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G.15 Community Engagement Policy

Date Adopted by Council	10 June 2016		Council Resolution No.	12-09-20
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Policy Owner	Council		Responsible Officer	CEO
Policy Number	G.15		IX Reference	96843
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	V2	08-Apr-14	Reviewed and adopted	
	V3	10-Jun-16	Reviewed and adopted	
	V4	13-Apr-18	Reviewed – no changes	
	V5	11-Sep-20	Reviewed and adopted	

CEO   Chief Executive Officer

DCCS   Director Corporate & Community Services

DES   Director Engineering Services

MFS   Manager Financial Services

1   OBJECTIVE

The objective of this policy is to broadly define Council's approach to the engagement of our community. It has application across the full range of policy, program and service issues encountered by local government. As such, it is intended that this policy will lead to the establishment of a framework that will assist community members establish appropriate expectations about their specific dealings or contacts with Council. In turn, Council expects more informed decision making as a consequence of the application of this policy.

Quilpie Shire Council's Community Engagement Policy is built on the expectation that Council is not driven by the decisions of the community, but rather, the community is integral to the overall decision making process.

Through this policy, Quilpie Shire Council gives weight to:

– the core values of the community are fundamental to the successful outcome of the community engagement activity through shared planning and decision-making practices in partnership governance;

– the impact on the region's development, prosperity and/or social capital by promoting the social, environmental, economic and / or cultural development of a community;

– an exchange of knowledge and expertise with an active community partnership in planning, implementation and evaluation of success;

– mutual benefit to Council and the community;

– the reputation of Council is enhanced through its active engagement with its community and region; and

– Council's legislative obligations to engage with its communities in decision making.

2   SCOPE

This policy applies to elected members of Council, to all employees and to all consultants engaged by Council.

3   STATEMENT

3.1   BACKGROUND

This policy recognises that there are obligations under a number of state and federal Acts and Regulations for public notification and community engagement to be undertaken. This legislation includes, but is not limited to, *Local Government Act 2009*, *Sustainable Planning Act 2009* and *Land Act 1994.* This policy also recognises the key role of Councillors in community engagement and decision-making, The *Local Government Act 2009* articulates the requirement for local governments to adhere to local government principles.

The Act requires Councils:

(1)   To ensure the system of local government is accountable, effective, efficient and sustainable. Parliament requires anyone who is performing a responsibility under this Act to do so in accordance with the local government principles.

(2)   The local government principles are:

a.   transparent and effective processes, and decision-making in the public interest; and

b.   sustainable development and management of assets and infrastructure, and delivery of

effective services; and

c.   democratic representation, social inclusion and meaningful community engagement; and

d.   good governance of, and by, local government; and

e.   ethical and legal behaviour of Councillors and local government employees.

Meaningful community engagement is now a key principle of governance in Queensland local government.

3.2   RESPONSIBILITIES

3.2.1   Councillors:

−   Councillors will work with Council staff to engage with the community in all circumstances required by legislation.

−   In deliberating on decisions, Council should consider whether, in accordance with this policy, community engagement should occur.

−   Councillors may take advice from Council Staff as to whether community engagement is required and what level/s of engagement are appropriate and direct Council Staff to undertake those levels of engagement.

−   Councillors should attend Community Consultation Forums when convened.

3.2.2   Council Officers:

−   Council Officers reporting to Council will indicate whether Community Engagement is required prior to or as part of Council decision making.

−   Council Officers involved in project management will consider in their project planning whether community consultation is required.

−   Council Officers will, where community engagement should occur, develop a Community Engagement Plan with such plan endorsed by the Chief Executive Officer (or other delegated officer) prior to the commencement of the project.

−   Council officers at the direction of the Chief Executive Officer, will attend Community Consultation Forums when convened.

−   Council officers responsible for managing external consultants undertaking tasks on behalf of Council shall make a determination on whether those consultants should undertake community engagement (prior to engagement of those consultants) and factor into the project plan, all costs associated with the community engagement elements of the project undertaken by those consultants.

