

4. DRAFT COUNCIL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

Source: Governance, Strategy & Performance – Corporate Affairs
Director: Rebecca Leonard

Purpose

1. For Council to endorse the release of the draft Council Community Engagement Policy for community consultation.

Background

2. Council is committed to best-practice community engagement which encourages and enhances accessible, diverse and inclusive community participation in decision-making. A draft Community Engagement Policy (the draft Policy) has been developed to reflect Council's commitment.
3. The draft Policy will supersede the City's existing Community Engagement Policy and coincides with the release of the new Local Government Act 2020 (the Act) which sets out a requirement for Councils to adopt and maintain a community engagement policy.

Key Matters

4. Community engagement is an essential element of good governance. It supports the community to consider, respond to and participate in decision making.
5. Under the Act, Councils must adopt a Community Engagement Policy by 1 March 2021.
6. The draft Policy (**Attachment 2**) provides guidance about why we engage, when we will engage, who we will engage with, and how we will engage.
7. The draft Policy:
 - 7.1 Ensures people who live, work and do business across our region have the opportunity to engage with Council and the City about upcoming decisions;
 - 7.2 Promotes effective, authentic and accessible community engagement as a mechanism to driving greater trust, stronger relationships and better outcomes for Council and the communities it represents;
 - 7.3 Establishes transparent processes to show how community input is used to inform and influence decision-making; and
 - 7.4 Guides Council to meet its legislated engagement obligations with the community giving effect to the engagement principles under the Act.
8. The draft Policy will be available for community feedback, with consultation open for a period of no less than 6 weeks.

Recommendation

9. **That Council endorse the draft Community Engagement Policy for community consultation.**

Attachment 1

Financial Implications

1. There are no specific financial implications for this report, however, future community engagement activities, including City officer resources and reasonable support for participants will need to be budgeted for.

Community Engagement

2. An engagement plan has been developed to ensure that the Community Engagement Policy is developed in consultation with the community.
3. The engagement plan sets out three stages of engagement in the development of the Community Engagement Policy:
 - 3.1 Stage one – Engagement Practice Review (internal employee and external community surveys undertaken to gather sentiment on current engagement practice and recommendations for future practice);
 - 3.2 Stage two – Pre-draft Community Engagement Policy development consultation (internal stakeholder and Council liaison to inform the draft Policy and provide feedback and recommendations for the further development of the draft Policy); and
 - 3.3 Stage three – draft Community Engagement Policy consultation. Once endorsed by Council, the draft Policy will be published, and a number of diverse engagement activities delivered to provide accessible and inclusive engagement opportunities.

Social Equity Considerations

4. The draft Community Engagement Policy recognises the importance of equity, access and inclusion as a key priority to best practice engagement.
5. Social equity, diverse and inclusive participation, has been considered during workshops and interviews and considered in the development of this draft policy.

Policy/Legal/Statutory Implications

6. The development of the Council's Community Engagement Policy must adhere to the legislated requirements set out in the Local Government Act 2020.
7. The Community Engagement Policy must give effect to the legislated requirements set out in the Local Government Act 2020.
8. Council must adhere to the legislative requirements set out in the Local Government Act 2020 in the implementation of the Community Engagement Policy.
9. The Local Government Act 2020 requirements have been considered and outlined in the development of this policy, the advice and guidance of the City Legal department has been sought and incorporated in the draft policy.

Alignment to Council Plan

10. Community engagement relates to the majority of areas of Council Plan. Community engagement is central to the development, implementation and evaluation of Council Plan.

Conflict of Interest

11. No City officer involved in the preparation of this report has declared a general or material interest in this matter.

Risk Assessment

12. Community engagement is directly linked and impacts the City's reputation and trust with the people who live, work and invest in Greater Geelong.

Environmental Implications

13. No environmental implications will result from the recommendation of this report.