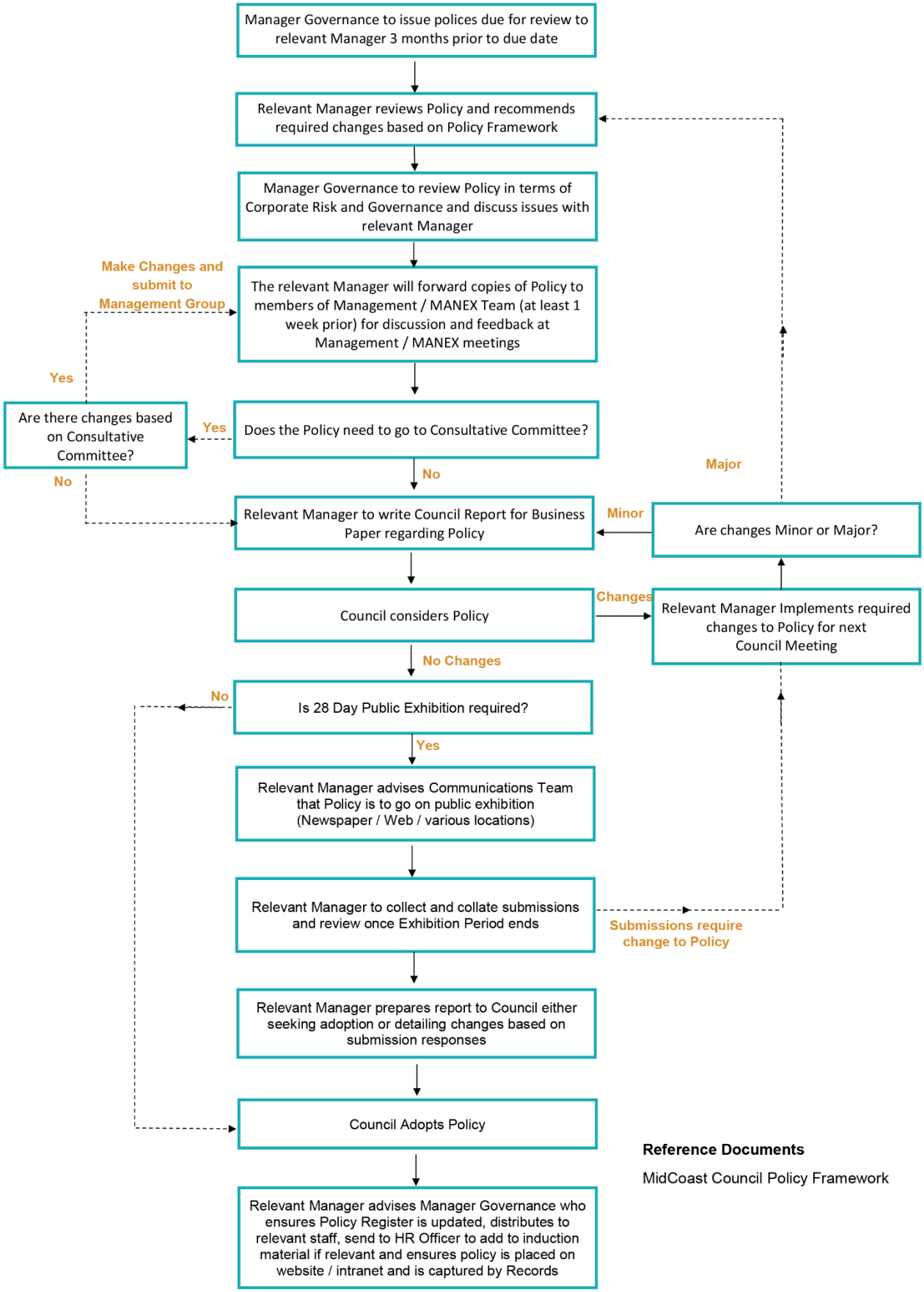
Procedure writing should be undertaken by people who are familiar with the activities and functions to be documented. Procedures relating to a specific policy should be referred to in the related documents sections of the policy template. This will ensure that people are aware of the processes relating to the policy.

For a procedure that supports Council policy, the approval process should be by the Executive Team on the endorsement of the relevant Manager. While the procedure does not require Council approval, as it is the operational mechanism by which Council policy is implemented, it should generally accompany the report seeking endorsement for public exhibition and also the report seeking policy adoption as it is of interest to the Councillors and public.

