



City of **Perth**

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# Reports under Separate Cover

Agenda Briefing Session

17 February 2026

Notice of Meeting

To the Lord Mayor and Councillors

The next Agenda Briefing Session will be held on Tuesday, 17 February 2026 in the Council Chamber, Level 9, 27 St Georges Terrace, Perth commencing at 5:00 PM.

Michelle Reynolds

Chief Executive Officer

17 February 2026

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## 17. Chief Executive Officer Reports

### 17.6 Psychosocial Risk Assessment

Responsible Officer	Michelle Reynolds – Chief Executive Officer
Voting Requirements	Absolute Majority
Attachments	Attachment 17.1A – Recommendation Table - Psychosocial Risk Assessment - Feb 2026 <a href="#">↓</a>

### Purpose

This paper provides advice in relation to the independently conducted Psychosocial Risk Assessment regarding interactions between Elected Members, and between Elected Members and those staff who work closely with them. Particularly, the paper provides information regarding the recommendations from that Assessment and actions taken by Administration to implement those recommendations.

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### Recommendation

That Council:

1. RECEIVES the recommendations of the Psychosocial Risk Assessment Report.
  2. NOTES the CEO has progressed those recommendations which are within the CEO's control and do not require additional funding allocation.
  3. REQUESTS the CEO to place the recommendations of the Psychosocial Risk Assessment Report on the agenda of an Elected Member Engagement Session to determine implementation of those recommendations relating to Elected Members.
  4. APPROVES allocation of \$280,000 to enable implementation of the recommendations of the Psychosocial Risk Assessment Report.
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## Background

1. Between March 2025 and 12 November 2025, the CEO has received repeated and escalating concerns from multiple City employees and Elected Members regarding their safety and work, particularly in respect of psychosocial safety issues.
2. The CEO has sought to address these concerns through informal interventions including direct discussions with the Lord Mayor and Elected Members regarding the reported safety issues and through the provision of work health and safety training which included information on the duties of Elected Members to take reasonable care to ensure their conduct does not adversely affect the health and safety of others.
3. These informal interventions have not resolved the issues.
4. Given escalating concerns including those raised by some Elected Members, and some staff who interact with Elected Members, on 12 November 2025 the CEO advised the Lord Mayor of her intention to commission an independent risk assessment to consider psychosocial wellbeing and safety and to conduct a Psychosocial Risk Assessment in relation to:
  - **Intra-council relationships**
    - How elected members function and interact with each other, including the Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor.
  - **Council/Administration relationships**
    - The interactions between the Council and City staff who appear at Council or interact directly with elected members, including the CEO and senior executives, and Council support employees.
5. The decision to conduct the psychosocial risk assessment to identify hazards and implement appropriate controls was consistent with the City's obligations to provide for the health and wellbeing of staff, and to take steps, as far as reasonably practicable, to provide a safe environment for Elected Members.
6. All engagement with the independent consultant was held on a confidential basis. The Risk Assessment process was completed throughout December 2025, with all Elected Members and staff who work with them invited to participate.
7. In January 2026 a Psychosocial Risk Assessment report (the Report) was submitted to the City. The Report has been provided to all Elected Members and was considered by the City's Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee on 21 January 2025.
8. The Report is evidence that there are known psychosocial harm risks within the City which must be addressed. A failure to address these now documented risks could be assessed as a failure to comply with work health and safety obligations. The City mitigates these risk by implementing the recommendations or equivalent controls to reduce the risks of harm.
9. The Report is and remains assessed as private and confidential. This designation reflects:
  - a. that participants in the process were assured that their participation and contributions would be confidential. While the report is deidentified, making the report public risk undermining the trust and good faith of the participants and may adversely affect participation in future processes.
  - b. Participants have participated in a work health and safety process and should be protected from victimisation as a result of that participation. Maintaining the confidentiality of the report supports this.

10. The findings and recommendations of the report do not risk identifying participants and are summarised here to provide context for the Recommendation to Council. All Elected Members have a copy of the full report.

