



WARRNAMBOOL
CITY COUNCIL

Community Engagement Policy

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Purpose

This policy details Council's approach to community engagement, including Council's commitment to the community engagement principles set out under section 56 of the Local Government Act 2020. This Policy aims to create stronger links between the council and the community; provide opportunities for the community to contribute to and inform identified strategic plans; build new relationships and/or improve relationships with the community; and to educate the community and Council on specific issues to increase knowledge and inform decision-making.

1.2. Scope

This Policy applies to all Councillors, Council staff, contract workers, consultants and all people who engage with the community on behalf of Warrnambool City Council.

The Local Government Act 2020 requires that the following activities are undertaken in accordance with this Community Engagement Policy:

- development of the Council Plan;
- development or amendment of Governance Rules;
- making or altering a Local Law, after 1 July 2021;
- development of a Community Vision;
- development of a Financial Plan; and
- development of an Asset Plan;
- developing the annual Budget;
- making changes to an adopted Budget that the Council considers should be subject of community engagement;
- The purchase or compulsory acquisition of land by Council in accordance with section 112 of the Local Government Act 2020;
- Sale or exchange of Council land in accordance with section 114 of the Local Government Act 2020; and
- Any lease of land where the lease is \$100,000 or more, the market rental value of the land is \$100,000 or more, or the lease is proposed to be for 10 or more years, in accordance with section 115 of the Local Government Act 2020.

Community engagement must follow the principles as defined under the Act, which are:

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

Following the principles will help ensure the community engagement becomes a deliberative process where issues are given in-depth consideration from multiple perspectives.

Community engagement should occur when:

- a proposed change could impact on current users or customers of a council service or facility;
- a proposed change could affect the rights or entitlements of community members;
- there is a potential impact on surrounding neighbours;
- when council is setting its strategic direction;
- the council needs to identify and understand community issues, needs and priorities;
- the council needs to monitor customer satisfaction with council services and facilities; and,
- there is a level of controversy, conflict or sensitivity about a particular issue.

There are occasions when community engagement may not be possible.

These include:

- When a decision must be made immediately;
- When decisions relate to Council's regular business operations; or
- When legal or commercial restrictions prevent it.

Community engagement can occur through a range of techniques and approaches in order to maximise community participation.

This policy provides a framework for community engagement based on the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum and will enhance the capacity of the community to engage Council and vice versa.

The policy articulates Council's commitment to thorough, consistent and genuine community engagement that will inform responsible decision-making for the benefit of the community.

Council will be informed in its decision-making by engaging with a range of stakeholders that comprise the following sectors of the community:

- residents and ratepayers;
- representative, interest and lobby groups;
- community organisations;
- service clubs;
- cultural organisations;
- government; and
- business.

1.3. Definitions

Term	Definition
Community engagement	A process of working with stakeholders and groups of people to develop relationships, build understanding and inform decision-making processes.
Council	Warrnambool City Council
Policy	Warrnambool City Council Community Engagement Policy
Community	People who live in, work in or visit Warrnambool
Community group	Groups, organisations and council advisory bodies that have community-based members and who may share a common interest or interests.
Consultation	A two-way relationship with the Council providing information, considering feedback and providing information on an outcome.
Stakeholders	A person, group or system that can affect or be affected by a council action.

1.4. References

Legislation	Local Government Act
Guidelines	Community Engagement Guidelines and Toolkit
Warrnambool City Council	Warrnambool City Council Plan
Warrnambool community	Warrnambool 2040 (long-term community vision)

2. POLICY

The intention of this policy is to improve decision-making through the involvement of the community; to strengthen the sense of community; to use resources more effectively and to gain greater insight into community needs and aspirations.

2.1. Policy statement

Core activities and values

The following activities and values aid in decision-making which reflects the interests and concerns of the community:

- community engagement includes the promise that the public's contribution will be included in the decision-making process;
- community engagement promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interests of participants, the broader community and

decision-makers;

- community engagement seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in, a decision;
- community engagement provides people with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way;
- engagement will recognise the diversity within a community including ages, abilities and cultures;
- the Council will report to those involved in an engagement process to complete the information loop from community input to outcome for the community; and
- people will be informed of community engagement outcomes via means which may include Council meeting reports, outcomes published on Council's website, on Council's social media platforms, in Council's newsletter to the community.

2.2. Deliberative Engagement

Deliberative engagement is where Council will seek help from the community to frame plans prescribed under the Local Government Act and its regulations and where Council resolves that this is the most appropriate form of engagement for any other matter or initiative.

The deliberative engagement process will provide an opportunity for participants to listen to and learn about each other's views, discuss similarities and differences, weigh evidence, and to deliberate in pursuit of a balance between competing values and interests.

Deliberative engagement will seek to involve individuals, groups and/or the broader community, being scaled to fit the size and impact of the individual project.

