COUNCIL POLICY

TITLE:	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
ID NUMBER:	CPO-COM-CW-002 (DocSetID: 2739692)
DEPARTMENT:	Community Services
UNIT:	Community Services
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Director Community Services

ADOPTED DATE AND BY WHOM:	23 February 2021 by Council
EXPIRY DATE:	23 February 2025
REVIEW DATE:	23 December 2024 *This policy will be reviewed every four years or as required by any legislative or council changes.*

AVAILABILITY:	Organisation wide　　　　　Yes ☒ Public　　　　　　　　　　Yes ☒ Internet　　　　　　　　　　Yes ☒
ADVISE AVAILABILITY:	Media Release

(This document is uncontrolled when printed)

1.   **References** (if applicable)

Local Government Act 2020
https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/local-government-act-2020/003
   - Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) Public Participation Principles

International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Core Values for the Practice of Public Participation https://www.iap2.org.au/

Rural Council Victoria, Resources for Councils
http://ruralcouncilsvictoria.org.au/resources/?preview=true&_thumbnail_id=364

*Freedom of Information Act 1982 - https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/inforce/
acts/freedom-information-act-1982/107*

*Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014- https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/inforce/
acts/privacy-and-data-protection-act-2014/025*

Equal Opportunity Act 2010
https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/equal-opportunity-act-2010/020

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 -
https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/charter-human-rightsndresponsibilities-
act-2006/014

Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic) https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-
force/acts/working-children-act-2005/063

Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 - https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-
force/acts/public-health-and-wellbeing-act-2008/046

Glenelg Shire Council, Records Management Policy OPO-CORPS-RECM-001
(DocSetID: 1933907)

2.   **Purpose**

This policy outlines Council's commitment to support the principles that drive quality community engagement. Council considers community engagement and public participation an essential component of good governance and leadership.

Community engagement provides opportunities for the community to be involved in planning and decision making because understanding the needs, aspirations, concerns and ideas of the community improves Council's planning and delivery of services.

Under section 55 of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) all Councils must adopt and maintain a Community Engagement policy.

A community engagement policy must:
   - be developed in consultation with the municipal community; and
   - give effect to the community engagement principles; and
   - be capable of being applied to the making of the Council's local law's; and

- be capable of being applied in relation to the Council's budget and policy development; and
- describe the type and form of community engagement proposed, having regard to the significance and complexity of the matter and the level of resourcing required; and
- specify a process for informing the municipal community of the outcome of the community engagement; and
- include deliberative engagement practices which must include and address any matters prescribed by the regulations for the purposes of this paragraph and be capable of being applied to the development of the:
  - Community Vision
  - Council Plan
  - Financial Plan
  - Asset Plan
- include any other matters prescribed by the regulations.

Under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* Council has a statutory requirement to develop a Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

3. Scope

This policy applies to councillors, staff, and contractors.

4. Community Engagement Principles

This policy gives effect to the Community Engagement Principles in section 56 of the Act:

- a community engagement process must have a clearly **defined** objective and scope
- participants in community engagement must have access to objective, relevant and timely **information** to inform their participation
- participants in community engagement must be **representative** of the persons and groups affected by the matter the subject of the community engagement
- participants in community engagement are entitled to be **supported** to enable meaningful and informed engagement
- participants in community engagement are informed of the ways in which the community engagement process will **influence** Council decision making.

Principles in Practice

Defined
- Understand the subject matter, purpose and context of the subject matter of the engagement.
- Consider the desired level of community participation, and what the promise is to them regarding the influence their input has on decision making.
- Identify the negotiables and non-negotiables clearly. Seek the community's input on matters where they can have influence in decision making.

Informed

- Enable the community to participate in engagement by informing them about the subject matter, the local context and choices they will weigh up.
- Ensure the information you provide the community is accessible and appropriate for the section of the community whose views you are seeking.
- Communicate information to the community through channels they regularly use. This could be social media, website, direct mail, email, or harnessing the support of community groups to promote engagement through their communication channels.

Representative

- Analyse stakeholders to determine the key people affected by the strategy, plan, or project.
- Ensure stakeholders are identified using inclusive and accessible methods to include representation from groups such as youth, indigenous, communities from diverse backgrounds, persons with a disability, and underrepresented groups.
- Consider the systems, organisations and structures that are already in place within the community that could assist you to reach key stakeholders.
- Communicate through channels that are familiar, easy to access, and widely used by key stakeholders.
- Consider the nuances and preferences of each geographic location to reach a broad cross section of representation.

Supported

- Ensure participation is inclusive and accessible to maximise reach utilising a variety of methods to encourage participation by youth, indigenous, communities from diverse backgrounds, persons with a disability, and underrepresented groups. Interpretive services are available to support engagement from CALD communities.
- Use a mix of engagement methods to seek feedback from key stakeholder to provide choice.
- Provide a contact name and number on all communications material. This humanises the process and makes it more likely for people to reach out for assistance.
- Hold in-person engagement at venues that are accessible for people with disability.

