

LIVERPOOL PLAINS SHIRE COUNCIL

POLICY REGISTER

Policy No. 1.49

POLICY TITLE: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

File Reference No: 13.6.1
Date Adopted: 24th February 2010
Minute No: 12843
Last Updated: New Policy

OBJECTIVES

To develop a framework to ensure that a consistent and appropriate process is undertaken by Council in relation to proposals and projects requiring community consultation.

To confirm Council's commitment to conducting quality consultation and its willingness to actively engage the community in its decision making processes.

POLICY STATEMENT

Council will actively engage with the community and seek a range of viewpoints, including academic research, evidence based feedback, local knowledge and expert advice.

Council will provide effective communication that provides timely and appropriate information and gives opportunities to the community to contribute their views and opinions, which can then be reflected in Council's decision making.

Council will ensure that the Community is:-

- Well informed on all issues that may directly or indirectly affect them.
- Actively encouraged to participate in Council's decision making and policy development processes
- Provided with an appropriate opportunity to voice their opinions, concerns or interest in matters that affect them

This will ensure that Council:-

- Meets its Legislative requirements regarding Community Consultation
- Seeks the views of as wide a cross section of the community as possible by selecting consultation methods that are flexible, inclusive and appropriate

Council is committed to:

- Informing the community of key Council decisions, services, programs and initiatives
- Promoting transparency and accountability to Council's decision making processes
- Promoting opportunities for public consultation, feed back and participation in Council activities
- Representing the views of the local community and acting as advocate to the State and Federal Governments and in all appropriate formats.

In all forms of community engagement, including verbal, printed or electronic, staff are expected to adhere to the highest standards of ethical practice and professional competence.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

A Community Engagement Toolkit has been developed (Appendix A) and provides practical guidance for staff on when and how to consult with the community and a checklist of tasks that should be undertaken to ensure that the consultation process is consistent and appropriate in each situation.

Note: *The Toolkit is not intended for the notification and consultation process relating to Development Applications as this process is determined in accordance with the provisions of the Environmental, Planning and Assessment Act 1993. The Legislative provisions of any other consultation process will also take precedent over this policy, however where the legislative requirements are less than is required by assessment under this Policy, then a more comprehensive consultation process shall occur in accordance with this Policy*

LEVEL OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Four levels of community participation have been developed. The level of participation needs to be determined based on what you are trying to achieve.

Level of Participation	Definition
INFORMING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advising the community of a situation or proposal • Informing on a decision or direction • Providing advice on an issue • No response is required, although people are free to seek a further level of participation
SEEKING INFORMATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertaking market research to identify needs or issues • Seeking comment on a proposal, action or issue • Seeking feedback on a service or facility • Option for people to seek a further level of participation
INVOLVING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involving the community in discussion and debate • Adopting a more personal and innovative approach through personal contact and meetings/sessions that encourage participation • Involving at different times throughout the planning process
PARTNERSHIPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing a structure for involvement in decision making e.g. working party • Enabling ongoing involvement and keeping informed • Sharing responsibility for achieving outcomes

LEVEL OF IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY

Level of Impact	Brief Description
Level 1 – (High impact on the LGA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level of impact on the whole or large part of the Shire
Level 2 – (Lower impact on the LGA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower level of impact on the whole or a large part of the Shire
Level 3 – (High impact on a section of the local community)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level of impact of a local nature, on a local area, a specific community or target group.
Level 4 – (Lower impact on a section of the local community)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower level of impact of a local nature, on a local area, a specific community or target group

STEP 1

Know and understand your project

You will need to have a clear understanding of the project. What is it, why and when the project is occurring, where and who the project will impact and the degree of impact that the project will have on those affected. Is there a need to inform or involve other areas within Council? Are there sufficient funds available in the Council Budget to fund the consultation process?

STEP 2

Determine the level of community participation suitable for your project.

Informing, seeking information, involving or a partnership?

STEP 3

With the assistance of the following table identify the level of impact your project has on the community

Who is affected? How much of the community is affected?