For a procedure that supports Administrative policy, the approval process will vary depending on the scope of the procedure, but approval should occur close to the staff undertaking the activity. That is, in most cases by the relevant Manager.

Where the procedure impacts all staff, the process for policy development to adoption is considered appropriate and it is likely that the procedure will accompany the policy where change is significant.

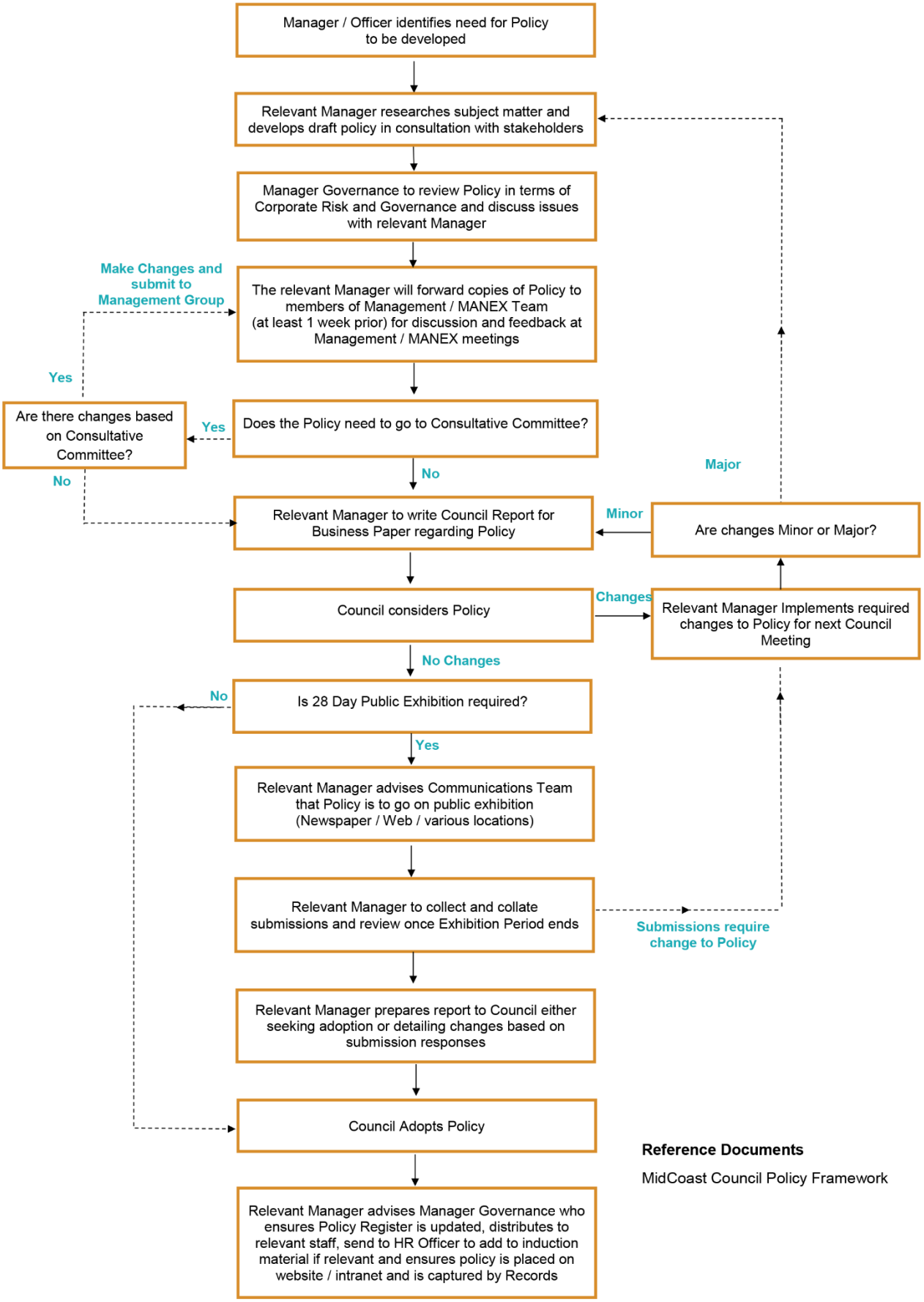
Appendix 3 – Policy Review Flowchart



Reference Documents

MidCoast Council Policy Framework

Appendix 4 – Policy Creation Flowchart



Reference Documents

MidCoast Council Policy Framework