

Document Control	
Policy Title	Community Engagement Policy
Doc ID No	GRC012
Responsible Directorate	Corporate and Community Services
Responsible Position	Manager, Community Partnerships
Date Review Due	Before November 2023

Version	Council Meeting Date (Date of Adoption/Review)	Minute Number
0.A	27 November 2019	M14/11/19

1. Purpose

To provide Council with direction on how to plan, deliver and evaluate its community engagement activities.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all Council Directorates and all projects that engage community or stakeholders in Council planning or decision making processes. It applies to elected Councilors, Council employees, volunteers, consultants and contractors.

3. Related Legislation

Local Government Act 2009 (Qld)

- Section 4 outlines the local government principles underpinning the Act, specifically relevant to this policy are: (a) *transparent and effective processes, and decision-making in the public interest; and (c) democratic representation, social inclusion and meaningful community engagement;*
- Section 104(5)(a) states that (i) *The system of financial management established by a local government must include a 5-year corporate plan that incorporates community engagement.*

Planning Act 2016 (Qld)

- Part 3, Division 2, section 18 outlines necessary steps in making or amending Planning Schemes, including necessary notices and process requirements, to ensure any person may make a submission during the statutory process. Under Part 3, Division 2, section 20, community engagement activities

are able to be delivered in accordance with the Minister's Guidelines and Rules under the Act and this process varies according to the nature of the proposed amendment or for the preparation of a new Planning Scheme. As part of this process, the preparation of a communications strategy may be a requirement.

4. Related Documents

Gympie Regional Council Corporate Plan 2017-2022, Our community: Strategy: *"Improve community information and engagement"*

CGPOL110	Information Privacy Policy
OCPOL400	Social Media Policy
OCPOL405	Media Protocol Policy
ISPM0	Project Management Framework
CCS012	Community Engagement Corporate Standard

5. Definitions

To assist in interpretation of this policy the following definitions apply:

- *Community engagement*: the process of engaging community and stakeholders in Council planning and decision making.
- *Community*: any individual, group or organisation within the Gympie local government area.
- *Stakeholder/s*: any individual, group or organisation with an interest or stake in the Council decision being considered.

6. Statement

Council is committed to providing opportunities for meaningful community engagement to inform Council planning and decision making in the public interest.

Community engagement allows people interested in, or likely to be affected by, a Council decision to have a say. It embraces a broad range of interactions between Council and the community including the provision of information, consultation, involving stakeholders in identifying issues and opportunities and working together to develop alternatives and preferred solutions.

Community engagement activity will be carried out in alignment with Council's corporate values of being *consistent, appreciative, communicative, respectful and accountable*.

Council commits to the following principles in planning and delivering its engagement activities:

- **Genuine** – provide meaningful opportunities for community/stakeholders to influence Council decision making.
- **Inclusive** – strive to include a wide range of people interested in or affected by the issue/project and use engagement methods to overcome participation barriers (e.g. language, age, location and accessibility).
- **Transparent** – be clear about the engagement objectives, how the community can have input, what the Council's preferred option is (if any), what is negotiable and non-negotiable and who will make the final decision.
- **Timely** – involve the community/stakeholders at the earliest possible stage and at appropriate milestones, allowing sufficient time for participation before the decision is made; keep stakeholders informed throughout the process and close the loop when the final decision is made.
- **Respectful** – listen to and take account of all community views expressed in the engagement process and ask those involved to respect that other people may have different opinions to their own.
- **Access to information** - provide objective, relevant and easy to understand information to enable informed community participation.
- **Accountable** – inform the community/stakeholders about how their input was taken into account and encourage community/stakeholder accountability for their role in the decision making process.
- **Partnership** – aim to build relationships and understanding through engagement activities, striving to reduce community division or conflict over issues.
- **Resourced** – allocate human, financial and technical resources to deliver cost effective and coordinated engagement.
- **Continuous Improvement** – evaluate Council's engagement activities to measure if they are effective in gaining community input and shaping council decisions.

7. Review Trigger

This policy will be reviewed when any of the following occur:

1. The related legislation/documents are amended or replaced.
2. Other circumstances as determined from time to time by a resolution of Council
3. As initiated by the CEO or Executive Team.
4. Periodic Review – within four years from date of adoption

8. Appendices

Nil

Endorsed: 27 November 2019

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