



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

Policy Number	C06	Directorate	Executive Office
Council Meeting	25 July 2018	Department	Community Information
Adoption Date			
Agenda Item No.	X.X	Primary Author	Communications and Engagement Officer
Review Date	July 2022	Secondary Author	Manager Executive Support and Community Information

1. POLICY OBJECTIVE

This policy outlines Council’s approach to community engagement to assist with transparency, understanding and trust in Council’s decision making process. The policy ensures that Council hears a wide range of perspectives, understands the breadth of issues to consider, and has access to potential solutions when decisions need to be made.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

South Gippsland Shire Council is committed to understanding the needs of its community and actively seeks the input of community members when significant decisions are required to be made. Council recognises the value in diverse views and actively seeks differing opinions in order to tailor services for the community it serves.

Council understands the importance of community engagement and encourages community members to be involved in government. It is expected that community members should feel they have sufficient opportunities to share their views.

Council will consider undertaking community engagement when:

- a. There is a high risk of community members or Council being impacted
- b. Community feedback will enhance the decision or action required
- c. A situation has a significant budgetary impact or a level of sensitivity
- d. It is compulsory under any legislative requirement

Community engagement activities can be scaled to an appropriate level according to the number of those potentially affected and the resources available.

This policy and all other guiding documents have been developed in line with the principles and methodology developed and endorsed by IAP2.

2.1 Principles

Council will have regard to the IAP2 principles and the engagement principles outlined in the expected revision of the *Local Government Act* when conducting engagement activities.

These principles are outlined in Council’s Community Engagement Strategy 2018-2022. The principles also align with the Victorian Auditor-General’s Office (VAGO) Public Participation Principles.

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Council staff will apply engagement techniques, when appropriate, in a manner that is effective and timely for the desired engagement result.

Focus will be given to a range of factors including scale, context and purpose to help determine appropriate engagement activities. Community Engagement Guidelines have been developed to assist staff when designing relevant engagement plans.

In recognition of the expected revision of the *Local Government Act* each Directorate will have the ability to determine its own processes in previously prescribed engagement activities. These processes should be reviewed annually to ensure their relevance.

Feedback provided will be presented to Council as a report for situations where decision making is necessary. All other feedback will be utilised for future improvement. Active participants will be advised of these feedback channels in such a way that suits their original interaction with Council or any other method as negotiated.

3. RISK ASSESSMENT

Without this policy no consistent approach to community engagement at Council would exist. This could result in haphazard engagement efforts that can discourage the community from participating.

If Council does not implement a community engagement policy it risks breaching statutory and legislative requirements, reducing the opportunity to make informed decisions and damaging its reputation.

Council would lose the opportunity to build relationships and stronger levels of trust with the community without community engagement. Council would also lose the opportunity to ensure monitoring and evaluation of engagement plans are undertaken, this ensures learnings are passed on throughout the organisation to ensure we improve in all community engagement efforts.

4. IMPLEMENTATION STATEMENT

Councillors and Council staff will be made aware of this policy in their inductions. Existing staff will be notified through the intranet and staff newsletters. Consultants working on behalf of Council that undertake consultation must be informed of this policy.

Community members will be made aware of this policy through media releases, Council's website, Facebook and email newsletters (In The Know).

5. POLICY DEFINITIONS

Community Engagement	A planned process with the specific purpose of working across organisations, stakeholders and communities to shape the decisions or actions of the members of the community, stakeholders or organisation in relation to a problem, opportunity or outcome. IAP2 also refers to this process as public participation.
IAP2	International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) is an international leader in public participation that seeks to promote and improve the practice of community engagement.



6. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Attachment 3.1.2

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Council Policy and Guidelines

- Council Plan 2017-2021
- Community Engagement Strategy
- Community Engagement Guidelines

Legislative Provisions

- Local Government Act 1989
- Planning and Environment Act 1987
- Information Privacy Act 2000

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