3.3 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ELEMENTS

Council understands community engagement to contain the following three elements:

1.	Information	**A one-way relationship where local government delivers information to citizens**
		Local Government ⟶ Community
2.	Consultation	A two-way relationship in which citizens provide feedback on issues defined by local government
		Local Government ⟶ Community Local Government ⟵ Community
3.	Active Participation	A collaboration in which citizens actively shape policy options, but where Local Government retains the responsibility for final decisions
		Local Government ⟵ Community Local Government ⟶ Community

Participation is made up of several parts:

1.	Involvement	To work directly with the community and key stakeholders so that their concerns / issues are consistently understood and considered
2.	Collaboration	To partner with the community and key stakeholders in each aspect of the decision process – including the development of alternatives and identification of a solution
3.	Empowerment	All final decisions rest with Council or a delegated officer of Council; Council may adopt recommendations from the community, unchanged, should the circumstances warrant such an approach, or authorise a community entity to proceed with a task that requires the entity to exercise a degree of decision making in dealing with matters contained within the task

The Community Engagement continuum can be understood more comprehensively by incorporating the following actions as examples.

Community Engagement Spectrum				
Information Education	**Consultation**	**Active Participation**		
		Involvement	**Collaboration**	**Empowerment**
Examples: – Briefings – Fact sheets – Council news letters – Websites – Media campaigns – Shop front – Shopping centre displays – Letters to the editor	Examples: – Road shows – Interviews – Surveys – Public meetings – Web based consultation – Research – Focus groups	Examples: – Workshops – Deliberate polling	Examples: – Citizens advisory committees – Consensus building – Participatory decision making – Community reference / advisory groups	Examples: – Delegated decisions – Community entities undertaking defined tasks on behalf of Council

3.4 OUTCOMES

The outcomes sought through this Community Engagement Policy include:

– an improvement in the quality of policies and decisions, through integration of community input to the policy making process

– an increase in the public's trust and confidence

– an increase in the public's satisfaction with greater Council transparency and accountability.

3.5 APPLICATION

Council will apply community engagement methodologies (of the type identified in the preceding community engagement spectrum table) appropriate to the circumstances and desired outcomes of any specific engagement. By way of example, engagement methodologies may differ significantly across the following activities of Council:

Example Activity	Informing	Consulting	Participating
Building regulations	☑	☑	
Land subdivisions	☑	☑	☑
Local laws	☑	☑	☑
Community plan		☑	☑
Priority infrastructure plans		☑	☑
Infrastructure (assets) management plans		☑	

Planning schemes	☑	☑	☑
Youth plan		☑	☑
Diversity plan		☑	☑
Cultural development policy		☑	☑
Social and recreational plan	☑	☑	☑
Natural resource management & conservation plan	☑	☑	☑
Waste management strategy	☑	☑	
Climate change strategy	☑	☑	☑
Economic development plan	☑	☑	☑
Economic development strategy	☑	☑	☑
Transport plan	☑	☑	
Tourism Strategy	☑	☑	☑

Where the activities are significant and community engagement necessary, Council will formulate a **community engagement plan** for that activity identifying the specific engagement methodologies to be employed and assigning responsibilities for the various tasks.

Community engagement plans for specific activities will ensure that:

– any statutory notification process is dealt with in as efficient manner as possible,

– the role of Councillors in the engagement process is explicitly addressed, and

– planned engagement activities will be based on the Community Engagement Spectrum.

3.6 GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In developing Community Engagement Plans, Council will embrace and give effect to the following community engagement principles:

• **Inclusiveness** — More inclusive processes and practices will increase community access to Council information and broaden involvement in Council policy development, planning and decision making.

• **Reaching out** — New and more effective ways to involve the community in planning and decision making processes will allow Council to move beyond established networks to tap into the significant knowledge and expertise residing within communities.

• **Mutual respect** — Listening to and understanding the views, concerns and experiences of the community will lead to better decisions and strengthened Council – community relationships.

• **Integrity** — Open and accountable engagement practices and processes that genuinely inform decision making will increase community trust and confidence in Council.

• **Affirming diversity** — Incorporating diverse opinions and perspectives into policy development, planning and decision making will help achieve effective and sustainable outcomes.

• **Adding value** — Council and the community working productively together will add value in policy development and program and service planning.

