Community Engagement Policy

Policy Number	C2
Responsible Officers	Chief Executive Officer
Policy Adopted	April 2000
Last revised date	August 2026
Minutes reference	2026/08-08
Next review date	August 2030
Applicable Legislation	*Local Government Act 1999 s50, s50A*
Reference	Community Engagement Charter

1 POLICY PRINCIPLE

Council is committed to open, accountable and responsive decision making, which is informed by effective communication and engagement between Council and the community.

Including communities in decision-making processes is important to the successful development of appropriate and informed decisions and policies by Council.

Council's community includes people who live, work, study, own property, conduct private or government business, visit or use the services, facilities and public spaces and places of Council. Council recognises that a community may be a geographic location (community of place), a community of similar interest (community of interest) or a community of affiliation, practice or identity (such as industry or sporting clubs).

Section 50A of the *Local Government Act 1999* (the Act) requires Council to prepare and adopt a policy relating to community engagement for the purposes of the Act. The policy must be consistent with and comply with any requirements specified by the Community Engagement Charter (the Charter).

2. POLICY OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Council meets its legislative obligations regarding public consultation by:

- Meeting the requirements set out in the Act and the Charter.
- Using appropriate and cost effective engagement methods which are relevant to the specific circumstances of each decision, activity or process.
- Providing for appropriate participation by the local community, key stakeholders and interested parties.
- Using feedback to enhance decision making.
- Providing information on the reasons for decision or actions of Council, where reasonable and appropriate.

This policy is a statement of Council's general position in relation to community engagement (public consultation), as required under the Act and the Charter.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to decisions, activities and processes undertaken by the Council, a delegate of the Council or a person exercising power on the Council's behalf, where public consultation is required to be undertaken in accordance with the Act, the Charter, or this policy. A reference in this policy to 'Council' includes a reference to a delegate or other person exercising power on the Council's behalf.

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for the implementation and application of this policy, and where necessary reporting the outcomes of consultations to the Council. The specific delegations made under this Policy are outlined in part 8 of this policy.

This policy does not apply where the Council is exercising powers and functions under any other Act. Where there are consultation requirements under other legislation, e.g. the *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016*, those specific processes take precedence over this policy.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

The preparation and adoption of this policy fulfil the Council's obligations to prepare and adopt a policy under section 50(A) of the Act. The following principles in the Charter have been considered in the preparation of this policy:

- community members should have reasonable, timely, meaningful and ongoing opportunities to gain access to information about proposed decisions, activities, processes of councils and to participate in relevant processes;
- information about issues should be in plain language, readily accessible and in a form that facilitates community participation;
- participation methods should seek to foster and encourage constructive dialogue, discussion and debate in relation to proposed decisions, activities and processes of councils;
- participation methods should be appropriate having regard to the significance and likely impact of proposed decisions, activities and processes; and
- insofar as is reasonable, communities should be provided with information about how community views have been taken into account and reasons for decisions or actions of councils.

Council will undertake public consultation in accordance with the Act, the Charter and this policy.

Council may, in its absolute discretion, determine to undertake a step or steps in addition to those set out in this policy in relation to a matter for which it is required by the Act and/or the Charter to undertake public consultation.

However, Council is not required to give prior consideration and/or to determine whether or not to undertake any additional step or steps in relation to such a matter. A well-intentioned engagement that does not generate the anticipated level of engagement is not a breach of this policy.

Council may, from time to time, alter or substitute a new policy, following public consultation.

5. PUBLIC CONSULTATION CATEGORIES

The Charter addresses minimum mandatory community engagement activities for matters where the Act requires public consultation to be undertaken.

