

C5 – COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PUBLIC CONSULTATION

PURPOSE

To provide direction for Council's community engagement activities.

POLICY STATEMENT

This policy upholds the view that involvement of the community and key stakeholders in planning and decision making for the local area is fundamental to effective governance. It ensures that Council's responsibilities to effectively communicate, consult and engage with stakeholders are fulfilled.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all facets of Council's operations including council's corporate, land use and financial planning and our day to day business activities.

It defines the principles underpinning Council's engagement activities, the role of councillors and staff in engaging with the community, and the mechanisms which council will use to engage the community.

PRINCIPLES

Council has decided to take a principle-based approach to its community engagement activities. This approach provides consistency, cohesion and facilitates the alignment of our performance reporting requirements. Each principle seeks to clarify the purpose of why Council engages with the community and guide how that engagement occurs. Principles which guide the actions of Shire of Irwin employees are as follows:

- Inclusiveness
 - The consultation must encourage the involvement of people who are affected by or interested in a decision;
 - Affected and interested parties will be given equal opportunity to do so, including groups who have traditionally not participated in the past;
 - Affected groups and interested parties can select their own representative from within their group to work with Council; and
 - The type of consultation or contact that is made will be sensitive to a group's particular needs.

- Purpose
 - The Shire will use this framework to ensure that consultation is purpose-driven to provide assistance in the decision making process of Council which can include revision of policies;
 - The type of consultation chosen must be appropriate for the task;
 - There is a clear statement about what consultation is to achieve;
 - There is a clear statement about what the role of Council is and what the role of the participants is, in the consultation; and
 - There is internal coordination within the Council to ensure organisational ownership of the consultation.

➤ Provision of information

- Information relating to the consultation is to be made readily available so that participants can make informed and timely contributions;
- Information relating to the consultation can be accessed easily by everyone involved before key decisions are made;
- Information must be presented in an easily understood format;
- In some instances, full details about an issue may not be fully disclosed to the public because of its commercial sensitivity or personal nature; and
- In some circumstances, Council may determine to recover part of the cost of providing the information.

➤ Informed consultation

Consultation is most effective when people have the facts before them. This will mean that Council will need to have the officers do some development work on an issue or proposal, prior to the commencement of the consultation.

- This work will generally be described as the scoping work or study. This scoping work will be the information that Council will put into the public arena for consultation. It will be factual.
- On occasion Council may develop preference for a particular position. When this occurs, Council will indicate what that preliminary position is and the reason for this. This will assist the community to understand where the Council stands at the start of the consultation.

METHODS OF CONSULTATION

As a guide, Council has outlined types of consultation that may be appropriate in a range of circumstances.

The methods of consultation are:

- A. Notifications on site (where appropriate)
- B. Verbal/written contact to affected household or group advising them of issue/project (no feedback invited).
- C. Written contact to affected household or group. Information will be given on how the receiver may give feedback.
- D. Council-organised community forum/meeting.
- E. Surveys or other forms of formal market research that are independently conducted and are statistically valid. Note: matters that are identified as requiring surveys will be determined by Council on a case-by-case basis when the scoping of the matter and full consultative program is presented to Council.
- F. Seek input via affected groups or advisory committees (if relevant one exists).
- G. Council's Shire Website / Brilliant Blend Bulletin / Council Facebook Page / Notice Board / Shire of Irwin Electronic Community Sign
- H. Advisory Public Notices / Media Release (i.e. Dongara Denison Local Rag, Geraldton Guardian etc)
- I. Public Notice advertising for public comment/feedback

COMMUNITY IMPACT LEVELS

Council believes that there are basically six different groups of issues on which it will wish to consult:

- Group One Matters that are a “one-off” issue impacting on Shire service delivery**
e.g. The temporary closure of a sporting facility for maintenance works.
- Group Two Matters that change the current arrangements/uses on a single site**
e.g. example: Any minor redevelopment of a Shire facility, park or reserve.
- Group Three Matters impacting on an area or neighbourhood**
e.g. Traffic management proposals/solutions, streetscape proposals
- Group Four Service Planning Matters which have impacts across the Shire**
e.g. Changes to the rubbish service
- Group Five Major Plans which have impacts across the Shire**
e.g. Open Space Planning, Community Development Plan, Tourism Plan.
- Group Six Major projects or issues with Shire wide impacts**
e.g. Construction of new building or major infrastructure/major redevelopment/Strategic Plan/Town Centre Development proposals

In circumstances categorised as group one, two or three, few examples beyond the type above were identified as having an impact or being significant enough to necessitate extensive consultation.

