

Community Engagement

Policy Owner: Group Manager Community Connections	
Date Last Adopted: 29 April 2014	Review Date: 27 July 2026

1. Policy Statement/Objective(s)

The purpose of this Policy is to guide a sustainable best-practice approach to community engagement processes and outcomes through encouraging consistency across the organisation.

The Community Engagement Policy will assist Council in achieving the organisational goals set out in the Communication and Engagement Strategy 2020-2024 and the community objectives that are defined in the Community Strategic Plan.

Council recognises that consultation can provide opportunities for community members to meet and hear each other, and that positive outcomes can occur through solving problems together. This Policy sets out a vision for community engagement in Shellharbour City and is underpinned by IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum, these levels of engagement are identified as; Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, and Empower.

Shellharbour City Council is committed to:

- Ensuring our engagement process is genuine and human.
- Listening to our community, respecting different views to gain a better understanding of the needs of the community.

Create meaningful engagement opportunities that result in an active and connected community, recognising local knowledge and expertise.

Providing engagement opportunities that are accessible and inclusive. Incorporating opportunities for community consultation in council decision making as much as possible. Meeting the requirements of the Local Government Act.

2. Scope

This policy provides a framework that underpins Council's engagement activities.

This policy applies to all Councillors and Council staff; it defines the roles and responsibilities of engaging with the community and suggests the approach for engagement.

The policy is informed by the internationally recognised 'Public Participation Spectrum' developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) which outlines various levels of participation. When planning for community engagement Council staff will need to determine the most appropriate level of participation, depending on the nature and

complexity of the project/issue. Effective application of this Policy will therefore involve a range of approaches and methods of community engagement.

3. References

Shellharbour City Council Communications and Engagement Strategy
Shellharbour City Council Community Strategic Plan
Local Government Act
International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)
NSW Social Justice Principles

4. External/Internal Consultations

Manager Community Engagement and Activation
Governance Manager

5. Definitions

Community	Refers to the people who live, work, visit and/or own property or businesses in the Shellharbour LGA
Community Engagement	Refers to the processes and practices that Council uses to inform the community, gather feedback from the community to support decision making; and work with the community to implement a range of projects/programs/services.
Stakeholder	Is a person or group that has an interest in or concern in an issue or project.

6. Variation and Review

Council reserves the right to review, vary or revoke this policy.

Review History -

Date Policy first adopted – version 1	19 May 2009
Date amendment adopted – version 2	30 August 2011
Date amendment adopted – version 3	29 April 2014
Reviewed with minor changes not requiring re-adoption – version 4	31 March 2017
Reviewed with minor changes – version 5	1 August 2020
Review with minor changes – version 6	27 July 2023

7. Policy

Shellharbour City Council is committed to ensuring that community engagement is integrated into Council's core business to support decision making, build relationships and strengthen communication channels and continually seek improvement opportunities.

COLLABORATION

ACCOUNTABILITY

INTEGRITY

RESPECT

SUSTAINABILITY

The implementation of this Policy is supported by the Communications and Engagement Strategy and underpinned by the International Public Participation Spectrum (IAP2) and the Social Justice Principles.

- 7.1. Council will provide genuine engagement opportunities for all members of the Shellharbour community to strengthen relationships, build community capacity and facilitate informed and transparent decision making.
- 7.2. Council will ensure that the purpose of its engagement is clear, and stakeholders understand how their feedback will inform decision making processes.
- 7.3. Council will ensure that community engagement activities are well planned, coordinated, accessible and inclusive.
- 7.4. Council will proactively engage with the community using a range of methods as well as seek out new, innovative ways of engaging with people (including online and creative methods) that increase accessibility and participation.
- 7.5. Council will encourage those affected by a decision to be involved in the decision-making process.
- 7.6. Council will seek out the participation of those in the community whose voices are not often heard.
- 7.7. Council will be respectful and actively listen to different points of view, acknowledging the diverse range of knowledge, expertise and experiences in our community.
- 7.8. Council will provide opportunities for stakeholders to indicate support or raise concerns through the public exhibition process. Formal submissions will be considered by Council in the decision-making process, under the Petitions and Submissions Policy and Submissions Procedure.
- 7.9. Council will monitor its approach and undertake evaluation and review to ensure continuous improvement in its approach to community engagement.

It must be recognised that Council performs many routine activities on a daily basis, and this policy is not intended to cover every task. Rather, it applies to broader decision making about strategies, plans, policies, projects and service delivery.

Council acknowledges that engagement is a process to gather opinions and ideas. It does not guarantee agreement between all parties. However, engaging the community early provides a far greater chance of fostering community “ownership”, and achieving a positive outcome for the majority of stakeholders.

Council also recognises that views gathered through engagement should represent a broad cross section of the community. To be effectively engaged, community members need appropriate information and time to respond. The Community Engagement Policy has been developed with consideration of the NSW Social Justice Principles of equity, access, participation and rights, as set out in Council's Community Strategic Plan.

Roles and Responsibilities

Councillors and Council staff play complementary roles in engaging with the community.

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The Elected Council is responsible for:

- Ensuring that community engagement directly informs Council decisions.
- Supporting and encouraging appropriate community engagement for the needs of the project and/or issue.
- Providing adequate funding and/or resources to support engagement activities.

Council Staff are responsible for:

- Ensuring this policy is appropriately implemented and applied.
- Developing Community Engagement Plans with Community Engagement and Activation Team guidance.
- Providing opportunities for community participation.
- Reporting outcomes.

The community has a role in supporting the principles of community engagement. The community is encouraged to actively participate in engagement activities and contribute to Council's decision-making processes.

Partnerships

As an integral part of this policy Council is committed in fostering partnerships between all levels of government, businesses, community organisations and importantly the community.

Council will advocate for its community and ensure that the community's views, needs and concerns are raised with other levels of government or relevant stakeholders.

8. Related Forms/Documents

Social Media Policy
Shellharbour City Council Public Participation Plan
Complaints Management Policy
Code of Meeting Practice
Petitions and Submissions Policy
Submissions Procedure
Cultural Diversity Policy
GIPA (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW)
Communication and Engagement Strategy 2020-2024

Note: Related forms can be located Online under "Forms"

9. Attachments

Nil

Policy Authorised by:

Name: Council Resolution Number 107

Date: 29 April 2014

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