Level of Impact	Criteria for determining the level of impact	Examples of projects/initiatives
<p>Level 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A project that impacts a substantial and significant range of the community (area or people). • High level of real or perceived positive or negative impact, or risk across the Shire. • Potential for a high risk controversy and/or conflict across the Shire • Likely high level of interest from the community. • Any significant impact or attributes that are considered to be of value to the whole community, such as regional facilities. • Potential high impact on state or regional strategies or directions. • Any impact on the health, safety or wellbeing of the broader community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Strategic Plan and its components (Operational Plan, Delivery program, Asset Plans, etc). • Significant policies / plans / strategies such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Disability Action Plan – Capital Works Program – Social Plans – Environmental Plan • Removal or changes to a district or regional facility / service • Provision of a district or regional facility/service (e.g. Library). • Changes to Shire wide services, (e.g. waste management). • Planning for a regional / district wide facility / activity. • New heavy industries to the shire such as mining
<p>Level 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some lower level real or perceived positive or negative impact, or risk across the Shire. • Potential for some controversy or conflict across the Shire. • Potential for some, although not significant impact on state or regional strategies or directions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revising the Capital Works Program. • Minor modifications to fees and charges. • Minor changes to service delivery.

STEP 4

Level of Impact	Criteria for determining the level of impact	Examples of projects/initiatives
Level 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level of real or perceived positive or negative impact, or risk on a local area, specific community or user group/s of a facility or service. • Significant change or loss to any facility or service to a specific community / target group. • Potential for a high risk controversy and / or conflict in the local community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal or changes to a local facility / service, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Playgrounds (e.g. changes of equipment) – Roads (e.g. local road closures) – Sportsgrounds (e.g. development of amenity building) – Parks (e.g. changes to use of park) – Childcare facilities (e.g. changes to ages). • Removal or changes to a local activity (e.g. sports activity). • Planning for a local area facility / activity. • Community Facilities Review. • Major works on local facilities or infrastructure
Level 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower level of real or perceived positive or negative impact, or risk on a local area, small community or target group of a specific activity or service at a local level. • Slight change or loss to any facility or service to a local community / target group. • Low or no risk controversy or conflict in the local community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a cultural development initiative in a localised community. • Plans of Management (Community Land)

After determining the level of community participation and the level of impact for the project or issue consult the following **Community Engagement Matrix (APPENDIX B)** to determine the essential strategies for engagement.

STEP 5

Determine the key stakeholders to be involved in the consultation process utilising the appropriate Checklist (**APPENDIX C**).

STEP 6

If the consultation process involves the calling of a public meeting complete the Meetings Checklist (**APPENDIX D**)

STEP 7

After the consultation process has been completed ensure that all stakeholders are informed of any outcome/decision on the issue. All written communications received in relation to the consultation process must be managed in accordance with Council’s Communications Strategy (Policy No 1.32).

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MATRIX**APPENDIX "B"**

Type of Consultation	Level 1 High Impact – Shire	Level 2 Lower Impact – Shire	Level 3 High Impact – Local	Level 4 Lower Impact – Local
INFORMING	E	E	E	E
Personal Telephone Contact	O	D	O	O
In Person Meeting	O	D	O	D
Written Correspondence	D	D	D	N/A
Website/Internet	E	E	D	O
Establish email distribution list on specific issue/project	O	O	O	O
Pamphlet	O	N/A	O	O
Letter Box Drop	O	D	O	O
Notice in Local Paper	E	O	D	O
Notice in Tamworth Paper	D	O	O	O
Media Release	E	N/A	O	N/A
Site Display	O	O	O	O
Displays in Other Locations (e.g. library)	O	O	O	N/A
SEEKING INFORMATION	E	E	E	D
Suggestion Box	N/A	N/A	O	O
Telephone Survey	D	O	O	O
Written Survey	O	O	O	N/A
Website/Internet	E	E	O	O
Establish email distribution list on specific issue/project	O	O	O	O
Hotline/Phone-in	O	O	O	N/A
Letter or Media Promotion Inviting Submissions	E	O	O	N/A
Public Exhibition	E	O	O	N/A
Interview	O	D	O	O
Focus Group Session	D	D	D	D
INVOLVING	E	E	D	D
Meetings with User or Stakeholder Groups	E	E	D	D
Meeting with Existing Group, e.g. parents, school children, youth, aged, business	D	O	D	D
Website/Internet	E	E	O	O
Workshop Session	D	D	D	D
Meeting by Invite	D	D	D	O
Site Tour/Meeting	D	D	O	O
Public Meeting	O	O	O	N/A
PARTNERSHIPS	D	O	O	O
Taskforce or Working Party	D	O	O	N/A
Joint Venture	O	O	O	O

E = Essential**D** = Desirable**O** = Optional**N/A** = Not Applicable

CHECKLIST OF STAKEHOLDERS**APPENDIX "C"**

It is important to identify the appropriate sections of the community "key stakeholders" to be involved in the consultation process. Examples of community segments to be considered in the communication and consultation process are as follows:

