

CCSP23 Community Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement Policy



October 2020

This policy sets the governing principles and values that align the strategic direction of the organisation with Goal 5: Effective leadership and governance as detailed in the Shire's Community Strategic Plan.

Objective

The objective of this policy is to provide guidance to Councillors and Officers in the planning, implementation and evaluation of community and stakeholder engagement. This policy facilitates community involvement in Shire projects, plans, strategy and policy development, and ensures inclusivity within informal and legislative consultation processes.

Policy

The Shire of Augusta Margaret River is committed to providing opportunities for all members of the community to participate and contribute to local decision-making processes. We recognise that our community is a source of knowledge and expertise, and this is harnessed to help find solutions to local issues as well as complex shire challenges.

Community engagement is a key part of our commitment to be a transparent and responsive organisation. By bringing the voices of communities and stakeholders into the topics that are important to them, we lead a culture which respects and welcomes community input.

This policy is centred on:

- The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) framework which promotes five context dependant levels of engagement: *Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate and Empower*, and
- Following principles of place-based approaches; including citizen-led, asset based and strength focused engagement responsive to diverse townsites.

The Shire's engagement approach is guided by the following principle statements:

1. We carefully plan engagement design and who to involve

Before we begin engaging, we identify the local places and stakeholders who are directly involved, or likely to be affected by the project. On major projects that set a direction or define a position for the Shire, we encourage broad community participation to ensure that a diverse range of views and ideas are expressed and considered and to best include those likely to be most impacted by the decision. The Shire's Your Say engagement framework has four stages to ensure we deliver a consistent approach to engagement activities. This includes a process of planning (developing an engagement plan), doing (preparing and engaging), reporting (analysing information and providing updates on the engagement) and evaluating (both the process and outcomes).

2. We are committed to working with indigenous stakeholders

The Shire of Augusta Margaret River acknowledges and is committed to working with the Wadandi and Pibelmen People as the traditional custodians of land in the Shire. Building and maintaining strong, respectful partnerships with Aboriginal owners and the

organisations that represent them is a key component of engagement activities undertaken by the Shire.

3. We prioritise accessible, diverse and inclusive engagement

Quality community engagement is well planned and executed, inclusive and accessible to all members of the community. We recognise people engage with the Shire in different ways depending on a number of factors, such as age, background, place and ability. We aim to be responsive to this broad spectrum of needs, by ensuring our processes, venues and information are accessible. This means delivering engagement across online, face to face and written channels, and in the appropriate places, to achieve appropriate community participation. We strive to deliver information that is clear and in easy to understand formats, or that it is available in alternative formats on request. Our engagement events and venues are designed to be accessible whenever practical and achievable.

We are responsive to community needs for engagement and are supportive of projects that are citizen-led. We are aware of our approach with community groups that we are asset based and strength focussed in our work.

4. We consult early and clearly communicate the community's role throughout engagement

We aim to be transparent and make our decision-making process clear. We do this by explaining upfront the process to be undertaken, identifying where there is opportunity for the community and stakeholders to have input, and where the decision-points are. We provide clear, comprehensive and accessible information, written in plain English, to stakeholders throughout the engagement process. Information about our engagement is available on Your Say (yoursay.amrshire.wa.gov.au) and through the Shire's communication channels.

From the outset, we articulate the purpose of our engagement and what will happen as a result of the information gathered. We explain what level of influence the community, stakeholders and Council have on the decision to be made, and any associated limitations or constraints. We consider the requirements for each project and its level of potential impact on the community to determine the required level and timing of engagement. We acknowledge contributions made during the engagement process and let participants know how their feedback was used in our decision-making. Where possible, we build on the outcomes of previous engagement. If the engagement crosses over with a previous engagement process, we explain the outcomes, identify how they relate to the current process and why a new process is required.

5. We deliver engagement methods that are relevant to context and place

The level of engagement will vary depending on the nature and complexity of the project or decision and are overall guided by the Shire's community engagement principles as detailed in this policy. We carefully consider aspects of both qualitative input (such as trends and thoughts) and quantitative input (such as number of participants) when designing engagement methods and reporting back what we heard.

The level of community participation that is appropriate depends on the level and scale of impact. This is determined with consideration of:

- The urgency of the issue and the time available for deliberation and decision-making
- The availability of resources (including staff, facilitation skills, venues, technology and financial resources)
- The need to involve local community groups, specific local places and stakeholders in matters that will affect them
- Complexity of the issues, the history of a project or extent of stakeholders and avoiding consultation fatigue in the community
- Degree that issues are of importance across the shire
- Need to build trust and respect

- Desire to be community-led and making space for communities to develop local initiatives and solutions
- Legislative requirements.