## Discussion

### The Psychosocial Risk Assessment Report

11. The Risk Assessment was a system level review focused on risk identification and mitigation. **It was not an investigatory or complaints assessment process** and did not make individual findings of wrongdoing.
12. The Risk Assessment did identify that currently, multiple participants in this process reported feeling unsafe at work and experiencing actualised harm requiring medical intervention and being at risk of ongoing harm.
13. The Risk Assessment was conducted with consideration given to requirements of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2020 (WA)*; *WHS General Regulations 2022*, Code of Practice: Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work; and the *Local Government Act 1995*.
14. The assessment identified six interconnected psychosocial hazard themes affecting the relationship within Council, and between Council and the Administration. In order to be identified as a theme within the Report, the consultant required an issue to be identified by multiple parties. The identified themes were:
  - i. Breakdown of key Council-Management Relationships
  - ii. Fragmentation and exclusion dynamics
  - iii. Harmful workplace behaviours
  - iv. Contested role boundaries
  - v. Workforce depletion and support erosion
  - vi. Ineffective accountability systems
15. The independent consultant found that the hazards identified during her assessment period were consistent with the baseline data utilised, being the findings of the Report into the Commission of Inquiry into the City of Perth and broader sector wide surveys. Those hazards include:
  - Governance- management relationship breakdown
  - Factional dynamics and internal division
  - Role boundary concerns
  - Complaints process ineffectiveness
  - Gendered patterns of differential treatment affecting women at all levels
16. New or intensified areas of concern identified by the consultant were:
  - Speed of deterioration over approximately nine months
  - administration and support staff have implemented protective protocols as workarounds, including only attending meetings in pairs and ensuring they are minuted; requiring communications to be in writing to minimise perceived gaslighting; and strict and formal responses to repeated questions to avoid misrepresentation, raised voices and intimidating

conduct, hostile communications and differential treatment perceived as having a gendered aspect.

- Executive depletion where several senior departures were directly attributed to exposure to harmful workplace behaviours in interactions with Elected Members.
17. The consultant's overall assessment was that immediate intervention is required to address systemic psychosocial hazards and prevent further deterioration. This particularly reflects the reports of participants feeling unsafe at work, experiencing harm requiring intervention and continuing to be exposed to the potential for future harm.
  18. The work health and safety risks identified by the independent consultant (aligned with Safe Work Australia Hazard categories) are rated as critical or high, and accelerating or chronic. Whilst the Report did not assign blame or find individual fault, it did identify a concerning gendered pattern, with multiple participants observing that problematic behaviours are predominantly directed at women.
  19. The CEO has raised the Report, and the actions required to implement its recommendations, through the City of Perth Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee and directly with the Lord Mayor.

#### **Administration response to the Report recommendations**

20. At the heart of this Report is people. Currently there are staff and Elected Members who do not feel safe and report experiencing harm. The City has a clear obligation to address this in line with the City's values and commitment to its people, and in compliance with legal obligations.
21. The City, the CEO, the Lord Mayor and all Elected Members have obligations under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2020*. Particularly, the CEO, as an officer of the organisation, is required to exercise due diligence to ensure the City is meeting its WHS duty to workers and Elected Members. This means ensuring processes and systems are in place and effective in identifying hazards, assessing risks and implementing controls. The Psychosocial Risk Assessment process is consistent with meeting this obligation.
22. The consultant makes 18 recommendations for action to address the identified psychosocial risks, a number of which are identified as high risk and requiring prompt action. The recommendations are interconnected and are structured to build sustainable and resilient systems within the City. The consultant has noted that the effectiveness of these recommendations is reliant on the commitment and engagement of Elected Members and the Administration.
23. Given that a number of the recommendations rely on engagement with the Lord Mayor and other Elected Members to progress, the Administration cannot, at this point, proceed with these matters, other than in relation to steps within the CEO's control.
24. The CEO's actions in relation to the recommendations that are within both existing budget parameters and CEO control are detailed within Attachment A. Of the five recommendations requiring immediate action, two require additional funding which is sought through this Agenda Paper, and the same two require engagement with Elected Members to implement.
25. Of the remaining recommendations, all of those which are within the CEO's control are either completed, or require budget allocation to progress. The remainder are dependent on Elected Member engagement to implement.

