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MOUNT ALEXANDER
SHIRE COUNCIL

Policy Category:	Community Development		
Title:	**Community Engagement**		
Adoption Method:	☐ CEO ☑ Council	**Date Adopted:**	25 September 2012
Review Period:	☐ Annually ☑ Other	**Date Last Reviewed:**	
Responsible Officer:	Director Economic and Social Development	**Next Review Date:**	September 2015
CEO Signature:		**Date:**	12 December 2012

Purpose / Objective:

This policy outlines Council's commitment to engaging with the community and its intent to ensure clear and thorough communication from the start to the end of each community engagement undertaking.

Definition:

Community engagement is defined by the International Association for Public Participation Australasia (IAP2) as a two way process by which:

- the aspirations, concerns, needs and values of citizens and communities are incorporated at all levels and in all sectors in policy development, planning, decision-making, service delivery and assessment; and
- governments and other business and civil society organisations involve citizens, clients, communities and other stakeholders in these processes[1]

Community engagement and community consultation are not interchangeable terms. Consultation is one element of community engagement. The IAP2 has developed a public participation spectrum which shows levels of participation from minimum to maximum public impact. This spectrum has five stages of participation which are: inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower.

Who is Affected by this Policy?

This policy applies to Councillors, staff and consultants responsible for Community Engagement undertaken for or on behalf of Council.

Background / Reasons for Policy:

Democratic governance exists when Council governs for and on behalf of its local community. Engagement between Council and the community aims to better understand the aspirations of communities and provides people with ways to have input into the processes of setting priorities and future directions for Council. Council needs to ensure that all groups in the Shire have an equal opportunity to participate and be engaged in Council processes.

[1] IAP2 Brisbane Declaration http://www.iap2.org.au/resources/un-declaration

Good community engagement should:

- Lead to better decisions
- Ensure stronger community ownership
- Mean there is greater likelihood of sharing the benefits and reducing win/lose outcomes
- Encourage a significant number of stakeholders to participate
- Build community leadership and resilience.

Scope:

This policy refers to all community engagement processes undertaken by Council through Council's role as a service provider, planner, advocate, facilitator, law enforcer and regulatory body.

Principles:

The following principles have been developed to inform Council's community engagement practice.

Genuine

Council will be upfront and explain the level of influence the community can have in the community engagement process and will highlight the negotiable and non-negotiable elements of any community engagement.

Focus and clarity

Council will provide clear statements about the focus and purpose of each community engagement activity.

Inclusiveness and accessibility

Council will facilitate processes for a diverse range of perspectives to be heard. Community engagement processes will recognise that there are a number of groups within the community who have particular requirements to enable them to participate effectively in engagement processes and will seek to accommodate and include these groups.

Provision of information and feedback

Council will provide sufficient, easy to read and accessible information so that community members are given the opportunity to provide informed input in the engagement. People participating in a community engagement process will be advised on issues of interest or concern and of the outcome.

Timing

Council will ensure that community engagement is timed so that results are able to influence the policy, planning and decision making process.

Transparency

Council is committed to open and transparent communication with the community to ensure meaningful input into Council's planning and prioritisation processes.

Evaluation

Council will evaluate community engagement processes against the goals as articulated in each community engagement plan.

Resourcing

Council will consider the effective resourcing for community engagement at the start of each new project.

Policy Content:

1. All of Council's community engagement processes are in accordance with the principles outlined in this policy document.
2. Council's Community Engagement Framework is used to guide and inform the community engagement practice of Council.

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3. All projects developed in accordance with Council's project management framework have a community engagement plan which is developed from the brief checklist in Council's Community Engagement Framework.
4. Council reports include discussion of community engagement that has taken place or planned in relation to the subject of the report and how this has informed the recommendations of the report.
5. Council commits to ongoing training of officers and Councillors to undertake effective community engagement.

Related Documents:

- Youth Engagement Charter
- Social Media Policy (draft)
- Staff values
- Customer Services Action Plan
- Community Engagement Framework
- Universal Access & Equity Policy
- Applicant Objector Meeting Policy

Related Legislation:

Victorian Charter of Human Rights

Local Government Act 1989 Section 3D

References:

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation http://www.iap2.org.au/resources/spectrum

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IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

Developed by the International Association for Public Participation

INCREASING LEVEL OF PUBLIC IMPACT

INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:
To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the Public:	Promise to the Public:	Promise to the Public:	Promise to the Public:	Promise to the Public:
We will keep You informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Example Techniques to Consider:	Example Techniques to Consider:	Example Techniques to Consider:	Example Techniques to Consider:	Example Techniques to Consider:
• Fact sheets • Web Sites • Open houses	• Public comment • Focus groups • Surveys • Public meetings	• Workshops • Deliberate polling	• Citizen Advisory Committees • Consensus building • Participatory decision-making	• Citizen juries • Ballots • Delegated decisions

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