



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

Adopted: 26 June 2013

TRIM: 152481.2013

## LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

*Local Government Act 1993*

*Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 and Regulation 2000*

*Local Government Amendment (Planning and Reporting) Act 2009*

## PURPOSE

The purpose of the Community Engagement Policy is to outline Council's commitment to community engagement and to support effective and consistent community engagement practices across Council.

Research indicates that effective community engagement results in better decisions and outcomes which are supported, understood, evidence based, sustainable and can be implemented. These outcomes are achieved by engaging with those who are affected by a decision or that are involved in its implementation. Community engagement is critical to effective, transparent and accountable governance in the public, community and private sectors. Effective community engagement leads to good planning decisions which help build healthier communities where people want to live and work.

The Community Engagement Policy:

- Outlines Council's commitment to community engagement and key methods for implementation
- Acknowledges that community input adds value to all of Council's operations
- Acknowledges that community engagement facilitates communication and that community involvement in decision making leads to better, sustainable outcomes.
- Provides a coordinated and consistent approach to community engagement across Council
- Extends collaboration and partnership between the community, Council, local organisations, business and government agencies
- Is aligned with social justice principles of equity, access, rights and participation
- Supports Council to meet its community engagement obligations under the *Local Government Act 1993*, the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 and Regulation 2000* and the *Local Government Amendment (Planning and Reporting) Act 2009*
- Supports a culture of continuous improvement in the way that Council engages with the community.

## DEFINITIONS

**Community** refers to the people who live, study, work, volunteer or recreate in Liverpool. This includes individuals and groups.

**Stakeholder** is an individual or organisation that perceives it has an interest or stake in the decisions of Council.

**Community engagement** is a two-way process by which the aspirations, needs and values of our local community are incorporated in policy development, planning, decision-making, service

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delivery and assessment. This definition is based on the United Nations Brisbane Declaration on Community Engagement (2005).

There are five aspects of community engagement practice as defined by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2):

- *Inform:* To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the issue, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions
- *Consult:* To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions
- *Involve:* To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered
- *Collaborate:* To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution
- *Empower:* To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.

These aspects of community engagement are further defined in the attached IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum, and reflect democratic processes.

**Social justice** is about building a society that is based on the principles of fairness for all, that understands and values human rights, and that recognises the dignity of every person.

**Sustainability** means a change in approach to civic leadership and decision making whereby environmental, economic and social-cultural consideration are equally embraced for the wellbeing of present and future generations.

### P O L I C Y S T A T E M E N T

Council is committed to engaging with the community. It will inform, consult, involve and collaborate with the community on its decisions in a manner that provides the community with genuine opportunities to be involved.

Council is committed to communicating with the community in a manner that is comprehensive, simple, regular and ongoing. Council will provide adequate information to participants or potential participants in engagement that will allow them to provide informed input.

Council recognises that meaningful community engagement seeks to address barriers and build the capacity and confidence of people to participate in formal, informal and accessible engagement with Council. Inclusive engagement requires Council to eliminate barriers to participation so that everybody is able to participate meaningfully in the engagement process.

Council will engage with the community in a transparent and consistent manner; providing diverse opportunities for engagement that result in sustainable outcomes in accordance with the Community Engagement Guidelines.

## Principles of Community Engagement

The following principles provide the framework for which Council will undertake community engagement as outlined in the United Nations Brisbane Declaration on Community Engagement:

- Integrity - when there is openness and honesty about the scope and purpose of engagement
- Inclusion - when there is an opportunity for a diverse range of values and perspectives to be freely and fairly expressed and heard
- Deliberation - when there is sufficient and credible information for dialogue, choice and decisions, and when there is space to weigh options, develop common understandings and to appreciate respective roles and responsibilities
- Influence - when people have input in designing how they participate, when policies and services reflect their involvement

These principles provide the framework for which Council will undertake community engagement:

- Information will be provided to the community in an open and respectful manner so that the outcome of each engagement activity is clear
- Community members who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process
- All materials and methods developed by Council to support community engagement will be genuine, unbiased, understandable and appropriate to ensure the community can participate in a meaningful way.
- Council will make use of a wide range of methods and technologies, including new and emerging tools associated with the Internet, to facilitate appropriate and effective community engagement
- When undertaking community engagement, Council's commitment is that the community's contribution will influence the decision. Council will communicate to engage participants how their input can and did affect the decision.