Owners of adjoining or affected land	Primarily in development matters, rate and property matters or health matters. In general, an owner or occupier should receive personal notification of any service or activity that will have a specific and direct effect upon them. It is noted, however that in relation to the statutory notification process for development applications, a public meeting would not be warranted.
Streets or Neighbourhoods	For traffic matters, dealings on Council land, garbage collections or for larger scale development matters.
Shire wide	For community-wide issues, providing general information e.g. recycling, Council functions, community land activities, community strategic plans.
Other Government Agencies	Council has a large advocacy role to play in advising other levels of Government of the needs and expectations of the community.
Namoi Councils	Council will consult with other councils on issues which cross the boundaries of the Shire e.g. waste management, resource sharing, transport infrastructure.
Elected Representatives	Local, State and Federal representatives act as advocates for the people in a wide variety of matters.
Police	In a community liaison capacity for traffic, vandalism and criminal matters or development matters such as amusement centres and alcohol free zones.
Specific Target Groups (Older People, Cultural and Linguistically Diverse, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Youth, Women, Children & People with Disabilities)	To ensure that affected target groups are consulted on relevant Council policies and services.
Sporting Groups/ Sports Council/Showground Users	In making decisions about sporting, recreational and leisure facilities in the Shire area.
Environmental Groups	In relation to environmental issues.
Chamber of Commerce	In matters where a Chamber of Commerce (or other organisation representing local business) is active and can provide information regarding the needs of the business community.
Community/Social Groups S.355 committees & Village Committees	Community/social groups comprising local residents should be consulted in relation to their particular interest areas and needs as well as activities and functions conducted by Council. (social, artistic or cultural interest).
Religious Groups	In matters of religious significance and social values.

CHECKLIST FOR THE CALLING OF PUBLIC MEETINGS, PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS AND PUBLIC FORUMS **APPENDIX "D"**

1. AUTHORISATION

Attached is a Council resolution (Minute) authorising the calling of a public meeting OR forum authorisation from the General Manager OR Director approving the selected consultation process.

.....

2. CONSULTATION STRATEGY

Have you established the appropriate level and category of community consultation in accordance with this Policy? If so, what type and level has been selected?

.....

3. PURPOSE OF THE MEETING/ KEY ISSUES

- (a) The purpose of the meeting has been separately identified and is attached.....
- (b) An agenda for the conduct of the meeting has been completed and is attached
- (c) The Key Issues have been separately identified and are attached

4. VENUE HIRE

A venue for the public meeting has been arranged which satisfies all of the following:

- (a) Access for people with disabilities
- (b) Venue is of sufficient size with available chairs to seat all persons likely to attend
- (c) All necessary equipment is available for the meeting and working (e.g. lighting, Overhead Projector / screen, microphones, air con, PA equipment, etc)
- (d) Budget allocation for equipment and venue hire has been identified.....
- (e) Cabling and connections available for technological presentations ie internet... ..
- (f) Arrangements have been made to collect keys and obtain security access.....

5. COUNCILLOR INVITATION

All Councillors have been notified of the public meeting and given all necessary details in writing of the matters noted in this checklist.

.....

6. INVITEES

A list of persons invited to attend the public meeting has been finalised and is documented and attached hereto.

.....

7. CHAIR OF THE MEETING

The Chairperson of the public meeting is and this person has agreed to chair the public meeting.

.....

8. RECORDING DECISIONS

The officer nominated to record the necessary decisions taken at the meeting is and this person has been advised of this requirement.

.....

9. NOTIFICATION

All forms of public notification have been considered and the following forms of public notification have been taken (please tick as appropriate):

- (a) Internet.....
- (b) Local Newspaper:
 - Quirindi Advocate.....
 - Werris Creek Flyer
- (c) Regional Newspaper - Leader.....
- (d) Correspondence.....
- (e) Letter Box Drops
- (f) Telephone Contact.....
- (g) Other.....

The above checklist has been fully and properly completed and all arrangements for the public meeting are to my satisfaction.

.....
(Signature of Relevant Director)

.....
(Date)

I have been briefed by the above Director and am satisfied that the abovementioned public meeting should proceed as planned.

.....
(Signature of Authorising Officer)

.....
(Date)

*** A COPY OF THIS CHECKLIST MUST BE FORWARDED TO THE GENERAL MANAGER AND THE EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT WHEN COMPLETED.**