The Charter establishes different categories of consultation for matters, as follows:

- **Significant – Annual business plan and rating policy**
  - Adopting an Annual Business Plan - section 123(3)(b)
  - Changes to basis of rating, declaring differential rates, imposing a separate rate, service rate or service charge, or changing the basis on which land is valued for the purpose of rating - section 151(5)(e)

- **Significant**
  - Representation reviews - section 12(7)
  - Development and review of Strategic Management Plans - section 122(6)
  - Changes to use of differential rating - section 156(4a)(b)
  - Revocation of classification of land as community land - sections 194(2)(b)
  - Community Land Management Plans - adoption - section 197(1)
  - Community Land Management Plans – significant amendments - section 198(3)
  - Alienation of community land by lease or license - section 202(2)

- **Standard**
  - Opening hours and place of principal office - substantial changes - section 45(3)
  - Community Engagement Policy - section 50A(6)(b)
  - Council behavioural support policies - section 75F(6)
  - Access to meetings and documents - section 92(5)
  - Power to make orders - section 259(2)(b)

- **Local**
  - Proposed permit or authorisation for alteration or use of a road for business purposes when there are works and traffic impeded for more than 48 hours (with a detour in place) or where no detour will be available - section 223(1)
  - Proposed planting of vegetation on a road – significant impact - section 232(b)

- **Inform**
  - Opening hours and place of principal office – minor changes - section 45(3)
  - Proposed permit or authorisation for alteration or use of a road for business purposes when there are works and traffic impeded for less than 48 hours and the Council ensures that a detour is in place - section 223(1)
  - Election information - section 13A (2) of the Local Government (Elections) Act 1999

The table in Part 6 of this policy sets out the engagement activities that Council will undertake to meet the requirements of each matter for which public consultation must be undertaken in accordance with the Act and the Charter.

6. CHARTER ENGAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS

Council will comply with the minimum mandatory public consultation requirements for each category of matters set out in the Charter.

The following table sets out the engagement activities that Council will undertake to meet the public consultation requirements in the Act and the Charter.

In circumstances where more than one engagement activity is specified, there is no obligation on Council to utilise all engagement activities in respect of each Charter requirement.

Charter requirement	Mandatory minimum actions to achieve Charter requirement	Charter Category					Engagement activities
		Significant ABP and Rating Policy	Significant	Standard	Local	Inform	
Website	Publish information about the matter that can be easily found on a Council website.	X	X	X	X	X	Information published on a Council website
News publication	Publish information about the matter in a local news publication (print where available, but otherwise digital) that circulates in the Council area and is not produced by the Council.	X	X				Information published in a print or digital newspaper, community newsletter or other (non-council) publication circulating in the area of Council.
Consult with the whole Council area	Consider appropriate forms of notifications to the Council area. Consider whether additional information or notification should be made available to the community to bring their attention to the matter and to support participation.	X	X	X			Information published on a social media platform maintained by Council. Information made available at Council offices.
Invite submissions	Provide information about how the community can make a submission, including timeframe.	X	X				Engagement material provides information about how the community can make a submission, including the minimum 21 day timeframe for submissions.
Explain decision making process	In material prepared explain what the Council proposes to do, why it proposes to do it, and what it seeks to achieve. Explain how community feedback will inform the Council's decision.	X	X				Engagement material explains what the Council proposes to do, why it proposes to do it, and what it seeks to achieve. Information published explains that feedback received will be taken into account by the Council before making a decision.

Charter requirement	Mandatory minimum actions to achieve Charter requirement	Charter Category					Engagement activities
		Significant ABP and Rating Policy	Significant	Standard	Local	Inform	
Seek and consider feedback from the community—significant matters	Consider how best to invite feedback from the community. Provide a minimum community engagement period of 21 days to enable the community to provide feedback. Include a summary of community engagement feedback to the Council ahead of the decision.	X	X				Feedback will be invited by (e.g.) • Written submissions • Completion of survey or questionnaire • Attendance in person at a Council meeting. • Attendance in person or electronic means at an information/briefing session. Community Engagement period open for a minimum of 21 days. Summary of community engagement feedback considered by Council ahead of decision
Public Meeting	Hold a public meeting where the community is invited to provide submissions (written or verbal) on the matter. The public meeting may be part of a Council meeting or a separate event.	X					A public meeting will be held either as part of a Council meeting, or as a separate event, for the making of written or verbal submissions.
Council meeting invitation	Invite people who have made a written submission to attend a Council meeting to speak to their submission before the decision is made.		X				People who made written submissions will be invited to attend a Council meeting and speak to their submissions before a decision is made
Seek and consider feedback from the community	Consider how best to invite feedback from the community Provide information about how community feedback will inform the Council's decision. Ensure an appropriate period of time is provided to enable communities to provide feedback.			X	X		Feedback will be invited by (e.g.) • Written submissions • Completion of a survey or questionnaire • Attendance in person, by representative or via electronic means at a Council meeting or public meeting • Attendance in person, by representative or via electronic means at a workshop, focus group or interview Information published indicates that feedback received will be taken into account by the Council before making a decision. Community Engagement period open for a period of 21 days] or such other period as determined by Council.

