

# SCS-017 - Community Engagement Policy

TRIM Reference: D20/92074 Due for Review: 30 September 2022  
Responsible Officer: Coordinator Communications and Community Engagement

## Purpose

This policy outlines the principles and commitments that underpin Council's approach to community engagement. Community engagement refers to 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).

## Policy Principles

The Local Government Act 2020 Section 56 establishes five community engagement principles applicable to Council. As required by Section 55 of the Act, this policy gives effect to these principles.

### ***Principle 1: A community engagement process must have a clearly defined objective and scope***

Council will:

- Develop community engagement plans in accordance with this policy.
- Identify and document the purpose of community engagement processes and the benefits sought.
- Allocate appropriate funding and time to engagement planning and implementation.

### ***Principle 2: Participants in community engagement must have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation***

Council will:

- Provide accurate, impartial and accessible information about intended projects or decisions for consideration.
- Provide information with sufficient notice for community members to consider how they may be affected by proposed decisions or plans and make arrangements to be involved in engagement processes.
- Provide opportunities, as appropriate, for community members to come together to learn and share information, and have meaningful and informed deliberations.

### ***Principle 3: Participants in community engagement must be representative of the persons and groups affected by the matter that is the subject of the community engagement***

Council will:

- Identify stakeholders at the commencement of all relevant projects and determine the level to which different groups may be affected by decisions or plans.
- Select a variety of accessible communication methods to ensure relevant parties are informed about engagement activities and opportunities to influence council decisions.
- Encourage and support the inclusion of a diverse range of perspectives, including, but not limited to, youth, older people, people with disabilities and carers, and people who identify as LGBTIQA+, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, or as belonging to a variety of culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
- Listen to and consider the views of the full range of participants.

### ***Principle 4: Participants in community engagement are entitled to reasonable support to enable meaningful and informed engagement***

Council will:

- Consider what barriers may exist to participation in engagement processes, including consideration of accessibility needs, information formats, communication channels, language and a variety of engagement methods and opportunities.
- Develop plans which respond to identified barriers and needs, and encourage broad participation.
- Support initiatives that improve the capacity of different groups to engage with Council and effectively present their views.

**Principle 5: Participants in community engagement are informed of the ways in which the community engagement process will influence Council decision making**

Council will:

- Identify the appropriate level of engagement according to the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Framework.
- State the level of influence available, and highlight the negotiable and non-negotiable elements of any community engagement process.
- Articulate how community perspectives will be incorporated into decision making and the nature of decisions to be made.
- Share what has been learned and what actions or decisions have resulted from an engagement process.

**Scope**

This policy provides direction on formal (including legislated) and informal community engagement activities undertaken by, or on behalf of, Council, including, but not limited to, the:

- Development and review of key strategic plans such as the Community Vision, Council Plan, Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan, Financial Plan, Asset Plan, and Road Management Plan.
- Making of local laws.
- Development of annual budgets.
- Development of Council policies that directly impact the community.
- Planning and delivery of projects that create new assets or change service levels.

This policy applies to all community engagement activity undertaken by Council, including work undertaken by consultants and volunteers.

Community engagement relating to planning permit applications and planning scheme amendments is outside of the scope of this policy, as these processes are governed by the Planning and Environment Act 1987 and associated regulations.

**Policy**

Council will undertake community engagement activities for any of the following purposes:

- when community input can enhance decision making or project outcomes
- to gain new information about community needs, aspirations and concerns
- when there will be a real or perceived change to existing services, programs or the use of public spaces and facilities
- when community members, business communities or other groups would have a particular interest in the outcome of a decision, project or development
- when Council resolves to consult the community
- when legislation, policy or other agreement mandates.

Council will seek participant feedback to monitor and evaluate engagement, and continue to adapt and improve our processes.

**Type and form of community engagement**

The process for determining the type and form of community engagement will be governed by a management procedure, aligned to the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation (below). Engagement approaches will be documented in project specific community engagement plans.

Council will assess the following when considering the selection of engagement level(s) and associated activities:

- the level of impact on the community the level of community and stakeholder interest
- the complexity and associated risks of the issue/project/topic
- the resources available to Council.

