

# City of Greater Geraldton Council Policy

## 1.6 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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### SUSTAINABILITY THEME

#### Community

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### OBJECTIVES

Council is committed to engaging with the community to:

- Respond to our external environment by continually adapting our approach to community engagement to reflect how our community communicates and engages with the City and Council;
- Respond to the increasing complexity of public policy issues which, increases the need to provide information to the community about the complexity and gather their response;
- Provide the public with a clear understanding of Council's commitment to community and stakeholder engagement;
- Continually identify opportunities to engage with the community and integrate the engagement process in project planning and service delivery;
- Ensure the community's expectation to be engaged in the decision making process is met with appropriate, consistent and coordinated engagement;
- Ensure our diverse communities of interest have the opportunity to engage in decision-making processes; and
- Report community engagement outcomes.

### POLICY STATEMENT

The City and Council will engage with the community to better understand their wants, needs and aspirations; address issues affecting their wellbeing; and to identify and deliberate solutions to commonly recognised problems.

This Policy defines the principles and mechanisms for engaging with the community.

#### Rationale

Community engagement strengthens relationships and builds trust between the City, Council and the community. It enables informed decision making in relation to strategic policy, planning and prioritisation of resource allocation. An engaged community is an outcome and is characteristic of good democratic government. Good governance reflects contributions to the decision making process by those impacted by the decision

### POLICY DETAILS

Community engagement occurs under different circumstances and for different reasons:

1. Community engagement may occur:
  - 1.1. Where a proposed change to Council strategic direction, functions or programs may significantly affect the community in terms of the economy, lifestyle, environment, wellbeing or amenity;

- 1.2 When developing new or reviewing existing strategies, plans and Capital Works;
- 1.3 When introducing a new service, discontinuing an existing service or substantially changing or reviewing a service that may significantly affect how services are provided;
- 1.4 When proposals are made for changing the way in which public space looks, is used or enjoyed;
- 1.5 When the community raises a significant issue with Council for deliberation and there are likely to be competing community interests and adverse media and public attention;
- 1.6 During the planning, development and delivery of major projects and the capital works plan; and/or
- 1.7 When we are required to do so by law.
2. Community engagement isn't always applicable, or possible, due to time constraints and generally may not occur when:
  - 2.1 An immediate resolution is required;
  - 2.2 Technical or other expertise is required;
  - 2.3 The City is responding in an emergency where public health and safety are at risk;
  - 2.4 Decisions relate to the City's day-to-day business operations; and/or Legal, commercial or confidential restrictions are involved.
3. The policy does not apply to advocacy campaigns and does not negate the need to adhere to statutory and legal obligations regarding community consultation.
4. The level of community engagement will vary depending on the nature of the project/proposal and impact it may have. The following Public Participation Spectrum will be used to determine the appropriate level of engagement.

	Low Level	Mid Level	High Level		
	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	*Empower
Goal	One-way communication to provide balanced and objective information to assist understanding about something that is going to happen or has already happened.	Two-way communication process aimed at obtaining feedback on ideas, alternatives and proposals to inform decision making.	Participatory process designed to help identify issues and views to ensure that concerns and aspirations are understood and considered.	Working together to develop an understanding of all issues and interests to work out alternatives and identify preferred solutions.	To give the community the knowledge, means, responsibility and accountability so the final decision can be placed in their hands.
Role of the community	Listen	Contribute	Participate	Partner	Lead

Table 1: Public Participation Spectrum.

\*In the Local Government context, the highest level of 'empower' is rarely achievable or appropriate as the ultimate authority to make final decisions rests with the elected Councillors.

5. Inform' is the core business of the Corporate Communications team and will be undertaken with the assistance of relevant staff utilising available channels including social media.

## **POLICY PRINCIPLES**

Councillors will endeavor to support and observe community engagement activities. The choice of engagement method and outcomes will be reported to Council through Agenda Items and Briefing Notes.

### **COUNCIL'S COMMITMENT TO ENGAGE WITH THE COMMUNITY:**

See the City of Greater Geraldton 2031 Strategic Community Plan Leadership Section 4.6. A community that is genuinely engaged and informed in a timely and appropriate manner.

### **RISKS**

All community engagement involves levels of risk. The financial, legal, social and reputational risks of engagement activities and their outputs must be identified and mitigated in the planning stages.

### **APPROVALS**

All community engagement activities must be approved by the Executive Management Team.

All high-level engagement activities must also secure from EMT and/or Council a determination of the extent or degree of responsibility and level of accountability the community will be given in regard to the output and/or final decision making.

### **REPORTING AND EVALUATION**

Results of community engagement activities on significant matters must be reported to Council, participants and the broader community.

To ensure engagement activities meet their objectives and are continually improved upon, mid and high-level engagement activities must conduct post activity participant surveys and all high-level engagement activities require an evaluation report.

## **KEY TERM DEFINITION**

**Accountability** - the tasks where someone is answerable for their actions.

**Authority** - the power to make and enforce decisions.

**Community** - a group of people who share something in common. It may be location, interests, culture, language, beliefs, age, ethnicity, values or traditions.

**Community Engagement** is the process of working together with the community to address issues affecting their wellbeing and to identify solutions to commonly recognised problems. The process takes into consideration the aspirations, concerns, needs and values of the community and incorporates them in the decision making process.

**Participation** - involving the community in a participatory process.

**Responsibility** - the tasks one is given the means to accomplish or perform.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for the implementation of this policy.

Community engagement is the responsibility of all Council service areas, teams and employees. As such, engagement activities must be considered and resourced via project budgets. To ensure the effective application of engagement principles and processes, a Community Engagement Framework and Toolkit have been developed to provide guidance for Council employees.

## WORKPLACE INFORMATION

*Local Government Act 1995 - Section 1.3 – Content and intent.*

- (2) This Act is intended to result in —
- a. better decision making by local governments; and
  - b. greater community participation in the decisions and affairs of local governments.

*Local Government Act 1995 - Section 2.10 – The Role of Councillors.*

A Councillor:

- a. represents the interests of electors, ratepayers and residents of the district; provides leadership and guidance to the community in the district;
- b. facilitates communication between the community and the council;
- c. participates in the local government’s decision-making processes at council and committee meetings; and
- d. performs such other functions as are given to a Councillor by this Act or any other written law.

*Local Government Act 1995 - Section 2.7 – Role of Council*

- (1) The council —
- a. governs the local government’s affairs; and
  - b. is responsible for the performance of the local government’s functions.
- (2) Without limiting subsection (1), the council is to —
- a. oversee the allocation of the local government’s finances and resources; and
  - b. determine the local government’s policies.

*Local Government Act 1995 - Section 3.1 – General Function*

1. The general function of a local government is to provide for the good government of persons in its district;
2. The scope of the general function of a local government is to be construed in the context of its other functions under this Act or any other written law and any constraints imposed by this Act or any other written law on the performance of its functions; and
3. A liberal approach is to be taken to the construction of the scope of the general function of a local government.

Statutory Compliance

The City has a number of functional areas where community engagement or public consultation processes are governed by legislative requirements. It is acknowledged that these legislative processes are the minimum requirement regarding public consultation processes and are to be utilised in conjunction with the Community Engagement Framework.

## POLICY ADMINISTRATION

Directorate		Officer	Review Cycle	Next Due
Infrastructure Services		Communications Officer - Engagement	Biennial	2023
Version	Decision Reference	Synopsis		
3.	<a href="#">IS247</a> 26/10/2021	Policy Review		