

Policy Title: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

Policy Subject: Community

Policy No: #1896552v3

Directorate: Community & Development

Department: Community & Culture

Section:

Responsible Officer: Executive Manager – Community & Culture

Authorised by: Director Community & Development

Adopted Date: 07/04/10

Review Date: 30/05/14

Amended Date: 30/05/13 – Administrative only changes – Reference to Community Plan not required

OBJECTIVE:

To provide direction for Council's community engagement activities.

POLICY:**Philosophy**

Council is committed to engaging the community in order to make decisions that best meet community needs and expectations. Council will listen to, collect information from, confer with and take into account the community's ideas but a central principle of Council's Community Engagement Framework is that the responsibility for decision-making rests with the elected body of Council. This message will be clearly communicated at all times when engaging with the community.

In order to engage the community most effectively and fairly, Council commits to the following principles:

1. Accurate, accessible and timely information will be provided as the basis for effective consultation;
2. Participation will be encouraged by individuals, groups and organisations in the Fraser Coast Regional Council area and other regional areas as required;
3. Practices to promote participation will be optimised and barriers to participation will be identified and minimised, and
4. The purpose of each consultation will be clearly stated, as per the IAP2 spectrum (see Attachment 2);
5. Feedback about the outcomes of consultation will be provided to participants as well as communicated to the general community.

Role

The role of this policy is to provide Council with a framework for engaging with the community that:

1. Forms part of Council's core planning cycles;
2. Ensures a consistent approach to engaging the community through informing, seeking information from and involving community members;
3. Develops Council's capacity to undertake effective community engagement;
4. Coordinates community engagement processes through Council to avoid duplication and;
5. Ensures maximum benefit to the whole organisation and community through sharing of information.

Authorities & Responsibilities

All Councillors and Council Officers are responsible for ensuring that they understand and implement the policy.

The Mayor, Councillors, Directors and Executive Managers are responsible for ensuring that this policy and strategies developed are implemented in a manner consistent with this policy.

Scope & Activities

This policy applies to all facets of Council's operations including council's corporate, land use and financial planning and our day to day business activities.

It defines the principles underpinning Council's engagement activities, the role of councillors and staff in engaging with the community, and the mechanisms which council will use to engage the community.

Reporting Standards

Council will establish a community engagement register to record its engagement activities.

HEAD OF POWER:

Local Government Act 2009

RELATED LEGISLATION:

Nil

RELATED DOCUMENTS (LOCAL LAWS, POLICIES, DELEGATIONS, ETC):

Nil

ATTACHMENTS TO POLICY:

Attachment 1: Community Engagement Framework

Attachment 2: IPA2 Public Participation Spectrum

DEFINITIONS:

Community Engagement - *an ongoing dialogue with our community to identify civic issues and opportunities, assist with planning and inform decision making.*

ATTACHMENT 1:**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK****FRAMEWORK PURPOSE:**

To provide direction for Council's community engagement activities.

DEFINITION

Council defines community engagement as:

an ongoing dialogue with our community to identify civic issues and opportunities, assist with planning and inform decision making.

FRAMEWORK OUTCOME

Communities partnering with council to improve services and create a sustainable region.

FRAMEWORK SCOPE

This policy applies to all facets of Council's operations including council's corporate, land use and financial planning and our day to day business activities. It defines the principles underpinning Council's engagement activities, the role of councillors and staff in engaging with the community, and the mechanisms which council will use to engage the community

ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Council has decided to take a principle based approach to its community engagement activities. This approach provides consistency, cohesion and facilitates the alignment of our performance reporting requirements under the new Queensland Local Government Act (2009). Each principle seeks to clarify the purpose of why Council engages with the community and guide how that engagement occurs.

These principles are:-

- **timeliness:** council will engage with its community in ways that are timely, open to all, easily understood and not overly bureaucratic or resource intensive.
- **information and feedback:** the community has the right to be well informed on issues and receive feedback from council on how its input has been used to inform council decisions.
- **mutual respect:** council's goal is one of inclusive involvement. All voices matter, all opinions are valued and considered.
- **action learning:** council is committed to the development of innovative engagement approaches, learning from each engagement experience, and using such learning to improve our approaches to engagement.
- **foresight:** council engages with its community not only to learn about and respond to present needs, but also to gain a better understanding of our communities' perspective on emerging issues that may affect our preferred future.

ENGAGEMENT CONTEXT

In broad terms Council's engagement activities will be subdivided into four categories:

1. Statutory Compliance

As an example, under the Queensland Local Government Act (2009) Council has a statutory obligation to develop a five year corporate plan. Similarly the Sustainable Planning Act (2009) requires Council to engage with the community in the development of its statutory land use plan.

Council will meet its statutory obligations by ensuring that citizens have the opportunity to:

- a. participate in developing a vision for the region's future
- b. have input into developing and monitoring priorities for action in the community and corporate plans; and
- c. comment on the development of, and changes to the statutory land use plan

2. Engagement around strategic issues

By their very nature these engagements will concern regional issues. On these issues Portfolio Councillors will involve the community through the establishment of advisory panels and taskforces or through special one off meetings or other appropriate engagement activities designed to generate dialogue and ideas.

