
Policy Number:	G13
Relevant Delegation:	Not Applicable
Adoption Details:	28 January 2016
Last Review Details:	25 August 2020

POLICY OBJECTIVE:

To ensure that community consultation and engagement processes are inclusive, consistent and accessible for residents and ratepayers and that the information derived from any process is used effectively to better inform Councillor decision-making.

POLICY SCOPE:

This policy applies to all aspects of Council activity other than formal notification, consultation and decision processes under the Planning and Development Planning Act 2005.

POLICY STATEMENT:

INTRODUCTION

Good local governance involves communication and trust between decision-makers and the community which they have been elected to represent. Councillors need to be well-informed before making a decision and a key source of information is understanding the feelings, views and attitudes of members of their community as input into their decision-making. This information can be sourced in a number of ways.

Community consultation and engagement is a conscious deliberate process of seeking input from the community about general direction, about an issue or proposal, a proposed work, or about a concept that might underpin a proposed policy.

There are five general levels of engagement – informing, consulting, involving, collaborating and empowering. The latter involves effective delegation of decision-making power. With local government this can only be delegated to a committee of Council and is used most commonly for management committees for facilities and is less appropriate for making decisions about significant issues, broad direction and policy. These five categories are set out in Table 1 with the ‘empowering’ category noted for information.¹

¹ This summary of categories is derived from the Shire of Broome Community Engagement Framework. This was in turn summarised from the Public Participation Spectrum - International Association for Public Participation.

Table 1: Broad Categories of Community Participation

Engagement Level	Public Participation Goal	Promise to the Public	Example Tools
INFORM	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them to understand problems, alternatives and/ or solutions	'We will keep you informed'	Fact sheets, web sites, open house, media releases, project bulletins
CONSULT	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and or potential decisions	'We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced decisions'.	Public comment Focus groups Surveys Targeted feedback (e.g. specific stakeholders)
INVOLVE (Actively Engage)	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	'We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in alternatives developed and will provide feedback on how public input influenced decisions '	Workshops Project/ strategy planning and design opportunities Steering committees Note: key provision is feedback loops during a process
COLLABORATE (Actively Engage)	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of a preferred solution	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in, where relevant, defining the problem to be addressed, designing the process, undertaking analysis design and input into formulating recommendations	Advisory groups Consensus building Participatory decision-making Appointees to Council Committees
(EMPOWER)	To delegate decision-making		Council committee with delegated decision-making

This policy sets out:

- a process for determining which level of consultation and engagement is appropriate to the matter at hand and subsequent design of the process.
- the requirements for receiving, analysing and reporting community views to Councillors.
- the requirements for providing feedback to participants and the wider community.
- monitoring of consultation and engagement processes.

PRINCIPLES

(a) The Council is committed to:

- providing reliable and easily understood information to stakeholders and where relevant the wider community as a key step in any community engagement process. This includes access to all submissions into a consultation process.

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- Inclusive consultation and active participation opportunities, where relevant, for Council policy-making and key Council driven projects
 - advocating for inclusive and responsive community engagement processes and projects driven by external agencies and interests which affect the Shire.
- (b) Objectives for and limits to information, consultation and active participation will be identified for all policy making and key projects at the outset. Council will ensure that there is clarity in relation to who will make final decisions, and how and when.
- (c) Consultation will be undertaken as early as possible in any policy process or key project to allow a greater range of policy solutions to emerge and raise the chances of successful implementation. Adequate time will be made available for consultation to be effective.
- (d) Council will ensure adequate financial, human and technical resources are available to ensure effective consultation and participation. The allocation of resources will be considered in relation to broader budgetary restraints and the implications for existing priorities.
- (e) The time and effort expended by members of the community on Council initiated engagement processes will be respected and valued including:
- always ensuring past consultation inputs into similar matters are used to inform a process.
 - designing a process to make involvement as easy as possible for all people.
 - providing feedback to active participants on the outcomes of a process.
 - co-ordinating processes to avoid, as far as possible, 'consultation fatigue'. Note: this will always be a balance between the need to consult, the desire to be consulted, and the impacts on people's time and energy.
 - Council will be accountable for the use made of input from an engagement process. It will ensure that processes are open, transparent and amenable to external scrutiny.
 - Any survey undertaken by Council will be designed, carried out, analysed and reported via an independent process.
 - All submissions and outputs from a consultation and engagement process will have the status of public information and will be available for public scrutiny.

PROVISIONS

1. REQUIREMENT FOR AN ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION PLAN

1.1 All significant activities undertaken by the Council must have an associated community consultation and engagement plan established at the beginning of the relevant process.

These activities are:

- setting of cross-activity priorities and allocation of high level budgets.
 - the community strategic plan and the two and four year budgets under the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IPR) process.
 - development of issue specific strategies and policies.
 - advancing major capital projects.
 - any significant new projects arising between formal review cycles.
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- property purchase and disposal.

Note: The Council has a statutory requirement to consult on property disposal.

