

Council Policy CP042 Community Engagement Policy			
<b>Officer</b>	Community Engagement Officer	<b>Owner</b>	Creative Communities
<b>Review Frequency</b>	Annually	<b>Next Review</b>	
<b>Council Resolution number and date</b>			
<b>Mayor</b>	Cr Ian Carpenter	<b>Chief Executive Officer</b>	Tony Brun

## OBJECTIVE

To ensure that meaningful community engagement is integrated with the City's planning, policies and activities and inform City decision making.

To ensure that community engagement is coordinated and integrated in a consistent manner across the City.

To assist in strengthening the partnerships between Council and community.

## SCOPE

The policy defines the principles of community engagement and mechanisms for engagement. The policy can be applied as necessary to all City activities.

### The value of Community Engagement

To enable a full decision making process, the City may consider and report on a cross-section of information:

- regional guidelines and national/international best practice;
- local values;
- professional assessments of local needs; and
- resource availability.

Community engagement is the key mechanism for the identification of local values and local needs that form part of decision making for a preferred approach. During the community engagement and reporting processes City staff must be mindful of the resource constraints and best practice standards that may be applicable.

### Engagement Context

Engagement and participation activities occur under different circumstances and for different reasons. The type and level of community engagement will vary between activities and projects and the level of engagement may be more detailed depending on the nature of the project/proposal and the level of impact of that project/proposal. The Community Engagement Spectrum, see Appendix One, provides a guide to the selecting the appropriate level that should be considered.

In addition to ensuring internal City control of collected information, correct analysis, and transparent reporting to Council bodies, good community engagement is able to:

- identify stakeholders – an engagement process identifies those with an interest in a decision making area, and helps define their expectations;
- define the agenda – sets boundaries for the questions to be asked, encouraging debate around a structured set of opinions;
- allow for two-way discussion – dialogue assists in reaching choices acceptable to a wide range of interests;
- improve information flow – in addition to helping the community to interact and discuss issues through the careful planning of public meetings, a wide range of mechanisms are used to invite stakeholders to consultations;
- enable others to act – good community engagement may lead to formation of groups that can attract additional resources and take projects forward, reducing the need for local government to ‘do and be everything’; and
- ensure a plan for evaluation – we need to learn so that our engagement methods, skills of our staff and the expectations of our community can evolve together.

## DEFINITIONS

### Community Engagement

Community engagement is the broad and ongoing range of interactions between Council and the whole of the local community to build capacity and partnerships. An engaged community is an outcome and is a characteristic of a participatory, effective, democratic governance model. The term community engagement is often used interchangeably with the term community consultation however, consultation is only one level of engagement. Community engagement refers to the different ways in which a local government authority connects with members of its diverse community. For the purpose of this document community engagement occurs on a spectrum of three levels; inform, consult and participation.

### Inform

One way communication that provides balanced and objective information to assist the community in understanding the problems, alternatives, and/or solutions. This usually occurs once a decision has been made.

### Consult

A process of obtaining public feedback on analysis and/or alternatives that will help determine how a project or policy will be implemented.

### Participate

Participation is achieved by involving the community in a participatory process designed to help identify issues and views to ensure that concerns and aspirations are understood and considered prior to decision making. Participation also recognises and acknowledges the importance of working *collaboratively* with the community and stakeholders to develop an understanding of all issues and interests to work out alternatives and identify preferred solutions. Participation is achieved through a range of deliberative techniques that encourages or enables participants to take responsibility for their contribution to solutions and helps shape the way in which a policy or activity is decided upon and implemented.

### Policy

All strategic planning and major projects will make specific reference to this policy and choose the level of engagement that is appropriate to the circumstances. The choice of engagement

method and outcomes will be reported to Council through reports and briefings where applicable.

### 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 Guide.

## **POLICY PRINCIPLES**

The following principles will guide processes for community engagement:

- a. Open and Transparent: is accessible and encourages participation with no hidden agendas.
- b. Genuine Commitment: there is a clear sense that there will be follow through and that the community will be kept informed on how input has been used in decision making;
- c. Inclusive: all voices and opinions are valued and considered. Everyone is respectful of views and values of those involved in the process;
- d. Consensus Seeking: in style and approach of the dialogue; and
- e. Proactive: an open, forward looking process, using every engagement experience as a learning opportunity to improve our community engagement practices.

## **WORKPLACE INFORMATION**

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1995

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Community Engagement Policy owner is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The CEO shall oversee the implementation of this Policy.

All strategic planning and major projects will make specific reference to this policy, and choose the level of engagement that is appropriate to the circumstances.

Councillors will endeavour to support and participate in community engagement activities. The choice of engagement method and outcomes arising from Community Engagement will be reported to Council through reports and briefings.

### Council's Commitment to Engage with the Community

1. Council decision making  
Reports presented to Council for a decision require that consideration has been given to the appropriate level of Community Engagement and reporting on the outcomes of the Community Engagement. This information is included to assist Council in their decision making.
2. Customer Satisfaction Surveys:  
The City conducts regular Customer Satisfaction Surveys which includes questions regarding the level of satisfaction with the way the City engages with the Community. Data from Customer Satisfaction Surveys ensures Council's commitment to Community Engagement is monitored and opportunities for improvement recognised and progressed.

3. The 2029 and Beyond Community Charter

'Ongoing and consistent community engagement where constructive feedback results in action.'

'Community involvement in decision making so it is collaborative, based on integrity, accountability and transparency.'

4. City of Greater Geraldton Strategic Community Plan 2011-2021

'Opportunities for Creativity'

'Recognised internationally as a leader in the integration of research, sustainability and community empowerment.'

'Investigate and develop innovative models for community engagement and empowerment.'

'Leading the Opportunities'

'Maintain meaningful engagement, consultation and deliberative processes with the community.'