Engagement level	Promise to community	Role of community	Examples of activities
<u>Inform:</u> Provide news and information to the community to help them understand.	Council will keep you informed.	Receive information.	Information sessions Provide information via media Social media posts On-site signage Direct mail Project updates Public meetings

Engagement level	Promise to community	Role of community	Examples of activities
<b>Consult:</b> Ask for feedback on a matter	Council will listen to and acknowledge your contribution.	Contribute opinions and ideas.	Survey Focus groups Drop-in sessions Opinion poll Submission processes Public meetings
<b>Involve:</b> Invite participation toward an outcome pre-determined by Council.	Council will work with you to ensure your concerns and aspirations are considered in the decision making.	Participate in making plans and decisions.	Working/reference groups Advisory groups Workshops Deliberative polling
<b>Collaborate:</b> Work together with the community toward a jointly agreed outcome.	Council will look to the community for advice and innovation, incorporating into decisions where possible.	Actively partner for an agreed outcome	Citizen's advisory committees Participatory decision making Community ownership project governance Deliberative processes
<b>Empower:</b> Place final decision making in the hands of the public and build their capacity to deliver change	Council will help you implement our mutual goals.	Carry out a community-led initiative.	Citizen's juries Deliberative processes Ballots

*Adapted from IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation*

When outlining the engagement approach, Council will tailor engagement based on the:

- specific aims and objectives of the engagement
- needs of participants
- local context
- needs of the decision or policy-makers
- requirements of any relevant regulations.

Each community engagement plan will include the following as a minimum:

- The purpose and objectives of the exercise (why and how)
- The intended outcomes (what will be achieved)
- The scope of the engagement (including available influence)
- The people who should be involved (specialists, decision-makers and public participants), and their potentially different needs and aspirations
- The context (social, political, historical, policy) into which the process will fit
- The methods for informing the community of the outcome of engagement.

#### **Process for informing the community of the outcome of engagement**

In determining the methods for informing the community of the outcome of engagement processes, Council will consider:

- the relevant community engagement plan
- the stakeholders involved
- the relevance to, and the interest level of, the broader community.

Council will utilise a variety of methods to inform the community of the outcome of engagement processes. These will be outlined in specific community engagement plans and will include, but not be limited to:

- Publication on Council's website
- Posts on Council's social media sites
- Print media
- Direct communication with individuals or groups that have participated in the process or requested to be notified of the outcomes (e.g. phone, email or post)
- Formal in-person announcements (e.g. community meeting).

#### **Deliberative engagement practices**

Deliberative engagement refers to engagement processes that enable community representatives to reach conclusions based on in depth consideration of relevant facts from multiple points of view, conversations with others and critical thinking about alternative perspectives, opinions, understandings and trade-offs (adapted from Mosaic Lab).

Council will undertake deliberative engagement in the following circumstances:

1. Where it has a legislated obligation (including Community Vision, Council Plan, Financial Plan and Asset Plan); or
2. Where it resolves that it wants its decision-making on a matter or initiative to be informed by this model of community engagement.

There is no single design for deliberative public engagement; therefore, Council’s deliberative engagement practices will be tailored in accordance with this policy.

Once designed, the deliberative engagement elements will be documented in a community engagement plan, in accordance with this policy. Where Council is undertaking deliberative engagement, the community engagement plan will be available on Council’s website.

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

- provide a clear remit to the deliberative group
- ensure participants have access to neutral, balanced information from a range of different sources, to allow in-depth conversation and understanding of this issues involved
- ensure the process is representative
- allow the time needed to deliberate on complex information, and weigh up options and ideas
- give the deliberative group a high level of influence over outcomes or decisions.

### Related Procedure

MPP-028 Community Engagement Management Procedure (draft under development)

### References

#### Documents

- Surf Coast Shire Communications and Community Engagement Strategy 2019-21
- Surf Coast Shire Customer Service Strategy 2015-18
- SCS-025 Surf Coast Shire Council Capital Works Community Engagement Policy
- Surf Coast Shire Community Development Policy 2019-21 (draft under development)
- Surf Coast Shire Governance Rules (draft)
- Surf Coast Shire Public Transparency Policy (draft)

#### Relevant Legislation

- [Local Government Act 1989](#)
- [Local Government Act 2020](#)
- [Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006](#)
- [Equal Opportunity Act 2010](#)
- [Subordinate Legislation Act 1994](#)
- [Public Administration Act 2004](#)
- [Road Management Act 2004](#)
- [Planning and Environment Act 2007](#)
- [Health and Wellbeing Act 2008](#)

#### Other References

- [International Association of Public Participation \(IAP2\) Spectrum of Public Participation](#)
- [IAP2’s Core Values for the Practice of Public Participation](#)
- [Mosaic Lab Principles of Deliberative Engagement](#)

### Document History

Version	Document History	Approved by – Date
1		Council Resolution - 15 September 2020