



# Making decisions and laws

Formal council meetings are where the council members (mayor and councillors) gather to debate and make strategic decisions on local issues.

Before a formal meeting, the council will share an agenda with the public, which lets the community know what issues the council will be considering and making decisions on.

Formal meetings are led by the mayor who makes sure councillors have a chance to speak and all items on the agenda are talked about.

Each agenda item has a question of council called a motion and councillors must vote. In voting, the mayor asks for those voting in favour and those voting not in favour of the question or motion. The question or motion is carried by a majority of votes in favour or lost if the majority are not in favour. If the vote is tied some mayors may vote, this is called a casting vote. All formal decisions of council are recorded and made available to the public.

In between formal council meetings, councils typically hold information sessions. Information sessions are informal meetings that give council members, the CEO and council employees an opportunity to talk about issues, hold workshops or training. In these sessions, they do not make any decisions – they only talk, listen and learn.

Sometimes councils have the help of a committee who will meet at different times to the formal council meeting. Committees can talk about specific issues in a lot more detail and can make recommendations to the council.

Councils also have the power to make laws called bylaws. These bylaws are created when the council decides on a rule for an action that is allowed or is not allowed in the community. These powers can be used to manage and control things like access to council land, laws that manage the speed of cars on local roads, and manage and control dogs in parks and open spaces.

## References:

‘Local Government’, Legal Services Commission SA, Jan 2024,  
<https://lawhandbook.sa.gov.au/print/ch28s01.php#:~:text=Council%20activities%20include%20waste%20management,District%2C%20Town%20or%20City%20Councils.>

‘Local Government Act 1999’, Jan 2024,  
[https://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/\\_/legislation/lz/c/a/local%20government%20act%201999/current/1999.62.auth.pdf](https://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/_/legislation/lz/c/a/local%20government%20act%201999/current/1999.62.auth.pdf)



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## References:

'How Councils Work', Local Councils SA, Jan 2024,  
<https://www.localcouncils.sa.gov.au/how-councils-work>