



GREATER SHEPPARTON CITY COUNCIL

**COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT
POLICY**



**GREATER
SHEPPARTON**

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

Version:	2
Business Unit:	Communications & Engagement
Responsible Officer:	Manager Communications & Engagement
Adopted By:	Council 21 November 2023
Next Review:	October 2025

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Community Engagement Policy is to formalise Council's commitment to engaging with the Greater Shepparton community through the use of appropriate, effective and inclusive community engagement practices.

This will be achieved through:

- Our community engagement principles and our commitment to the community, which underpins and guides our approach to community engagement.
- Our clear approach to conduct meaningful, equitable and inclusive engagement, taking into consideration the significance and complexity of projects and matters, and level of interest, impact and influence that the stakeholders have on decisions being made.
- Consistent application of this policy to all planning, implementation and evaluation of all community engagement processes and activities undertaken by Council, including work undertaken by consultants and volunteers.

The policy recognises the need to have a consistent approach to community engagement methods and processes, and the scale of community engagement can be dependent upon the topic/issue and/or any legislative requirements.

2. OBJECTIVE

- To inform and strengthen Council's community engagement by encouraging a consistent, responsive and considered community engagement approach and methodology with the ultimate aim of strengthening our community through leadership, decision making, and advocacy.
- To ensure community engagement is integrated into Council activities to inform decision making, foster relationships, and encourage capacity development.

3. SCOPE

This Policy outlines Council's position, role and commitment in regard to community engagement across the organisation and is applied at all levels.

This policy applies to all Council Officers, Councillors, and Council engaged consultants providing a guide for all forms of engagement with the Greater Shepparton community.

4. DEFINITIONS

Reference term	Definition
Accessibility	Undertaking community engagement in a manner that considers needs of individuals and specific groups of people – for example: Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, vulnerable, aged and disabled.
Community	People who live, work, visit or utilise services and amenities in the Greater Shepparton local government area, recognising the Greater Shepparton community is very diverse.
Community engagement	An interactive process providing a range of opportunities for community to inform decision making, foster relationships and encourage capacity development.
Consultative engagement	A term used to describe engagements at the level of ‘inform’ or ‘consult’ on the IAP2 Spectrum of Engagement, with the related promise of keeping the community informed or seeking feedback on strategies, policies and plans.
Deliberative engagement	A process that involves an informative and engaging dialogue with an inclusive, diverse and genuine representation from our community, where considered views and joint outcomes can be developed. Participants are provided with a breadth of inputs, information and enough time and opportunity to engage and discuss issues in depth in a welcoming and respectful environment, then provide recommendations and feedback which is reviewed and adopted by Council.
IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation	The International Association for Public Participation’s Spectrum which helps define the public’s role in any participation process.

POLICY

4.1 Community Engagement Policy

a. *Our commitment*

- i. We will aim to ensure the purpose of our engagement is clear, relevant and the methods used are well suited to generate highly effective community engagement.
- ii. We will aim to provide information that is easy to understand and accessible.
- iii. We will seek to act transparently and use a range of methods to enable everyone to have a voice on matters of importance to them. We seek to provide engagement opportunities that are mutually respectful, undertaken in reasonable timeframes and with a shared understanding of how the input received will inform decision making processes.
- iv. We will value the diversity within community and all participants' knowledge, expertise and experiences, acknowledging that everyone has different views and needs.
- v. We will aim to undertake evaluation processes to continually improve our approach to community engagement.
- vi. We seek to report back to our community in a timely manner about how their input was considered and influenced the final outcome.
- vii. Where appropriate we will use information provided by community engagement to advocate on behalf of our community to relevant parties.
- viii. We will recognise there will be differences of opinion.
- ix. We will conduct all community engagement within legislative requirements.
- x. We will ensure our community engagement practices are in line with Council's values.

b. *Engagement principles*

Where possible, we will coordinate and align engagement across population groups, localities and priorities to avoid duplication, engagement fatigue and recognising the value and importance of the communities' time and input.