3.7 IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS POLICY

It is acknowledged that Council must take responsibility for ensuring that staff assigned responsibility for carrying out community engagement activities possess the necessary competencies to be able to carry out the tasks assigned to them to a high level of proficiency.

With respect to employees of Council, Council encourages its employees, as residents of the Quilpie Shire Council area, to participate in community engagement processes to the extent permitted by the employees' Code of Conduct.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES, TIMEFRAMES & PERFORMANCE INDICATORs					
Key Element	**Relationship**	**Key Outcome**	**Strategy**	**Timeframe / Purpose**	**Performance Indicators**
Information	A One-way relationship where Council delivers information to the Community	A more informed community	Implement Bi-monthly Council Newsletters delivered to all households	Ongoing • Provide key facts to the broader public about Council activities, actions and policy decisions • Complement media releases, web site information	• Council's information clearly articulated • Reduced incidences of misinformation • Information available to all community members • Community awareness of Council policies, activities and events
			Council Website	• Timely and immediate information delivery to the community • Remote delivery of Council information to rural and remote community members	• Greater community awareness of Council decisions, current and future planning • Detailed information on all Council services, policies, activities and events • Greater community access to Council services, information, policies, decisions and actions • Greater community access to community organisations and businesses • Higher levels of Council services delivered via the internet
			Briefings with community representatives	Ongoing: • Detailed information required to be disseminated to particular community sectors	• Community representatives appraised of Council decisions and planning – dissemination to community groups and organisations
			Newspaper advertising	As required to: • Comply with legislative requirements • Timely dissemination of significant decisions, actions and events to the community	• Legislative advertising requirements of Council met • Community awareness of Council policies. decisions, activities and events
			Media campaigns / Media Releases – across a range of	As required to: • Provide information to the broader public	• Community awareness of significant legislative and policy changes • Community awareness of significant Council planning

			media	• Sustain public interest • Advise of significant achievements	and policy considerations • Community awareness of significant achievements
			Letters to the editor	As required: • Reinforce Council's position on issues • Reinforce other media campaigns and media releases	• Council responds appropriately to issues raised in local media • Council clarifies incorrect or ambiguous media reporting of Council decisions, policy or actions • Council alerts the community to significant decisions, activities or events
			Shop front and trade displays	As required: • Development proposals • Council infrastructure developments • Legislative requirements	• Community awareness of Council programs, services, activities and events • Wider promotion of the Quilpie Shire Council area as a place to live and do business
			Radio advertising	As required to: • Provide information to the broader public • Sustain public interest • Advise of significant achievements • Advise of particular programs or events	• Community awareness of Council programs, services, activities and events • Wider promotion of the Quilpie Shire Council area as a place to live and do business • Community awareness of particular events and programs
			Councillor social interaction	Ongoing: • Informal information flow to and from Council	• Improved general awareness of Council activities • Improved Council awareness of community issues and thoughts

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES, TIMEFRAMES & PERFORMANCE INDICATORS					
Key Element	**Relationship**	**Key Outcome**	**Strategy**	**Timeframe / Purpose**	**Performance Indicators**
Consultation	A two-way relationship in which	An Involved Community	Community Information Forums (public meetings) in	Bi-annually or as required and determined by Council: • To action Council's community	• Community have the opportunity to meet personally with Councillors, Senior Council Staff • Relationships developed between the Council and

			Quilpie Shire	engagement Policy • Provide opportunity for all community members to engage with Councillors & Senior Council staff	individual community members • Community provides feed back to Council on policy decisions and actions • Community provides input into Council planning, policy and decision making
			Use of various media such as radio, newspaper, email, direct phoning, public display, targeted stakeholders	As required: • To obtain feedback on specific proposals, programs, initiatives	• Greater community awareness of Council decisions, current and future planning • Community provides input into Council planning, policy and decision making • Community provides information to Council on matters being determined by Council
			Council Web Site - incorporate community interactive facilities	• Community members from all communities including rural and remote community members have an opportunity to engage with Council	• Greater community awareness of Council decisions, current and future planning • Community provides input into Council planning, policy and decision making • Detailed information on all Council services, policies, activities and events • Community opportunity to express individual or representative view points on Council policies, decisions or actions • Community provides information to Council on matters being determined by Council
			Community Surveys	As required: • Sample of potential respondents is representative of the public • Questionnaire is designed in a balanced way that does not unfairly bias responses	• Community involvement in Council planning, policy and decision making • Council awareness of community aspirations and feelings on identified issues and planning • Survey sample is representative of the broader community
			Research	Ongoing: • To gain a more accurate idea of broader community views • Obtain balance to input being	• Community provides information to assist in Council planning, policy and decision making • Discreet data on local economies provided by the community at a level not able to be captured by census