#### **Cost of implementing recommendations**

26. A preliminary estimate of the cost of implementing the recommendations is \$280,000. This includes additional administration costs associated with implementing and monitoring the recommendations, both in the People and Culture team and in the Chief Executive Officer's Alliance. This is in addition to

the already committed cost of \$70,000 for the Psychosocial Risk Assessment itself, and the \$35,000 committed to the cost of the Monitor.

## Consultation

27. The Report has been discussed with the City’s Executive Leadership Team, and with staff directly affected. It has been tabled at the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee where members agreed to support, in principle, the recommendations of the Report. The CEO has also sought further engagement with the Lord Mayor on the recommendations of the Report and implementation.

## Decision Implications

28. At its most fundamental level, this Report details the need to rebuild trust and effective working relationships between Council and the Administration, as well as within Council itself. A failure to do so further risks ongoing harm to the City’s people, the operations and reputation of the City.
29. Additionally, the City has obligations under the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 2020* that require strict compliance. The decision to conduct a psychosocial risk assessment to identify known hazards and to implement appropriate controls was an important step to ensure appropriate safeguards are in place to protect the health and wellbeing of both Elected Members and officers at the City.
30. Council support for the recommendations, both in allocating budget and engaging constructively in the findings of the report, will demonstrate to City staff that their well being and safety are of importance.
31. Importantly, implementing the recommendations of the Report itself will assist Council to focus on the work of serving the City in a cohesive and unified manner.

## Strategic, Legislative and Policy Implications

Strategy	
Strategic Pillar (Objective)	A Well-Governed City
Related Documents (Issue Specific Strategies and Plans):	Nil

Legislation, Delegation of Authority and Policy	
Legislation:	<i>Work Health and Safety Act 2020</i> <i>Local Government Act 1995</i>
Authority of Council/CEO:	<u>Section 5.41 of the <i>Local Government Act 1995</i></u> (3) The CEO is the council’s principal advisor and, as such, does the following — (a) advises, and procures advice for, the council in relation to the local government’s affairs and the performance of the local government’s functions; (b) ensures that the council has the information and advice it needs to make informed and timely decisions.

Policy:	Nil.
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### Financial Implications

32. Implementation of the recommendations will require budget allocation of \$280,000.

### Further Information

33. Nil.

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No.	Recommendation	Priority Level	Administration response	Current status
1.	<p><b>External facilitation for central Council-management relationship</b></p> <p><i>Engage an experienced mediator with local government governance or specialist expertise to facilitate structured relationship repair between the CEO and presiding member (LM). It should produce documented commitments or 'Working Relationship Agreement' and a scheduled review cycle with external accountability.</i></p>	Immediate (0-4 weeks)	<p><b>Supported requires further discussion with Elected Members.</b></p> <p>Subject to budget allocation and procurement processes.</p> <p>Anticipate initial allocation of a senior mediator will require approx. \$3,500 per day + GST</p> <p>Initial commitment five (5) full days spread over an initial engagement of 3 weeks, then fortnightly review meetings over a three month period.</p> <p>Preliminary cost estimate: \$17,500 + GST</p>	<p>Funding Required.</p> <p><b>Requires EM engagement to progress.</b></p>
2.	<p><b>External oversight arrangement</b></p> <p><i>Appoint an external party to provide ongoing oversight of commitments, monitor implementation progress, and hold parties accountable. The external party should have clear terms of reference and authority to escalate non-compliance.</i></p>	Immediate (0-4 weeks)	<p><b>Supported.</b></p> <p>Monitor to provide initial oversight of conduct, recognizing that the appointment is only for an initial three months and may not provide ongoing compliance monitoring.</p>	<p>Local Government Inspector appointed Monitor has commenced.</p>