1.2 The plan will identify:

- the type of engagement approach to be used.
- a commentary on usefulness and relevance of previous consultation and engagement to the design of the process (methodology) for the matter at hand.
- the broad methodology to be used.
- how the plan fits with any DLGC guidelines or standards for consultation and engagement.

2. Determining the Type of Engagement

2.1 Table 2 below identifies the broad categories for engagement which must be used for each type of activity. The engagement plan must select a broad engagement category or document reasons for an alternative approach. The basic requirement for informing the community applies to all consultation and engagement processes.

2.2 Generally, decisions about adopting major capital projects will be taken as part of the Integrated Planning and Reporting framework. From time to time, a decision to advance a project will arise outside the formal IPR cycle, sometimes linked to an external funding opportunity. When this occurs, if it involves internal budget reallocation, it will affect existing established strategic and budget priorities and consultation will be needed. Table 2 below identifies the broad engagement processes category.

Table 2: Consultation and Engagement Categories

	Engagement (Involvement/ collaboration)	Consultation
Integrated planning and reporting	Visioning, aspirations, priority identification	On draft documents
Strategies/Policies	user/ special interest issues and vision targeted stakeholders	With general community on draft documents
Major Capital Projects		
• high level approval		Via IPR process
• out-of-cycle approval		With general community
• design stage	user design matters targeted stakeholder process	With general community

3. Determining the Appropriate Methodology

3.1 Each Engagement and Consultation Plan will set out the broad methodology to be used. This will include:

- Timelines.
- stakeholders and groups to be targeted for involvement.
- broad methods/ tools to be used to inform individuals, groups and the wider community.

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- broad methods/ tools to be used for engagement and consultation stages where relevant (e.g. media, social media, focus groups, surveys etc.).
 - how Councillors will be involved in the process to support the process.
 - feedback processes.
 - the mechanism to be used for summarising and reporting outputs to decision-makers.
- 3.2 From time to time, guidelines will be published by the Department of Local Government and Communities for implementing the IPR framework. This may include 'basic', 'intermediate' and 'advanced' standards for associated consultation and engagement. An Engagement and Consultation Plan for any activity must specify the standard being applied.
- 3.3 The Engagement and Consultation Plan will be reported to the Council for final approval, prior to work on any project commencing. The final determination of the consultation and engagement process at a macro-level will be by Councillors. Significant alterations to consultation and engagement methodologies will require formal report back to Council as part of wider project planning and approval processes.

Requirements for Receiving and Reporting Community Views to Councillors

- 3.4 Consultation and engagement outputs will be formally reported to the Council at agreed decision points in a process. They will be accompanied by a report which will set out:
- summary of issues raised by submission, if this process is used.
 - the key themes emerging from consultation and engagement.
 - implications for any decision required at that point.
 - any implications for project design and timing.
 - all Councillors will be provided with:
 - on-going access to the raw data. Consultation and engagement outputs which are not in submission form will be summarised. Original material will be retained.
 - on-going summaries of issues raised as they emerge, the timing as agreed in the Consultation and Engagement Plan.
- 3.5 Privacy Requirements
- The Shire of York values the privacy of our residents, customers and stakeholders. In an effort to improve transparency in decision making, when submissions are provided as part of a report (or an attachment to a report) that is presented to Council, the following will apply:
- The name of the submitter will be published, unless otherwise requested by the submitter.
 - Personal information such as phone numbers, addresses, email addresses and signatures will be redacted.
 - For a submission to be considered complete / valid, minimum information is required ie: name, address, date & signature must be supplied. (It is noted that emailed submissions do not always contain electronic signatures).
 - When advertising for public submissions, the Shire of York will refer to these privacy requirements and advise that information may be made public in relation to submissions (as directed by this policy).
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3.6 Group Submissions

- If a group submission is received, it will be treated as one (1) submission. Eg: submissions containing 25 signatures on it will be treated as 1 submission signed by 25 people.

4. Requirements for Providing Feedback to Participants and the Wider Community

4.1 All projects will provide final feedback of decisions in relation to a project where consultation has taken place. This will include:

- a final response letter to active participants thanking them for their participation and providing access to any final reports to Council, the final decisions made and any published documents or publications.
- provision of access to reports, formal decisions and published documents on the Council website and at the Shire library.

5. Reporting on Consultation/ Engagement Activity and Achieving Best Practice

The Council aspires to best practice in its consultation and engagement activities in the context of the overall organisation capacity.

5.1 An annual report will be provided to Council on consultation and engagement activity in the previous year which will summarise:

- the number of Council initiated processes, levels of participation and feedback on the effectiveness and usability of processes from the community perspective.
- benchmarking against any Department of Local Government and Communities guidelines and standards.
- lessons learnt for the future.
- summarise any externally driven significant consultation and engagement processes and note process issues arising, if any, which may require advocacy by the Shire in the future.

PENALTIES:

Not applicable.

KEY TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

Not applicable.

Responsible Officer: Chief Executive Officer
Contact Officer: Chief Executive Officer
Relevant Legislation: Local Government Act 1995

Review History:

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