Charter requirement	Mandatory minimum actions to achieve Charter requirement	Charter Category					Engagement activities
		Significant ABP and Rating Policy	Significant	Standard	Local	Inform	
Consult with local community	Consider appropriate forms of notifications to the area within the Council affected by the Council decision or action. Consider whether additional information or notification should be made available to the local community to bring their attention to the matter and to support participation.				X		e.g. • Information published on a social media platform maintained by Council • Information published in targeted letters or leaflet drops to the area within the Council affected by the Council decision or action • Information made available at Council offices in the area within the Council affected by the council decision or action.
Information to the whole Council area	Provide information to the whole of the Council's community if it may be directly affected by the Council decision or action.					X	e.g. • Information published on a social media platform maintained by Council • Information made available at Council offices.
Information to local community	Provide information to the local community that may be directly affected by the Council decision or action.					X	e.g. • Information published on a social media platform maintained by Council • Information published in targeted letters or leaflet drops to local community that may be directly affected by the Council decision or action • Information made available at Council offices in the local community that may be directly affected by the Council decision or action.

7. OTHER DECISIONS, ACTIVITIES AND PROCESSES

Council recognises there may be decisions, activities and processes where the Act and Charter are silent in relation to community engagement, but for which community engagement may nevertheless be appropriate.

Council may undertake community engagement activities for community participation in relation to other decisions, activities or processes of the Council not specified in the Charter at its absolute discretion. However, Council is not required to give prior consideration and/or to determine whether or not to undertake any such steps in relation to these matters.

8. DELEGATIONS

Specific engagement activities to be undertaken in relation to any particular decision, activity or processes shall be determined on a case by case basis, by:

- Council, by resolution;
- the CEO;
- a delegate with the power to undertake community engagement under the Act, the Charter or this policy; or
- a delegate with power to make a decision or undertake an activity or process that requires community engagement under the Act, the Charter or this policy.

Council, the CEO or a delegate is not required by this policy to undertake, or to consider or determine whether to undertake, additional engagement activities or engagement methods. Such a decision is at the absolute discretion of the decision maker.

9. REVIEW AND EVALUATION

This Policy shall be reviewed every 48 months, or more frequently if required by legislation or Council to ensure Council continues to meet legislative requirements and undertakes effective community engagement.

Document history:

Version	Date	Description of change
1.0	April 2000 - Min349	New document
2.0	Mar 2010 - Min 211	Wording change as recommended by LGA
3.0	Dec 2012 - Min149	Insert note re Development Act on page 1 and minor rewording
4.0	Sep 2014 - Min 69	Minor wording deletion
5.0	Nov 2014	Policy numbering system changed and inclusion of this document history table
6.0	Sept 2017	Wording changes – to simplify and reflect greater commitment to engagement of the community. Simplification, change of review timeframe, addition of principle. Change of policy name. Reference to the IAP2 core values. New template
7.0	April 2021	Incorporating changes as part of the public health emergency declared on 15 March 2020 (COVID-19)
8.0	June 2022	Removing the public health emergency declaration, update reformed legislation and removing the public consultation requirement of notice in Council's newsletter to reflect modern practices.
9.0	August 2026	Policy updated to meet legislative requirements and in line with the Community Engagement Charter