Council's community and stakeholder engagement approach is guided by the community engagement principles set out under the *Local Government Act 2020*, and are listed below:

- community engagement process must have a clearly defined objective and scope.
- participants in community engagement must have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation.
- participants in community engagement must be diverse and representative of the persons and groups affected by the matter that is the subject of the community engagement.
- participants in community engagement are entitled to reasonable support to enable meaningful and informed engagement.
- participants in community engagement are informed of the ways in which the community engagement process will influence Council decision making.

c. *Types of community engagement*

Engagement practices can largely be considered as ‘consultative’ or ‘deliberative’. Consultative engagement is where the engagement level is at ‘inform’ or ‘consult’ on the IAP2 Spectrum and deliberative engagement is where the engagement level is at ‘Involve’, ‘Collaborate’ and ‘Empower’.

- i. Consultative Engagement includes:
 - information provided to the community to help them to understand a project or a matter.
 - feedback sought from the community such as ideas, thoughts and insights which are considered by Council and the outcome of the engagement is reported back to the community.
- ii. Deliberative Engagement principles include:
 - authentic engagement with the community;
 - good representation of the community in engagement activities;
 - clear demonstration of how all views have been considered;
 - accessible and relevant information available to the community to ensure the decision-making process and the community’s level of influence is clear in each instance and that participants are fully informed.

d. *Legislative environment and requirements*

Under the *Local Government Act 2020*, there are four principles that need to be applied to the engagement undertaken for strategic documents and plans such as the four-year Council Plan, Community Vision, Financial Plan, and Asset Plan.

The following is a summary of how Council will meet the engagement requirements as outlined in the Act, however it must be noted that this list is not exhaustive of all documents, plans or processes but to be used as a guide.

Strategic document, plan or process	Minimum engagement required
Council Plan	Deliberative Engagement
Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan	Deliberative Engagement
Community Vision	Deliberative Engagement
Financial Plan	Deliberative Engagement
Asset Plan	Deliberative Engagement
Making of local laws	Consultative Engagement
Budget	Consultative Engagement
Governance Rules	Consultative Engagement
Acquiring, purchasing, selling, exchanging or leasing land	Consultative Engagement
Other Council policies, strategies and plans that directly impact the community	Consultative Engagement

Strategic document, plan or process	Minimum engagement required
Projects that create new assets or change service levels	Consultative Engagement
Submissions process – replaces section 223 of the Local Government Act 1989	Follow the provisions in the Local Government Act 1989

Community engagement relating to planning permit applications and planning scheme amendments is outside of the scope of this policy, as these processes are governed by the *Planning and Environment Act 1987(Vic)* and associated regulations. However, these processes should be interpreted in accordance with human rights principles as mandated by the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)*.

4.2 Strategic Link

Community engagement is a core process that needs to underpin the Council Plan and Integrated Planning Framework and ensures that community needs and aspirations are considered in developing and implementing Council's strategic directions and priorities.

4.3 Procedure

Greater Shepparton City Council Community Engagement Procedure will outline the process and procedure for conducting community engagement.

4.4 Toolkit

Greater Shepparton City Council Community Engagement Toolkit will provide Council Officers with the tools to conduct community engagement.

5. RELATED POLICIES AND CORPORATE POLICYS

- Community Engagement Procedure
- Community Planning Policy 55.POL1
- Council Plan 2021-2025
- Emergency Communications Plan, Greater Shepparton Municipal Emergency Management Plan
- Relevant Code of Conduct
- Language Services Corporate Procedure 02.PRO2
- Privacy Policy 37.POL12
- Right to Make a Submission Corporate Procedure

6. RELATED LEGISLATION

- Local Government Act 2020
- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic).

- Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008

7. REVIEW

The Manager Communications & Engagement will be responsible for reviewing this Policy every two years, and/ or when required.

8. ATTACHMENTS

DOCUMENT REVISIONS

Version #	Date Adopted	Date Effective
1	16 February 2021	
2	13 September 2023	