Influence

- Consider the views of a person, group or stakeholder that the decision-making process will affect.
- Inform participants how decisions under consideration during engagement will be made.
- Be transparent regarding the influence community input will have over planning and decision making.

Deliberative engagement

The Act does not prescribe what deliberative engagement practices are. The key characteristics of deliberative engagement are considered broadly to be:
- authentic engagement with the community;
- good representation of the community in engagement activities;
- clear demonstration of how all views have been considered;
- accessible and relevant information available to the community to ensure the decision-making process and the community's level of influence is clear in each instance and that participants are fully informed.

5.   Council Policy

How we engage

When planning engagement, Council is careful to adhere to the engagement principles, set clear engagement objectives, and to consider statutory processes, community interest, political sensitivity, time, resources and budget constraints. In accordance with this policy:

Council staff will:
- follow the **Community Engagement Framework** (DocSetID: 2557701), including the **Community Engagement Planning Template** (DocSetID: 2557702) to plan for engagement
- seek advice from the Engagement Support Officer
- obtain approval for the plan and action from Director/CEO; and
- reference best-practice International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation in the day-to-day practice of engagement.

Council is guided by the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation which is designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation. It describes five levels of engagement, from 'inform' through to 'empower'.   Many projects will involve more than one level of engagement.

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

Tools and Methods

The tools and methods used make a big difference to who can participate and how meaningful the feedback is. Often projects will use different methods at different stages. The **Community Engagement Framework** and **Community Engagement Planning Template** provide further planning, resources and guidance.

Examples of tools include:

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
- Signs - e-newsletter - Media release - Direct mail - Public notice - Engagement platform - Council website - Facebook /Instagram	- Surveys (online & hard copy) - Engagement platform - Ideas boards - Face to face meetings	- Partnering with the community - Workshops - Reference groups - Online portals or forums - Randomly selected groups - Co designing - Regular exchange of information at multiple stages		- Reference groups - Citizens juries

Engagement activities will vary depending on the project or decision, stakeholders involved, and the level of participation selected. Projects or decisions will vary according to its context, who it affects and how it impacts them as well as what can be influenced or is achievable.

Examples of how different types of engagement may align with influence:

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
	The Act stipulates that this Policy must be applied to the development of the: • Community Vision • Council Plan • Financial Plan • Asset Plan • planning and financial management including revenue and rate planning. • local laws and policy development. Council has a statutory requirement to develop a Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*			

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
		High impact and complex projects for example, major park upgrades, precinct master planning or annual budget planning require extra levels of interaction and often happen over several stages.		
	Decisions carrying a lower impact still require community input but less time and resource intensive methods.			
	Sometimes options are limited for practical reasons for example work must be carried out but Council will ask you how and when it should happen.			
Sometimes Council may need to inform you of a decision where there is no opportunity for community input. For example where there are public safety issues that need to be addressed, we are not the decision-making authority, or there are no real options available. In these cases, Council will keep you informed.				

Who we engage

Council engage with a broad range of people, all with differing interests. For the purpose of this policy community is identified as anyone affected by Council's decisions.

This includes individuals or groups identified but not limited to; residents, ratepayers, business owners, customers, traditional owners, community groups, sporting groups, youth, agencies, funding bodies, developers, internal stakeholders and culturally and linguistically diverse groups.

<u>When we engage</u>

Engagement should happen early in the planning stage for any changes to or introduction of new services, facilities, policies or local laws that impact the community, including Council's budget. It may need to occur at several stages in the lead up to final plans or decisions. The greater the impact on the community or stakeholder, the more interactive the consultation will be.

Where necessary Council will conduct technical research and feasibility of options before seeking community input to ensure the community is appropriately informed. As a general rule, two to four weeks should be allowed from the time of notification until the close of time for comment by any stakeholder group.

<u>Engagement Evaluation</u>

Council measures its engagement performance in order to test that we are delivering public value to the community. Council evaluates the engagement process through the number of interactions, submissions made, surveys completed, participants in a workshop, letters distributed, calls taken and more.

Participation outcomes are also reviewed. It is important to advise participants, stakeholders and decision makers about the findings of the engagement and how the input has been used to make decisions.

Evaluation enables Council to reflect on the process undertaken, refine it for the future and engage more effectively with stakeholders.

6.   Records Management

All Council records created and managed as a result of implementing this policy will be managed in accordance with the Council's Records Management Policy.

The Records Management Policy assigns responsibilities for records management to employees, supervisors, volunteers and other specific positions.

No Council records are to be destroyed without consideration of the requirements of the Act(s) that govern the functions relevant to this policy. Prior to destruction, advice must be sought from the Records Management Unit, with consideration to the requirements of the appropriate Retention and Disposal Authority (RDA).

7.   Victorian State Legislation Copyright Acknowledgement

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