These principles are adapted from the International Association for Public Participation Core Values for Public Participation and are reflective of the *Local Government Amendment (Planning and Reporting) Act 2009*.

Council believes that these principles promote effective engagement with the community by adopting transparent, inclusive and collaborative processes. Council's Community Engagement Policy is also based on principles of social justice including Equity, Access, Participation and Rights.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Council will undertake a formal community engagement process in the following circumstances:

- To ensure that community input is implemented to enhance decision-making and/or improve a project
- To help identify and understand community needs; In response to expressions of

- community interest
- When Council resolves to consult the community or
- To align with legislative requirements, policy or by agreement with a government agency or statutory body.

Council will endeavour to undertake community engagement in relation to its operations beyond this scope. Council recognises that it is not always possible to undertake community engagement in every circumstance. However, when a decision has the potential to have a high level of impact on the local community, Council will seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected by or with an interest in a decision.

## **IMPLEMENTATION GUIDES**

The following documents guide Council's effective engagement with the community and stakeholders in Liverpool:

### **1. Community Engagement Guidelines**

The Community Engagement Guidelines assist Council officers to undertake community engagement. It identifies a range of implementation strategies to engage with the community on Council projects and issues. It incorporates a number of engagement methods for various circumstances. It aims to improve Council's knowledge, skills and processes in community engagement and supports a coordinated and consistent approach to community engagement across Council.

### **2. Integrated Planning Community Engagement Strategy**

The Integrated Planning Community Engagement Strategy outlines the activities that Council will implement to engage with the community on long term planning for the local government area. The outcomes of the community engagement process directly inform the 10 year Community Strategic Plan for the City of Liverpool, Council's four year Delivery Program and annual Operational Plan. The outcomes also inform Council's Resourcing Strategy that includes Council's 10 year Long Term Financial Plan, 10 year Asset Management Plan and four year Workforce Management Plan.

### **3. Customer Service and Communication Policy**

The Customer Service and Communication Policy is Council's approach to effectively communicating and providing information to the public. It outlines the key mechanisms that Council will use to keep the community informed about Council's services, programs and local issues. It assists the community to understand decisions that are made by Council and others, and how they affect the local area.

### **4. Media Representation Policy**

The Media Representation Policy provides guidance to Council officials (includes Councillors and Council staff) in dealing with the media on behalf of Liverpool City Council. It outlines the circumstances in which Council will communicate with the media to inform the public about Council's activities, decisions, plans and policies including the use of social media for this purpose.

## **IMPLEMENTATION METHODS**

There are a number of key methods of engagement that Council implements to provide formal

and informal participation opportunities for residents and stakeholders. The following is an indicative list and Council may use other methods as required:

### **1. Community Advisory Committees**

Community Advisory Committees provide formal opportunities for community and stakeholder input to Council services, planning and overall business. They actively discuss local issues and work directly with nominated Councillors. Committees focus on specific topics or areas of interest. They are nomination based (where appropriate) and operate under an adopted charter. Membership terms are outlined in each charter and nominations for membership are open to the whole community within the parameters of the charter.

### **2. Engagement Booths**

Engagement booths provide residents, workers, students and visitors with informal and ongoing engagement opportunities with Council. They are pop-up stalls which are placed in different locations across Liverpool including at public events and activities. They aim to be accessible to community members within their local area. Community members can provide feedback to help Council plan for and deliver services to the community.