In such circumstances, consultation is more likely to involve a specific party, groups or neighbourhood (i.e. those that may be affected) than the wider community, and the appropriate consultative tools would be outlined by the project team at the commencement of a project.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GUIDELINES

COMMUNITY IMPACT LEVELS							
METHOD		1	2	3	4	5	6
	A.	N	N	-	-	-	N
	B.	P	P	-	P	-	-
	C.	-	-	N	-	N	N
	D.	-	-	-	-	P	P
	E.	-	-	-	-	P	P
	F.	-	N	N	-	N	N
	G.	N	N	N	N	N	N
	H.	P	N/P*	-	N	N/P*	N/P*
	I.	-	N/P*	N	-	N/P*	N/P*

*If both H & I are relevant to a specific group, one or the other must be selected. This will be based on whether the engagement is to be used for the purposes of informing or advising the community.

N – Necessary

P – Possibility (needs to be considered)

This table identifies minimum requirements however this should be reviewed on an as needs basis during operational planning.

APPROPRIATE CONSULTATION

This framework will apply predominantly to matters requiring a decision by Council. It will not necessarily apply to routine, day-to-day activities such as:

- Maintenance activities
- Implementing an existing plan

- Where the work is integral to the work of an advisory committee

Note: This framework relates to obtaining community input before the Council makes a decision on the matter, i.e. consultation. When the decision has been made and the decision is being implemented/the activity is routine, it is more appropriate for the Council to inform/advise.

STATUTORY OBLIGATIONS

Council has responsibilities and makes decisions under a wide variety of State and Federal legislation. In many instances the legislation sets standards and provides minimum/maximum requirements in regard to notifications and referrals.

This Consultative Framework is designed to complement any statutory obligations the Council may have and to ensure the Council's principles of consultation are applied.

Council is rarely the final decision maker, so it must be mindful of the folly of inviting input from residents whose objection cannot be reasonably taken into account (e.g. relativity to a proposal).

IMPLEMENTING THE CONSULTATION

- a) This policy applies to Elected Members, Council staff, contractors, agents and consultants acting on behalf of the Council.
- b) The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for implementing community engagement and consultation programs in accordance with this policy. Guidelines and resources are to be provided to enable staff to fulfil the consultation requirements of legislation and this policy.

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Council will use different community engagement techniques and communication mechanisms depending upon the issue or project, its particular circumstance and the audience it needs to target.

The need for, and type of community engagement to be undertaken will be determined at the project's planning stage following an analysis of the desired project outcomes. The project plan will also identify the most appropriate communication tool to ensure that the particular target group(s) are well informed of both the issue and related engagement opportunities.

At the planning stage the project team will also consider whether or not it can obtain the community information it requires from another source, or previous engagement activity in order to maximise the use of limited resources and minimise the likelihood of consultation fatigue developing within the community.

PARTNERSHIPS

As an integral part of his policy Council will facilitate the establishment of a range of partnerships between all levels of government, business and community organisations. These partnerships will:

- provide a flexible vehicle to respond to economic, environmental and community issues;
- advocate to other levels of Government on issues of regional importance;
- attract external funding to the region; and

- undertake specific projects or activities of mutual benefit to the region and its communities.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Councillors and staff play complementary roles in engaging with the community.

Council will decide the high level strategic issues on which it will engage the community. These issues will be linked to an identified corporate plan priority, or a significant emerging regional issue.

Councillors have responsibility for engaging with their local and divisional communities; and council staff have responsibility for engaging the community in their day-to-day business activities and on agreed projects and place-making activities.

DEVELOPING ENGAGEMENT CAPACITY

In order to develop a culture of engagement across the organisation Council will:

- explore opportunities to provide community engagement training for councillors and staff;
- modify its Council Agenda report format to include a section titled 'community engagement'; which details the proposed engagement strategy to be undertaken within the context of the report; and
- identify new and emerging information, communication, and knowledge management technologies and explore how they could be used to better engage the community.

REVIEW OF THE POLICY

Council will formally review this policy annually in line with the formal Policy Manual review.

<i>Date of Last Amendment – 15 December 2015</i> <i>(reviewed 27 June 2017 Minute 140617)</i>