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3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formalise protective protocols for staff</li> <li>• Document and resource the protective arrangements Administration have already implemented (such as witness requirements for certain meetings). Ensure all staff with direct council interface have access to these protections as standard practice.</li> </ul>	Immediate (0-4 weeks)	<b>Supported.</b>	<p><b>Completed.</b></p> <p>Specific communication protocol in place for one Elected Member to manage inappropriate communication with staff. The protocol advises that all communication should be through one email address which will be checked twice per day and responded to within particular timeframes.</p> <p>Operational Policy 29 has been reviewed (shown in green below) to address this recommendation and formalise protective protocols. OP29 now reads:</p> <p><i>“Where the communication is a face-to-face meeting:</i></p> <p><i>In-person meetings with elected members are to be conducted with a minimum of two staff members present, including at least one officer at the level of General Manager, Executive Director or above.</i></p> <p><i>“summary notes of the meeting are to be made by the employees attending the meeting.”</i></p> <p>In addition, the Elected Member Engagement Protocol has been amended to advise elected members (who are not bound by OP 29) that a minimum of two officers will be in attendance at all face-to-face meetings between elected members and the administration.</p>
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4.	<p><b>Rapid response mechanism for conduct matters</b></p> <p><i>Implement a third-party rapid response mechanism for conduct matters that require prompt intervention. This can be an additional tool prior to formal interventions that take significant periods as the focus is immediately addressing the issue. This may be fulfilled by a private specialist mediation company or similar. Council and Administration agree to utilise the service as a means to supplement the lack of appropriate mechanisms at a sector level. This fills the gap between ineffective internal discussion and lengthy formal processes.</i></p>	<p>Immediate (0-4 weeks)</p>	<p><b>Supported.</b></p> <p>Subject to budget allocation and procurement processes.</p> <p>Cost is likely to be \$15,000 + GST</p> <p>Propose two full days per engagement, with five engagements in the first six months.</p>	<p><b>Requires EM Engagement and budget allocation.</b></p>
5.	<p><b>Interim resourcing for critical capability gaps</b></p> <p><i>Conduct rapid gap analysis and implement temporary resourcing arrangements for positions critical to governance support and organisational functioning.</i></p>	<p>Immediate (0-4 weeks)</p>	<p><b>Supported</b></p>	<p><b>Completed.</b></p> <p>An Alliance reporting structure for Jan – March has been put in place to assist with workload management.</p> <p>However issues with retention within Council facing staffing roles continue, and challenges with recruitment to the City (given present issues) persist.</p>
6.	<p><b>Meeting procedure review</b></p> <p><i>Review standing order and meeting procedures to provide appropriate voice for all parties, establish intervention mechanisms when proceedings</i></p>	<p>Short-term priority (1-3 months)</p>	<p><b>Supported</b></p>	<p>The City of Perth has <b>commenced</b> a review of the Standing Orders Local Law 2009.</p>

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	<i>become harmful, address process where the presiding member role requires meeting management support.</i>			
7.	<b>Communication equity arrangements</b> <i>Establish communication protocols that ensure all elected members receive equal access to information. Include monitoring arrangements to identify and address selective information sharing.</i>	Short-term priority (1-3 months)	<b>To be discussed with Elected Members.</b> The City already has a protocol in place ( <i>Elected Member Communication Protocol</i> ) for formal communications however there is inconsistent application by elected members.	Requires EM engagement to progress
8.	<b>Council team development</b> <i>Implement facilitated team development for the full council, addressing factional dynamics, conflict resolution and building shared purpose. All members must attend.</i>	Short-term priority (1-3 months)	<b>To be discussed with Elected Members.</b> Can be implemented, subject to budget allocation, procurement processes and elected member agreement.  Provision of a consultant to provide elected member team building was previously suggested twice by Administration during 2025 (July and October).  Senior facilitators with governance and political acumen, who can confidentially address factions, behaviours and trust deficits in a structured and expert manner with expertise in conflict resolution and structured follow up is estimated to cost around \$60,000 plus GST.	Has been discussed with LM who supports team building activity.

