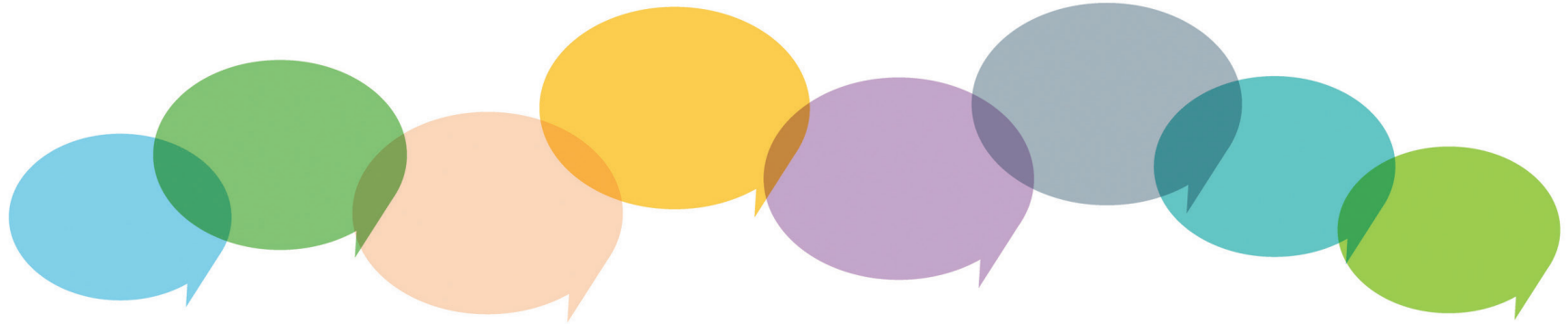




WHAT IS GOOD GOVERNANCE?



What is “governance”?

- = The **PROCESS** of **DECISION-MAKING**, and
- = The **PROCESS** by which **DECISIONS** are **IMPLEMENTED** or **NOT IMPLEMENTED**.

Good governance is an **IDEAL**.

Good governance, in local government, occurs when a local council **governs for an on behalf** of its local community and the **wider public** as assessed according to certain **KEY CRITERIA**.

Good governance is a special responsibility and duty of the “governing body” of the council, that is, the elected Councillors, who are elected to exercise good civic leadership on behalf of the whole community and otherwise in the public interest.

• Good governance is:

- lawful, equitable and ethical
- transparent, accountable and responsive
- democratic and consensus oriented
- participatory and inclusive
- effective and efficient.

• Good governance is:

LAWFUL, EQUITABLE AND ETHICAL

- Decisions and decision-making processes are:
 - lawful ... i.e. legal and fair
 - ethical ... objectively assessed in terms of their consequences
 - equitable ... in terms of balancing the disparate and often competing needs of different groups in the community, including minorities and the marginalised

• Good governance is:

TRANSPARENT, ACCOUNTABLE AND RESPONSIVE

- decisions and decision making processes are open to public scrutiny
- information is made freely available and directly accessible
- directly accountable to the local community and the wider public (especially those affected by decisions and actions)
- service within a reasonable time frame
- ability to adapt to changing circumstances

• Good governance is:

DEMOCRATIC AND CONSENSUS ORIENTED

- effective representation at the local level
- mechanisms for managing and mediating divergent and conflicting community interests ... what is in the “best” interest of the whole community
- consensus oriented decision making (i.e. managing conflict actuality and potentiality involving all the key players/stakeholders)

• Good governance is:

PARTICIPATORY AND INCLUSIVE

- participation by people regardless of sex, race or any other discriminatory characteristic
- freedom of association and expression
- ensuring that all groups, especially the marginalised and most vulnerable, are adequately represented with their particular interests being duly considered.

• Good governance is:

EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT

- Effectiveness = doing the right things
- Efficiency = doing things right ... - Peter Drucker.
- The challenge is ... **HOW DO WE MAKE THE BEST USE OF THE LIMITED RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO PRODUCE THE RIGHT RESULTS IN AN EFFICIENT MANNER?**

A couple of weeks ago I wrote about what are and are not matters that decision makers can take into account in making planning decisions. Essentially the difference is between what is in the public interest, and what is a private interest, and that is what governance is about. So, how do councils govern in the public interest so that different, and often competing, interests are recognised, addressed and properly managed?

The public interest is:

- the common good or the good of society at large
- the “common well-being” or “general welfare”
- central to policy debates, politics, democracy ... and local government.

In making land use decisions:

- The public interest includes (with different weight and relevance in individual cases):
 - Layout
 - Density
 - Privacy
 - Daylight/sunlight
 - Access/traffic
 - Local economy/employment
 - Design/appearance
 - Noise/smells
 - Previous similar decisions

• What considerations should **NOT** be taken into account in the determination of an application?

Private interests:

- History/character of applicant
- Loss of view
- Commercial competition (e.g. Coles v Woolworths BUT out of town v in town (i.e. vitality and viability of town centre) **MAY** be material)
- Impact upon property value
- Restrictive covenants

- Ownership of land
- Issues related to decency or belief (e.g. sex shops, places of worship)



ONE OF THE KEY CRITERIA FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE IS BEING:

transparent,
accountable and
responsive

including decisions and decision making processes are open to public scrutiny.

Over recent times I have noticed that scrutiny is not welcomed by some people in public life, and those of us who ask questions and raise issues are often shunned for being negative or critical and can be treated as pariahs. In writing these columns I try very hard to be objective and factual. It is an important part of a democratic society to have scrutiny and for our public bodies to be accountable. I have seen many public sector organisations that suffer from ‘group think’ and their senior decision makers can get into a siege mentality instead of seeking different points of view, being responsive and thinking outside the square. People in public life need to wear Teflon overcoats and not feel personally criticised.

The media is an important part of scrutiny and I hope that my columns help us to get the best out of our councils by engaging with them and helping them to be accountable.

I have received feedback that many people find these columns informative and I am happy to receive comments from readers about this column and other issues you would like me to cover so please either contact me at Orange City Life or aes@amandaspaldingconsulting.com