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				offered by the more articulate, vocal sections of the community • Gain an appreciation of the level of understanding concerning specific issues • Gauge values and attitudes of the broader community.	and other means • Community involvement in the type and extent of data available to Council • Greater Council awareness of its community makeup and aspirations • Community input into decisions made by Council affecting the community
			Focus Groups	As required to: • Identify & define need • Identify problems in project implementation • Obtain perceptions of project outcomes • Identify information gaps • Random selection of members	• Higher level input by Community members into Council decisions, policy making and activities • Great Council awareness of community sentiment and aspirations • More informed decision making by Council • Council and the community experience a wide range of views from a broad cross section
			Interviews	As required when: • Council seeks input from particular community members to assist in planning and decision making	• Direct contact between Council and individual community members • Community members have an opportunity to put individual viewpoints forward for Council consideration in its planning, policy making and decisions • Greater opportunity for involvement of community members not comfortable in providing their view point in a public forum

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES, TIMEFRAMES & PERFORMANCE INDICATORs					
Key Element	**Relationship**	**Key Outcome**	**Strategy**	**Timeframe / Purpose**	**Performance Indicators**
Active Participation	A collaboration in which community members actively shape policy options, but where Local Government retains the responsibility for final decisions	A community actively involved in Council's decision making	**Involvement**		
			Workshops	As required: • Where a need to involve a wide range of people to make substantial progress on a matter • Identified as appropriate to work at the involve level or higher • Broad community / stakeholder wisdom likely to add value to decision making	• Shared vision for the future • Community actively involved in policy and decision making • Council working in partnership with the community • Community's visions and aspirations identified • Council's decision making takes notice of community's visions and aspirations
			Deliberative Polling	As required when: • Issues are complex • Expert and special interest advice sought along with wider community interests	• Council and the community benefit through structured and open examination of issues • Special Interest Groups have an opportunity to engage in decision making • Wider community representation • Processes are seen as open and representative
			Collaboration		
			Community Reference Groups	Ongoing: • Establish with representation from across the Shire • Council seeks regular information on issues impacting on communities and community aspirations	• Communities provide constructive input into Council planning, decision making and activities • Reference groups are representative of whole of community interests • Wider community participation in reference groups • Strong communication processes between reference groups and the wider community • Reference group feed back to the community • Community issues identified and referred to Council • Council implements effective reporting mechanisms

						to inform reference groups of
				Advisory Groups	Ongoing key input from community representatives crucial to project success: • Business & Tourism • Youth • Aged • Disability Sector • Arts • Sports • Community Organisations • Wild Dog Control	• A strong flow of information between Council & community over the life of a project • Council is well informed about community interests & concerns • Participants understand the range of perspectives and complexity of a project / issue
				Empowerment		
				Delegated Decisions	As required: • Council & community jointly decide on community driven projects • Council supporting community driven initiatives	• Council and the community recognise the strengths existing within the community • Communities accepting of their ability to take actions to benefit their own communities
				Community Entities undertaking defined tasks on behalf of Council	As required: • Community initiated projects and programs where direct Council involvement is not required • Communities are confident of achieving strong outcomes without Council being required to drive or undertake defined tasks on their behalf	• Communities identify their own strengths and capacity to implement and drive their own community projects • Council recognition of the strengths and capacity within communities • Communities willing to take responsibility for community development projects and programs

4   DEFINITIONS

Community Engagement   "any process that involves the public in problem solving or decision making and uses that public input to make decisions"

International Association for Public Participation [IAP2]

5   RELATED POLICIES | LEGISLATION | OTHER DOCUMENTS

Local Government Regulation 2012

IX #	Details
96842	G.15-A Community Engagement Guideline