Deliberative engagement takes place at the highest three levels on the IAP2 spectrum, 'Involve', 'Collaborate' or 'Empower'. The deliberative engagement process to be undertaken for each individual engagement will be outlined in the community engagement plan for that matter. Some projects may require skilled facilitators to ensure a fair and equitable process. The need for and feasibility of facilitators will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

As part of Council's commitment to effective deliberative engagement practices, Council will:

- ensure that it includes any prescribed matters required by any of the Local Government Act 2020 Regulations;
- ensure participants have access to objective, relevant and timely information;
- ensure the process is representative, including those groups and individuals who are directly affected by the matter; and,
- Provide appropriate time to deliberate on complex information and ideas, and, where possible, seek to find consensus.

2.3. Legislative Requirements

Where Council is making a local law or policy of key significance to the community, community engagement processes listed in this policy are capable of being applied.

Where a community engagement process is undertaken, a plan for that engagement will be developed and will include a clearly defined objective and scope.

All community engagement processes will include providing participants with access to

objective, relevant and timely information.

Each community engagement plan will include information about how that community engagement process will inform and influence any subsequent decision of Council.

2.4. Informing the community of engagement outcomes

Council will utilise a variety of methods to inform the community of the outcome of engagement processes.

How engagement outcomes are shared with the community will be outlined in each community engagement plan, and will include one or more of the following:

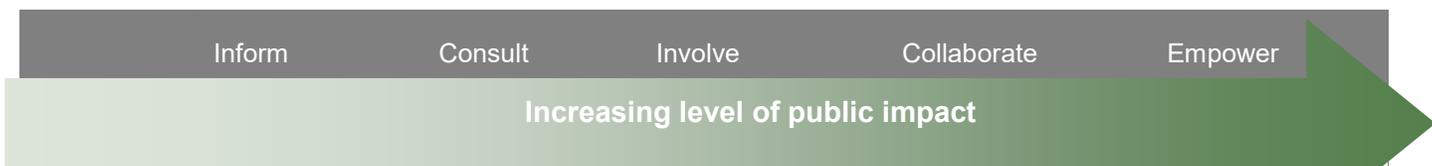
- publication on Council's website
- posts on Council's social media
- print and digital media releases and/or advertisements
- direct communication with participants in the process
- direct communication with those that have requested to be notified of the outcome (e.g. phone, email or post)
- formal in-person announcements (e.g. community meeting).

In determining the methods for informing the community of the outcome of engagement processes Council will consider the stakeholders involved, and the relevance to, and interest levels of the broader community.

3. PROCEDURE

3.1 Procedure statement

To help guide decisions around engagement choices Council recognises the participation spectrum developed by the International Association for Public Participation as the recommended guide to engagement activities. The Community Engagement Toolkit provides advice as to an appropriate level of participation (see Further Information and Advice).

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Increasing level of public impact 					
Goal	Provide the public with balanced and objective information to enable them to understand the challenges, alternatives, opportunities or solutions.	Obtain feedback from the public on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	Work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are considered and understood.	Partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	Place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Commitment	Council will keep the public informed.	Council will keep the public informed, listen and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	Council will work with the public to ensure concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	Council will look to the public for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and will incorporate that advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	Council will implement what the public decides.
Techniques, approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fact sheets • Websites • Open houses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public comment • Focus groups • Surveys • Public meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops • Deliberate polling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen advisory • Committees • Consensus building • Participatory decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen juries • Ballots • Delegated decisions

Above: Community Engagement Model based on the IAP2 public participation spectrum.

3. FURTHER INFORMATION AND ADVICE

To help staff undertake community engagement activities the Community Engagement Planning Template has been developed.

4. GOVERNANCE

4.1. Owner

The responsible officer for this policy is the Manager Communications, who will ensure the policy is implemented and reviewed.

4.2. Review

The Manager Communications will review the policy for any necessary amendments no later than four years after its formulation or after the last review.

4.3. Compliance Responsibility

4.3.1. Executive Management Team (Chief Executive and Directors)

- Demonstrate Warrnambool City Council values through being positive role models for this policy.

4.3.2. Managers and Supervisors

- Managers and Supervisors are responsible for ensuring employees under their direct control comply with actions detailed in this policy (and related procedures).

4.3.3. All Employees

- Demonstrate Warrnambool City Council values through being positive role models for fellow employees, contractors and volunteers by ensuring compliance with this policy (and related procedures).

4.4. Charter of Human Rights Compliance

It is considered that this policy does not impact negatively on any rights identified in the Charter of Human Rights Act (2007).

Warrnambool City Council is committed to consultation and cooperation between management and employees. The Council will formally involve elected employee health and safety representatives in any workplace change that may affect the health and safety of any of its employees.