Councillors, Directors and Executive Managers will be consulted to determine the nature and type of their involvement in the strategic issue

3. Engagement concerning local issues

Council will take a flexible approach on how it engages with the community on local issues with the Portfolio Councillor playing a pivotal role. Engagement activities will provide an opportunity to give and receive information and may include the establishment of working or project groups or community meetings. Such activities will be action focussed and will often involve council staff.

4. Engagement linked to day to day council business

Council staff in consultation with the Portfolio Councillor will identify and manage community engagement activities associated with council's core business and projects approved in Council's budget. The responsible Directorate will establish the most appropriate engagement technique at the project planning stage and will then be responsible for providing information to the community on the issue and facilitating the community involvement.

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Council recognises the full spectrum of engagement activities from informing through consulting and involving to collaboration and empowerment as advocated by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2). (See Attachment 2).

Council will use different community engagement techniques and communication mechanisms depending upon the issue or project, its particular circumstance and the audience it needs to target.

The need for, and type of community engagement to be undertaken will be determined at the project planning stage following an analysis of the desired project outcomes. The project plan will also identify the most appropriate communication tool to ensure that the particular target group(s) is well informed of both the issue and related engagement opportunities.

At the planning stage the project team will also consider whether or not it can obtain the community information it requires from another source, or previous engagement activity in order to maximise the use of limited resources and minimise the likelihood of consultation fatigue developing within the community.

PARTNERSHIPS

As an integral part of this policy council will facilitate the establishment of a range of partnerships between all levels of government, business and community organisations. These partnerships will:

- provide a flexible vehicle to respond to economic, environmental and community issues;
- advocate to other levels of Government on issues of regional importance;
- attract external funding to the region; and
- undertake specific projects or activities of mutual benefit to the region and its communities.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Councillors and staff play complementary roles in engaging with the community. Council will decide the high level strategic issues on which it will engage the community. These issues will be linked to an identified corporate plan priority, or a significant emerging regional issue.

Councillors have responsibility for engaging with their local communities; and council staff have responsibility for engaging the community in their day to day business activities and on agreed projects and place making activities. In doing so staff will consult with the appropriate councillor(s) in order to establish the engagement technique(s) that will be used.

DEVELOPING ENGAGEMENT CAPACITY

In order to develop a culture of engagement across the organisation Council will:

- provide community engagement training for councillors and staff
- modify its report format to include a section titled 'community engagement' which details the proposed engagement strategy to be undertaken within the context of the report
- establish performance indicators to measure engagement outcomes
- identify new and emerging information, communication, and knowledge management technologies and explore how they could be used to better engage the community.
- establish a network of community engagement practitioners to share information and experiences

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REGISTER

Council will establish a community engagement register to record its engagement activities.

This will assist in developing a system of governance that mitigates the risks of duplication and over consultation, records activities undertaken, and allows the community to see at any time what consultation is being planned or is actually occurring. The register will also contain a record of the membership and the minutes of all council taskforces and advisory panels.

Establishment of the community engagement register will assist Council meet its reporting obligations to State Government.

COMMUNITY COMMITTEES

From time to time Council may establish community committees that will:

- have a specific terms of reference;
- explore a major strategic or regional issue;
- have a defined timeframe;
- report at least once every six months to Council;
- be chaired by a councillor;
- identify staff resources to act as project officer and secretary to the taskforce or panel.

RELATED POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

Queensland Local Government Act 2009
Queensland Sustainable Planning Act 2009

REVIEW OF THE POLICY

Establishment of a cross departmental team

In order to ensure that the actions detailed within this policy are undertaken, information is coordinated and new opportunities grasped as they emerge council will establish a cross departmental project team charged with monitoring and reporting on the implementation of this policy. This team will be coordinated by the Executive Manager – Community and Culture and will meet quarterly or as required.

Formal review

Council will formally review this community engagement policy annually.

ATTACHMENT 2:



International Association
for Public Participation
Australasia

IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

Developed by the International Association for Public Participation

INCREASING LEVEL OF PUBLIC IMPACT

| INFORM | CONSULT | INVOLVE | COLLABORATE | EMPOWER |
|---|--|---|--|--|
| Public Participation Goal: | Public Participation Goal: | Public Participation Goal: | Public Participation Goal: | Public Participation Goal: |
| To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions. | To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions. | To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered. | To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution. | To place final decision-making in the hands of the public. |
| Promise to the Public: | Promise to the Public: | Promise to the Public: | Promise to the Public: | Promise to the Public: |
| We will keep You informed. | We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. | We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. | We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible. | We will implement what you decide. |
| Example Techniques to Consider: | Example Techniques to Consider: | Example Techniques to Consider: | Example Techniques to Consider: | Example Techniques to Consider: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fact sheets • Web Sites • 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 |

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