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9.	<p><b>Presiding member support and development</b></p> <p><i>Provide tailored individual coaching for presiding members covering effective meeting management, managing team dynamics, conflict resolution, and creating psychological safety.</i></p>	Short-term priority (1-3 months)	<p><b>To be discussed with Lord Mayor</b></p> <p>Can be implemented, subject to budget allocation, procurement processes and Presiding Member agreement. Monitor may identify training requirements.</p> <p>Executive level coaching over a multi-month period would cost in the vicinity of \$15,000 plus GST</p>	Requires LM engagement to progress
10.	<p><b>Leadership transition protocol enhancement</b></p> <p><i>Develop enhanced transition protocol that includes handover of relationship dynamics, working arrangements, and team context. Implement for any future leadership transitions.</i></p>	Short-term priority (1-3 months)	<p><b>Supported</b></p> <p>Finalize after receipt of Inspector report.</p> <p>Timeframe likely to be amended, given election cycles.</p>	To be progressed after receipt of Monitor’s Report and ahead of next election cycle.
11.	<p><b>Enhanced support for Council support staff and management</b></p> <p><i>Implement proactive wellbeing support for staff in council-facing roles, including: specialist psychological support; structured debriefing; annual leave planning; peer support arrangements; workload review; and regular wellbeing check-ins.</i></p>	Short-term priority (1-3 months)	<p><b>Supported</b></p> <p>CEO to action. Most initiatives already established, however further assessment is required.</p> <p>Initial budget assessment for specialist support is \$24, 000 plus GST</p>	<p><b>Ongoing but requires budget allocation to expand.</b></p> <p>Staff already have access to the Employee Assistant Program. This Program offers support via trained psychologists for a wide range of issues people face and work or home.</p> <p>Counselling support is also available via the LGIS “Psychological Safe” program whenever employees struggle with workplace-related issues.</p> <p>Specialist support (with ongoing understanding of specific workplace issues) requires budget allocation and would be subject to procurement processes.</p>

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12.	<b>Governance framework enforcement mechanisms</b> <i>Develop internal agreed graduated response mechanisms for governance framework breaches. Include clear consequences and escalation pathways. Focus on rebuilding trust so that parties interpret actions charitably rather than relying solely on enforcement.</i>	Short-term priority (1-3 months)	To be discussed with Elected Members	Requires Elected Member engagement.
	Medium-term priority			
13.	<b>Structured circuit breaker in governance arrangements</b> <i>Amend governance framework to include standing provision for external mediation when key relationships reach impasse. Define triggers for activation and process for engaging mediator without requiring crisis.</i>	Medium-term priority (3-12 months)	To be discussed with Elected Members	Requires Elected Member Engagement
14.	<b>Regulatory reform advocacy</b> <i>Engage with relevant local government association and state government department regarding structural constraints in the regulatory framework, particularly the gap between ineffective low-level responses and disproportionate state action.</i>	Medium-term priority (3-12 months)	Support in principle	Opportunities for advocacy on regulatory reform will be identified.
15.	<b>Complaints process procedural support</b> <i>Provide procedural guidance and support to ensure legitimate complaints are not dismissed on technical grounds. Review past dismissals to identify systemic procedural issues.</i>	Medium-term priority (3-12 months)	Supported The City is required to adhere to the complaints management process and legislative requirements.	Implemented and ongoing.

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16.	<p><b>Gender equity assessment</b></p> <p><i>Commission specific assessment of gender equality across elected member and staff experiences. Establish accessible complaint pathway for discrimination experienced by elected members and staff.</i></p>	Medium-term priority (3-12 months)	<b>To be discussed with Elected Members</b>	A complaint pathway is available for staff at the City, in accordance with the EEO legislation. However this needs to be discussed further in relation to applicability to Elected Members.
17.	<p><b>Psychosocial risk integration</b></p> <p><i>Integrate psychosocial risks into the organisation's risk management framework. Implement regular monitoring using validated tools such as People at Work. Report to Audit and Improvement Committee.</i></p>	Medium-term priority (3-12 months)	<b>Supported</b>	<p>Psychosocial risk measurement tool for elected members and staff to be identified and implemented. Administration has already identified similar tools from other jurisdictions.</p> <p>Psychosocial risk is integrated into the WHS hazard identification processes.</p>
18.	<p><b>Ongoing cultural monitoring</b></p> <p><i>External oversight party to conduct regular cultural monitoring of council, executive team, and their interface. Track interpersonal dynamics, trust levels, and behavioural patterns against baseline.</i></p>	Medium-term priority (3-12 months)	<b>Supported but will need to be discussed with Elected Members.</b>	<p>City systems (Culture Amp) provide a mechanism to enable monitoring.</p> <p>Will require EM engagement to progress.</p>