

CE 8 – Community Engagement

1 Objectives

This policy affirms the commitment of the Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes to community engagement and consultation.

The policy establishes a framework for timely and well-defined community engagement and communication to take place between Council and the Community.

2 Scope

All 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.

4 Policy

4.1 Aims of the Policy

The aims of this policy are to:

- (a) Provide parameters and guidelines for engagement within the Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes.
- (b) Allow the community an adequate and appropriate opportunity to:
 - Be kept informed on current issues and proposals that will potentially affect the community; and
 - Respond to and comment on issues and proposals affecting individuals and groups within the community.

- (c) Ensure that the consultation includes people affected by a Council decision;
- (d) Ensure the stakeholders have opportunity to make an impact on Council decision-making within the scope of the project parameters.
- (e) Clearly define the levels of community consultation required on issues affecting the community;
- (f) Detail the requirements for consultation for the related levels of community impact; and
- (g) Outline the process that will be undertaken in consulting with the community and in considering the related submissions.

4.2 Key Principles

4.2.1 Accessible and Inclusive

- Encourage the participation of community members affected by, or interested in, a decision.
- Identify potential barriers to community input, maintaining sensitivity to the needs of particular groups.
- Make it as easy as possible for community to participate and provide input.

4.2.2 Timely and Relevant

- Method of engagement will be appropriate for the task.
- Information is provided in a timely manner for input before decisions are made.
- Information provided is appropriate in relation to the scale and complexity of a proposal and nature of feedback being sought.

4.2.3 Well Defined and Transparent

- Information is accurate and easy to understand.
- The community is 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 is provided to the community on what we did, and what decisions were made, and why.

4.3 When we engage with the Community

- On strategies, plans, projects and policies that have a direct impact on the community and their quality of life.
- On changes to services or infrastructure.
- In line with statutory requirements.

4.4 When we do not engage with the Community

- When a decision had already been made by Council or another agency (other than to communicate final decision).
- 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 possible.
- When developing or reviewing internal 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

Elected members and the CEO are charged under the *Local Government Act 1995* (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. Elected members are also accountable to the people in the community via periodic elections.

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.

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.

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 taken into account by the decision-makers.

All community consultations will clearly outline from the outset any such constraints or limitations associated with the matter under consultation.

4.6 How we engage

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

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

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 Accountabilities & Responsibilities

5.1 Council is accountable for:

- Ensuring the organisation has in place a lawful, transparent, and accountable policy framework, supported by a suite of compliant and appropriate policies and procedures.
- Endorsing (or not) each organisational policy document in a timely and effective manner.
- Delegating implementation of each policy document to the CEO.

5.2 The CEO is accountable for ensuring the development, implementation, monitoring and review of this policy document, in accord with governing legislation and Council directives.

5.3 The Executive Management Team and Managers is responsible for:

- Ensuring that all employees under their direction comply with this policy document.
- Enacting process to redress non-compliance with this policy document.

5.4 All employees are individually responsible for complying with this policy document.

6 Legislation, Policy & Other Related Documents

Act	<i>Local Government Act 1995</i> s.2.7(2)(b) – The council is to determine the local government’s policies
Regulation	N/A
Local Law	N/A
Policy	CE 7 – Social Media Policy
Procedure	Community Engagement Toolkit (including Community Engagement Templates)
Other 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

7 Version Control

Version	Date	Author	Amendments
V1	29 November 2018	T Clynch	Original Document
V2	02 November 2023	N Gibbs	Three-year Review
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