

CR 3 – Community Engagement

1 Objectives

- To affirm the commitment of the Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes to community engagement and consultation.
- To establish a framework for timely and well-defined community engagement and communication to take place between Council and the Community.
- To ensure information, feedback and other data obtained from the community engagement process is considered and implemented or, if this is not appropriate, the community is advised as to the reasons that this is the case.
- To align Council's Community Engagement Policy with IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum.

2 Scope

Councillors and staff.

3 Definitions

3.1 Community

People who live, work or visit the Shire and are united by at least one common characteristic, such as shared interest, experience or location.

3.2 Engagement

Actively bringing community voices into decisions that affect or interest them using a range of methods.

3.3 Consultation

Seeking and receiving feedback on opinions (e.g. seeking comment on a draft policy).

3.4 Stakeholders

Group, committees and individuals who have a specific interest in the decision or issue under consideration.

3.5 Communications

The process of transmitting information between the government and the community it serves. It involves sharing information about policies, programs, events, and other important issues affecting the local community.

3.6 Inform

To provide our community with objective and clear information that lets them know when something is happening or about to happen.

3.7 Consult

To seek and consider community feedback on alternatives, proposals and/or decisions we need to make.

3.8 Involve

To work directly with our community throughout the process to ensure that community concerns, and aspirations are consistently understood, considered and incorporated where appropriate.

3.9 Collaborate

To partner closely with our community in identifying alternatives, developing solutions and co-designing a jointly agreed outcome.

4 Policy

4.1 Aims of the policy

A community engagement policy is a formal document that an organisation, government agency, or other entity adopts to outline its approach to involving and collaborating with the community it serves. The aims of this Community Engagement Policy are to:

- (a) Provide parameters and guidelines for engagement within the Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes.
- (b) Allow for the community an adequate and appropriate opportunity to:
 - Be kept informed on current issues and proposals that will directly affect the community; and
 - Respond to and comment on specific issues and proposals directly affecting individuals and groups within the community.
- (c) Ensure the stakeholders have opportunity to make an impact on Council decision-making within the scope of the project parameters.
- (d) Outline the general process that will be undertaken in consulting with the community and in considering the related submissions. The process will vary, dependent on the matter at hand.
- (e) Ensure the diversity of community members and their needs is represented during community engagement.
- (f) Improve accountability by setting expectations for how the organisation will be held accountable for its actions and decisions by the community.
- (g) Mitigate conflicts by providing a structured and agreed-upon approach for addressing community concerns and grievances.

It is important to note that the specific content and scope of our Community Engagement Policy may vary depending on the Council's goals, the community's needs, and the nature of the engagement process. An effective Community Engagement Policy should be designed to be flexible, adaptable, and responsive to changing circumstances and community dynamics.

4.2 Key Principles

4.2.1 Accessible and Inclusive

- Encourage the participation of community members affected by, or interested in, a decision that directly impacts them.
- Identify potential barriers to community input, maintaining sensitivity to the needs of particular groups.

4.2.2 Timely and Relevant

- Information will be provided in a timely manner for input before decisions are made.

- Information provided will be appropriate in relation to the scale and complexity of a proposal and nature of feedback being sought.

4.2.3 Well Defined and Transparent

- The information will be accurate and easy to understand.
- The community will be provided with a clear explanation of the engagement process to be undertaken, what level of input and influence they have and how they will be affected.
- Feedback will be provided to the community on what we did, and what decisions were made, and why.

4.3 When we engage with the Community

- On local government strategies, plans, projects and policies that have a direct impact on the community and the people's quality of life. This does not include the development of internal operational policies.
- On changes to local government services or infrastructure.
- When we have a statutory requirement to do so.
- On receipt of direct feedback (compliments or complaints).
- To inform on local government events, functions and other activities within the Shire.

4.4 When we do not engage with the Community

- When a decision had already been made by Council.
- When a decision has already been made by another agency. Council will not always be successful in influencing a decision made by another agency or party but will advocate on behalf of the community when appropriate.
- When developing or reviewing internal organisational policies, procedures or protocols.
- When the decision involves confidential or commercial information.
- When an immediate resolution is required, often in emergency or safety related situations.

4.5 The Decision-Making Process

- 4.5.1 Elected members and the CEO are charged under the *Local Government Act 1993* (The Act) with the responsibility to make decisions based on fact and the merits of the issue without fear or favour and are accountable for their actions and decisions under law.
- 4.5.2 Elected members are also accountable to the people in the community via periodic elections.
- 4.5.3 Decisions may not necessarily reflect the majority view received from community consultation. However, Council is bound to make decisions that are equitable, economically, socially, and environmentally appropriate, timely and in accord with The Act.
- 4.5.4 Decisions must be made for the overall good of the Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes. The Act requires decision-makers to make decisions in the interests of "the good government of the district." This responsibility from time to time puts decision-makers at odds with the expressed views of citizens from a local neighbourhood or community group who may, understandably, take a narrower view of the considerations at hand.
- 4.5.5 There will be a diversity of views on most issues. Council and Shire Officers are wary of claiming to speak for the "community" and wary of those who claim to do so. Council and

Shire Officers recognise that, on most significant issues, diverse views exist that need to be respected and considered by the decision-makers.

All community consultations will clearly outline from the outset the formal method to be used for consulting and any such constraints or limitations associated with the matter under consultation. The mode of consultation will vary according to the matter under consideration.

Please refer to the Community Engagement Toolkit for additional information.

4.6 How we engage

4.6.1 Level of engagement will vary depending on the nature and complexity of the project or decision.

4.6.2 An adaptation of the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum will help determine the level of engagement.

IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum is designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any community engagement program.

The Spectrum show that differing levels of participation are legitimate depending on the goals, time frames, resources and levels of concern in the decision to be made. However, and most importantly, the Spectrum sets out the promise being made to the public at each participation level. The Spectrum is widely respected and used across community engagement in Australia.

4.6.3 There are four levels of engagement: Inform, Consult, Involve, and Collaborate. This is expanded upon in the Community Engagement Toolkit.

4.7 Actions after Consultation or Engagement

At the end of the engagement process, the data will be reviewed and evaluated in terms of whether parts, or all of it, will impact decision-making. The community will be informed of why or why not recommendations, suggestions, criticisms or other input impacted the outcome or outcomes.

5 Applicable Legislation and Documents

Statutory Power <i>(Acts, Regulations, Local Laws, TPS)</i>	s.2.7(2)(b) <i>Local Government Act 1995</i> – The council is to determine the local government's policies
Shire Policies	CR5 – <i>Social Media</i>
Related Documents	External Communications Framework Community Engagement Toolkit Community Engagement Templates 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 Shire Branding and Style Guide Strategic Community Plan 2021 - 2031

Related Procedure	<i>Community Engagement Toolkit (including Community Engagement Templates)</i>

6 Administration

Original Adoption Date	Insert date
Last Reviewed	Insert date
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