### **3. Public Meetings**

Public meetings are held as required. They are an open forum which focuses on a specific topic or issue that has a high level of impact on the community.

### **4. Liverpool Voice**

Liverpool Voice is a panel made up of randomly selected people from different ages, backgrounds and locations who participate in ongoing consultations with Council over a period of time. Members participate in a variety of consultation processes including surveys, forums, focus groups and workshops on specific issues and topics.

### **5. Customer Service and Developer Focus Groups**

Customer Service and Developer Focus Groups engage residents and stakeholders around operational matters. Stakeholders are able to raise operational matters directly with Council and provide input into service delivery, the Local Environment Plan and Development Control Plans. Council delivers both customer and developer focus groups on a regular basis.

### **6. Community Forums**

The community forum is an open meeting of community members and Council officers. It provides an opportunity for community members to be informed and consulted about relevant issues and to provide feedback. Council operates two monthly Community Forums: an Urban Forum and a Rural Forum, each with a strategic focus on the areas they represent. The structure of each forum is to give equal time to Council presentations and to General Business whenever possible.

### **7. Social Media**

Social media tools are increasingly used to reach a wide audience to inform and engage the community. These may include but are not limited to social networking sites, video and photo-sharing sites and blogging sites. Council uses social media to inform residents and interested stakeholders about Council services, events and other activities.

### **8. Mobile Applications**

Council is committed to making it easier for residents to communicate with Council on various matters. Specific applications used on mobile devices, including smart phones and tablets, can be an effective engagement method. This could be through the adoption or creation of specific applications. Mobile applications are also increasingly being used as a way for residents to report operational issues to Council.

### **9. Community Telephone Survey**

The annual Community Telephone Survey is an opportunity for residents to provide direct feedback on their satisfaction with Council's services. It seeks representative views from the community and is a randomly selected telephone sample of residents undertaken by an external provider. The feedback from the community rates Council's performance in a number of areas and informs the planning of future services and priorities.

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### **THIS POLICY WAS**

Adopted on 27 February 2012

Amended on 26 June 2013

### **AUTHORISED BY**

Council resolution

### **EFFECTIVE FROM**

26 June 2013

### **DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBLE**

Community Planning and Development

### **REVIEW DATE**

The Community Engagement Policy will be reviewed every four years following each Local Government election. This allows each incoming Council to determine its community engagement principles and methods of implementation.

The Community Engagement Policy can be reviewed periodically, as determined by Council resolution.

### **THIS POLICY HAS BEEN DEVELOPED IN CONSULTATION WITH**

Council staff

Aboriginal Consultative Committee

Access Committee

Heritage Advisory Committee

Youth Council

Community Forums

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Public Participation Spectrum, International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)

### **REFERENCES**

Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government, *Local Government and Community Engagement in Australia* (2011)

International Association for Public Participation, *Core Values for Public Participation* (2007)

City of Canada Bay, *Community Engagement Policy* (2010)

Liverpool City Council, *Growing Liverpool 2021*

United Nations, *Brisbane Declaration on Community Engagement* (2005)

Attachment: Public Participation Spectrum



**IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum**  
Developed by the International Association for Public Participation

International Association for Public Participation  
Australasia

**INCREASING LEVEL OF PUBLIC IMPACT**

INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:
To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the Public:	Promise to the Public:	Promise to the Public:	Promise to the Public:	Promise to the Public:
We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Example Techniques to Consider:	Example Techniques to Consider:	Example Techniques to Consider:	Example Techniques to Consider:	Example Techniques to Consider:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fact sheets</li> <li>• Web Sites</li> <li>• Open houses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public comment</li> <li>• Focus groups</li> <li>• Surveys</li> <li>• Public meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshops</li> <li>• Deliberate polling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen Advisory Committees</li> <li>• Consensus building</li> <li>• Participatory decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen juries</li> <li>• Ballots</li> <li>• Delegated decisions</li> </ul>

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