DRAFT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

Reviewed	October 2024
Next Review	Four years from adoption date
Version	6
Responsible Position	Community Engagement Team Leader
Administration Reference	5706160

1. PURPOSE

To establish a framework of effective community engagement practices. This will build community relationships and gather stakeholder and community feedback to inform Council decision making.

2. CITY STRATEGY OUTCOME

Our Future Willoughby 2032 identified five city outcomes guiding our community's future direction in relation to Council's policy making, along with 32 community priorities.

This Policy enables Council to deliver on Outcome 5, "A city that is effective and accountable", through the following three priorities:

5.1 - Be honest, transparent and accountable in all we do

5.4 – Anticipate and respond to changing community and customer needs

5.5 – Make it easy for citizens to participate in decision making

3. APPLICATION

The Community Engagement Policy, Community Engagement Strategy and Community Participation Plan (together known as the Community Engagement Framework) apply to all Council officials, members of staff, contractors and delegates of Council.

4. POLICY PRINCIPLES

Willoughby City Council will have regard to the following principles of Community Engagement;

- Community engagement will be easy-to-understand. It will be accessible and available and in a form that facilitates community participation.
- Community engagement will be inclusive. It will actively seek views that are representative of the community to participate in decisions that affect them.
- Community engagement will be meaningful. It will provide a platform for community to express their views and their input to be taken into consideration within Council's decision-making process.
- Community engagement will be early and ongoing, with the community enabled to participate in Council's work at key stages during a project's lifecycle.
- Community engagement will be visible. Council will seek to go to the community who are affected by or interested in a decision to seek input and feedback.
- Community engagement will be responsive, with the Council to engage in a systematic, structured and timely manner including being transparent about the feedback it has received and how this feedback has been considered.
- Community engagement will be ongoing, with the community being updated as the projects progress.

5. POLICY STATEMENT

Willoughby City Council is committed to understanding the needs and expectations of the community to inform decision making processes.

Council recognises the value of engaging with the community in a meaningful way to meet Council's commitment to building long term, sustainable community relationships in achieving a

shared vision for Willoughby City.

Council commits to inclusive, meaningful, visible, credible and equitable engagement processes throughout the organisation, after considering the IAP2 Spectrum for Public Participation.

We are committed to protecting the privacy of personal information we collect from our community.

6. RESPONSIBLE OFFICERS

Council

- Meet the requirements of the *Local Government Act 1993*, including the guiding principles relating to community engagement and transparent decision-making under Section 8A.

CEO

- Lead and foster a Council-wide culture of valuing community input to inform decision making.

Directors

- Oversee the establishment and implementation of the Community Engagement Framework.
- Ensure engagement activities are conducted in accordance with the Community Engagement Framework.
- Allocate resources to effectively conduct community engagement activities.
- Facilitate and encourage a culture of valuing community input to inform decision making.
- Ensure communication practices that inform the community about how their input was incorporated into Council decisions.

Program or Project Managers

- Implement the Community Engagement Framework into operational activities.
- Identify engagement opportunities to constructively engage with community in achieving Council's strategic objectives.
- Ensure compliance with the Community Engagement Framework in the performance of their duties.
- Ensure that any conflicts or risk to Council identified during engagement processes are escalated to the relevant Council officer.

Community Engagement Team Leader

- Deliver centralised policy, processes and protocols, and engagement planning advice, to enable work of Directors and Program and Project Leaders
- Maintain and where possible strengthen the Council's centralised engagement infrastructure, including the Council's community engagement portal

7. MONITORING AND REVIEWS

Community Engagement Team Leader

Evaluate and monitor the Council's implementation of the Community Engagement Framework.

8. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

8.1 REPORTING AND LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

For initiatives requiring Council approval, the results of community and stakeholder engagement activities will be reported to Council and published on Council's community engagement portal.

The Council will comply with relevant NSW and Australian legislation and regulations which include community engagement provisions, including the *Local Government Act 1993* and the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*. It will also comply with its own Community Engagement framework and the above legislation and regulations when undertaking development with a significant impact on Council owned or managed land.

8.2 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The Community Engagement Framework consists of:

- Community Engagement Policy
- Community Engagement Strategy
- Community Participation Plan

Governing laws and standards	▪ *Local Government Act 1993* ▪ *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*
Related policies and other documents	▪ Communications Policy ▪ Advisory Committees Policy ▪ Privacy Management Plan
Document History	▪ Date amended 29 October 2024 ▪ Date amended 9 December 2019 ▪ Date amended 11 November 2019 ▪ Date adopted June 2016

Appendix

Definitions	
Policy	A statement/s of principles and intent that guide decisions to help achieve outcomes and community priorities.
Procedure	A statement or instruction to staff, contractors and consultants that sets out how policies will be implemented and by whom.
Project	A temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product, service or result. Must have a defined beginning and end date, with defined scope and resources to respond to community needs or achieve outcomes designated in the Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program or Operational Plan.
Program (of projects)	A collection of projects that are managed by a group. The projects within a program are typically closely related and more efficiently managed as a group rather than individually.

Engagement	Within this policy 'engagement' is used as a generic, inclusive term to – in line with the IAP2 spectrum (as referenced below) – describe the broad range of interactions between people. It can include a variety of approaches, such as one-way communication or information delivery, consultation, involvement in decision-making, and empowered action in informal groups or formal partnerships.
Community	Within this policy 'community' is used in its broad sense to define groups of people; whether they are stakeholders, interest groups, citizen groups, businesses etc. A community may be a geographic location (community of place), a community of similar interest (community of practice), or a community of affiliation or identity (such as industry or sporting club).
Community and Stakeholder Engagement	Within this policy 'community engagement' refers to a planned process with the specific purpose of listening to and seeking feedback from the broader community or targeted stakeholder groups to inform Council's decision-making process.
IAP2	The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) is an international organisation advancing the practice of public participation. Council will focus its practice of engagement on the IAP2 model whereby a spectrum or continuum of engagement is available to assist in planning effective community engagement.
Stakeholder	Anyone with an interest in or who is impacted by a program or project. It can describe members of a local community or the general public including residents, business owners, workers, visitors, community groups and organisations. It may also be used to describe employees, contractors, consultants, professional associations, or levels of government and government agencies.