NAIDOC Week 2018, Anglesea

Communications and Community Engagement Strategy 2019-2021

This strategy describes how we approach communication and engagement at Surf Coast Shire Council.

We value the contribution that your voice brings to local decision making and through effective communication and engagement, we aim for reasoned decisions that are informed by the needs of our local communities, townships and environments.

This strategy outlines our key focus areas as we communicate and engage with communities over the next few years.

Our approach

We base our communications and community engagement activities on four fundamental principles.

GENUINE
We believe citizens have a right to know about and contribute to decisions that affect them.

RESPONSIVE
We will communicate to you promptly and when we seek your feedback we will ensure it is in time to inform our decision making.

SIMPLE
We will use plain language when we communciate with you.

PROGRESSIVE
We will be innovative where doing so can improve understanding, encourage deliberation and allow for shared responsibility for decision making.

Major Initiatives

Digital Transformation
Customer access, live streaming Council meetings and explaining technology to support customers

Customer Experience
Shining a light on the customer experience

Community stories
sharing your positive stories

Explaining Council process in plain English

Understanding and recognising local culture and heritage

Building community networks through meetings and communication

Giving a voice to diverse points of view

Engaging the community on the benefits and impacts of growth

Our focus areas

VALUING LOCAL KNOWLEDGE
We know that better decisions are made when we work with the people affected. What you share with us about local priorities helps to shape policies, plans and projects. We will:

- Use what we have (database of existing knowledge)
- Listen to what we hear (record feedback from existing channels such as; social media, customer contact, committee meetings)
- Understand and be sensitive to local heritage and culture
- Develop ongoing relationships – Councillors, staff and community

SHARED DIRECTION SETTING
We aim to increase public participation by including community voices at the planning stages of projects. We will invite you to engage early on key projects.

- Place based coordination
- Deliberative processes for major and/or controversial projects
- Monitoring and evaluation framework

CUSTOMER FOCUSED COMMUNICATIONS
Our communication to you will be timely, relevant, interesting and accessible through the channels you prefer. We will reply when you contact us and keep you updated when you request customer service.

- Timely communications
- Community stories
- Prompt responses to requests
- Accessible and interesting approaches – video

FRAMEWORK/TOOLS/TECHNIQUES
We will continue to refine our internal process and focus on skill development for staff.

- IAP2 commitment
- Staff training
- Templates/tools/training

"What you told us

We regularly invite and receive feedback from communities. We are sensitive to the diverse perspectives offered from around the shire.

You have consistently told us you want to be kept informed, you want the opportunity to contribute to decisions that affect you, and you want feedback on how your input has influenced final decisions.

We conducted a survey during 2018 to better understand how you like to be informed and contribute to local initiatives.

The top four methods chosen for finding out about Council matters were **direct mail (70%)**, **local newspapers (58%)**, **email (53%)** and **Council website (29%)**.

The preferred methods for contributing your ideas and feedback were; **written feedback (60%)**, **online surveys (40%)** and **workshops (31%)**.

Leading the way: International Association of Public Participation (IAP2)
Our approach is guided by the work of the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2). The IAP2 framework outlines options for inclusive, influential engagement supported by clear and timely communications.
Find out more at **www.iap2.org.au**

Surf COAST SHIRE