The level of engagement with the community or local government area (LGA) will be determined according to the scope of the issue or project:

Level of impact	Definition	Level	Project examples	Engagement method examples
High impact on LGA	High level of impact or interest on all or a large part of the Shire. Potential high impact on state or regional strategies or directions.	Consult Involve Collaborate Empower	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Strategic Plan • Coastal Management Plan • Decisions that could have major environmental impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large group / stakeholder collaboration • Meetings by invitation • Meetings with Council committees/advisory groups • Online discussion forum or webinars • Citizens jury or panel • Appreciative enquiry • Conversation cafes • Action research and co-design
Low impact on LGA*	Lower level of impact or interest across the whole Shire. Level of interest among various communities or stakeholder groups.	Inform Consult	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to opening times for a facility • Street signage strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey • Workshops or drop in session • News feed or blog
High impact on local area or group	High level of impact on a local area, small community or user group(s) of a specific facility or service. Potential for a high degree of community interest at the local level.	Consult Involve Collaborate Empower	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement to playgrounds • Changes to specific services • Local traffic management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local or interest specific reference group • Local survey • Focus group • Pop up/Market • Public meeting • Drop in session • Personal briefing or interviews
Low impact on local area or group*	Lower level of impact or interest in a local area, small community or user group of a specific facility or service. Only a small change to a facility or service at the local level.	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor bridge or road repairs • Renewal of street furniture • Bushfire mitigation works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted email • Letterbox drop • Social media • News feed or blog • Media release or advertising

** There are some circumstances where some minor statutory planning projects fall under this low impact threshold (also refer to principle 8: Statutory). Examples include Shire-wide omnibus amendments and R-Code compliant development which occurs locally.*

6. We are innovative and always improving our engagement approach

The Shire is working to continuously improve how we engage, and design approaches that are creative, relevant and engaging. We are open to new and innovative engagement methodologies, and tailor our approach to draw people into the process and maximise the reach and impact of our engagement. We evaluate the success of engagement at the end of each project and regularly share improvement opportunities across the organisation.

7. When it is not effective or appropriate to engage

It is not effective for the Shire to engage when the community's feedback cannot influence the outcome. In the following instances, the Shire will inform stakeholders why the decision has been made:

- When community have little influence over the final decision which would be made by Council or another agency
- When Council cannot influence a decision by another agency or party
- When the decision to be made concerns a minor operational matter with minimal impact on the community or stakeholders
- When implementing a project or decision that has already been engaged on, or
- When there is insufficient time due to legislative or legal constraints, or urgent safety issues to be addressed.

The Shire will coordinate the timing of high impact engagements to best manage and avoid consultation fatigue in the community. The Shire will not commence an engagement process between the last Council meeting of the calendar year and the first council meeting of the new-year, unless there is a legal requirement, council direction or other necessity to do so. Although this may occur if there is a specific need to engage absentee landowners who are commonly in the shire area around the summer period. Additional time for engagement will be factored in around public and school holidays.

8. Statutory engagement

In some instances, the Shire is legally required to conduct consultation with the community. In these cases, the Shire will treat the prescribed level of engagement as the minimum standard. The most common instance of this is in relation to development applications and other planning proposals. Relevant legislation includes the Planning and Development (Local Planning Schemes) Regulations 2015, Planning & Development Act 2005, Residential Design Codes, the Bushfire Mitigation Act 1955, Land Administration Act 1997 and the Local Government Act 1995.

There are some circumstances where some minor statutory planning projects fall under the low impact threshold as detailed under principle 5. Examples include Shire-wide omnibus amendments and R-Code compliant development which occurs locally.

Definitions

Engagement – The practice of actively bringing community voices into decisions that affect or interest them, using a range of methods.

Consultation – Seeking and receiving feedback or opinion, usually on a proposed plan or decision, e.g. seeking comment on a draft policy or concept.

Community – A general term for individuals and groups of people not part of an organised structure or group. They may be a community based on location, or interest, or both, e.g. residents of Augusta, people impacted by proposed traffic management measures, young people interested in art.

Level of engagement – Refers to any one of five levels of engagement (inform, consult, involve, collaborate, empower) defined by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum to describe the community's role in any engagement programme. A complete description of the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum can be found online at www.iap2.org.

Place-based approaches – a contemporary philosophy and framework for engagement that targets the specific circumstances of a place and engages local people as active participants in development and implementation, requiring government to share decision-making.

Stakeholders – People who are organised under the banner of a defined group or organisation, often providing representation to a broader group, e.g. Chambers of Commerce, a local school or precinct group.

Application

Responsibility for the implementation of this policy rests with the CEO and staff of the Shire of Augusta-Margaret River. The Policy is to be reviewed every three years.

Document and version control table			
Strategic outcome	Goal 5: Effective leadership and governance		
Responsible Directorate	Corporate and Community Services		
Authority of original issue	Council		
Date of original issue	27 August 2009		
Contact officer	Community and Corporate Planner		
Date of next review	June 2023		
Document No.	N207142	File No.	CSV/86 (CSV/87 – historic)
Version	Date issued	Brief description	
1.0	27 August 2009	Initial Issue - Community Consultation Policy for Non-Planning Matters	
1.1	23 January 2013	Review and update of the Community Consultation Policy for Non-Planning Matters	
2.0	23 November 2016	Revoked policy Local Planning Policy 2 – Consultation Update of the Community Consultation Policy for Non-Planning Matters updated to Community Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement Policy - Review and alignment to IAP2 model by the International Association for Public Participation, and the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australia (IPWEA) Practice Note 8: Levels of Service	
3.0	14 October 2020	Review of policy and template update.	