



# SHOULD THE COMMUNITY DO A PERFORMANCE REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL?

A couple of weeks ago I wrote about What is Good Governance? I advise on good governance in my business and it has become good practice to evaluate the performance of a Board at least every two years. Different private sector boards use different methods to undertake the evaluation and different criteria. Some undertake a review by confidential surveys of directors and management and the review can include:

- the structure and operation of the board
- the skills and characteristics required to maximise its effectiveness
- the appropriateness of the board's practices and procedures to meet the present and future needs of the company
- the delivery of strategic plan Key Performance Indicators
- opportunities for improvement.

### What else should be included in performance evaluation?

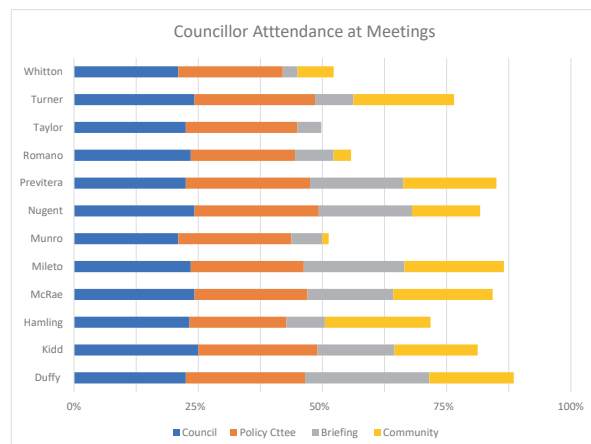
In NSW Councillors comprise the governing body of a council in the same way that a Board of Directors is the governing body of a corporation, so should there be a performance review of the governing body of Council? A councillor is accountable to the local community for the performance of the council. I shall consider the performance of the Council in comparison to its strategic plans once the Annual Report for 2018/19 is available. Recently Orange City Council reported on Councillor attendance, training and compliance during the current term of Council that started in September 2017 and ends in September 2020. There was some debate about whether attendance at meetings constitutes performance. Diversity is important and that includes diversity of personal circumstances including people employed full-time or part-time in different occupations; unemployed, students or retired people; people who are self-employed running their own business; parents and carers. Councils generally try hard to facilitate the ability of Councillors to attend meetings and that includes providing funding for childcare and carers during meetings and conferences. I thought it would be helpful to look at the statistics provided in the report graphically.

1. Attendance at Council meetings.

Councillor	Council Attendance	Policy Committee	Briefings
Duffy	90%	96%	100%
Kidd	100%	96%	62%
Hamling	93%	78%	31%
McRae	97%	91%	69%
Mileto	94%	91%	81%
Munro	84%	91%	25%
Nugent	97%	100%	75%
Previtera	90%	100%	75%
Romano	94%	84%	31%
Taylor	90%	90%	19%
Turner	97%	97%	31%
Whitton	84%	84%	12%

I have written a column earlier about Council's Community Committees and suggested there should be a review of their effectiveness. There are 22 Community Committees and the following table shows how many Committees Councillors are members of, and the proportion of the Committee meetings they attended.

Councillor	% of Committees	% of Attendance	Training
Duffy	27%	68%	1
Kidd	45%	67%	4
Hamling	9%	85%	0
McRae	41%	80%	5
Mileto	27%	80%	5
Munro	32%	5%	1
Nugent	27%	55%	2
Previtera	23%	75%	5
Romano	23%	14%	1
Taylor	5%	0%	0
Turner	9%	81%	0
Whitton	5%	29%	0



It could be asked which meetings are most important, and is there a minimum expectation of Councillors' attendance at meetings? Clearly attendance at Council and Policy Committee meetings are very important. Having spent over 25 years in senior management in local government I would argue that briefings are equally important as they tend to show a Councillor's willingness to listen to staff and to learn. With regard to Community Committees the number of committees each Councillor is involved in is not included in the graph. It shows the proportion of Community Committee meetings that a Councillor attended of those they were committed to attend.

Part of any evaluation of the effectiveness of Community Committees could include a confidential survey of community representatives on the effectiveness of each Councillor and community member and what each Committee achieved measured against the strategic plan of what it set out to achieve.

The Council report also looks at training undertaken by Councillors. The 2016 Reforms to the Local Government Act added to the role of individual Councillors - to make all reasonable efforts to acquire and maintain the skills necessary to perform the role of a councillor.

Councils are now required to develop a Professional Development Program in consultation with all councillors and delivered over the term of the council to build the skills, knowledge and personal attributes necessary to be an effective mayor or councillor. It appears that effectiveness is yet to be defined, so it is currently difficult to evaluate the performance of Councillors with regard to the training they have undertaken as described in the report. The number of training courses undertaken by each Councillor is shown in the table above.

The Office of Local Government recommends that all Councillors attend the 'Hit the Ground Running Workshops,' regardless of whether they are new or returning Councillors and record who does attend.

The new requirements concerning induction and professional development of Councillors came into force in December 2018. From the 2019/20 Annual Report onwards Councils will be required to report information in their annual reports on the induction and ongoing professional development activities offered to the mayor and each councillor.

*I would be interested to hear from readers what they think should be included in a Governing Body Performance Evaluation. As the Office of Local Government 2017 Councillor Handbook says - ultimately, councillors are accountable to the community every four years on election day.*

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](mailto:aes@amandaspaldingconsulting.com)