

Community Engagement Policy

Policy Statement

This Policy aims to give the community a clear view of the importance of community engagement in democratic governance. It also aims to be a practical document that will assist Council to undertake effective community engagement in a coordinated and consistent manner.

This Policy fosters community inclusion in the decision making process and ensures that the engagement undertaken genuinely reaches ordinary everyday people affected by a decision of Council, providing them with every opportunity to be part of the outcome.

1. Purpose

The Policy aims to outline the principles by which the Town of Cottesloe will communicate with, consult and involve the community in decisions that affect or are of importance to the community. It identifies that Council is committed to developing a culture that involves community participation in the decision making process and values the benefits such consultation provides.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Foster and support a culture of community engagement, where participation from the community is valued and encouraged.
- Ensure easy access for members of the community to participate, including the provision of various engagement methods and tools.
- Ensure the community is provided with sufficient information to participate in an informed manner.
- Enhance the Council's decision making as well as the community's understanding of the decision making process.
- Provide feedback and advise how the information gathered is used to inform the decision or outcome.
- Ensure that Council meets its obligations under the *Local Government Act 1995* and other relevant statutory requirements.

2. Definitions

International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Australasia is an international association of members who seek to promote and improve the practice of public participation in relation to individuals, governments, institutions, and other entities throughout the world. IAP2 is the leading public participation Association in Australasia and IAP2 Australasia is the largest IAP2 affiliate in the world.

Community Engagement is the process undertaken in working with identified groups, organisations and individuals on common interests or issues that affect them to shape decisions, actions and opportunities. The process aims to achieve and improve outcomes for the whole community.

In line with IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum, engagement might involve the following:

- **Inform** – keep the community informed by providing objective information to assist them in understanding the situation, circumstances and/or Council decision.
- **Consult** – communication designed to seek feedback from the community about ideas and proposals to inform the decision making of the Council.
- **Involve** – Work directly with the community throughout the process to ensure public concerns and aspirations are understood, considered and acknowledged.
- **Collaborate** – Partner with the community in each aspect of a decision to identify preferred solutions and/or develop alternatives.
- **Empower** – Give the community a role in the decision making process.

Our Community are our residents, local groups and clubs, businesses, organisations, individuals and government stakeholders who have a common interest in Cottesloe. Community can be:

- **Communities of Place** – People living in neighbourhoods and localities.
- **Communities of Identity** – People from ethnic groups, young people, older people, people with disabilities, religious groups etc.
- **Communities of Interest** – People involved in groups or activities which might cut across other communities. For example board riders, tourists, business owners etc.

It is important to note that people see themselves as belonging to one community of place but can identify more than one community of interest or identity.

3. Key Principles

The following principles form the basis of this engagement policy.

3.1 Inclusiveness

The Council will work towards maximum community participation by:

- Actively seeking to identify stakeholders as early as possible and remain engaged with them throughout the project.
- Respecting Cottesloe's diverse community and range of interests that may be represented during engagement.
- Providing equal opportunity for affected and interested parties to participate in the engagement process.
- Allowing, if required, affected groups and interested parties to select their own representative to work with the Town of Cottesloe.
- Ensuring community engagement is sensitive and respectful to all stakeholders needs to maximise their capacity to contribute.
- Making a commitment to the provision of a culturally appropriate processes to encourage increased access by Aboriginal people, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to participate in discussions about Council initiatives.
- Committing to a collaborative approach, providing an environment that is easily understood and encourages maximum participation by our community.

3.2 Focus

The Council will ensure:

- Engagement is purpose driven; and clearly defined in an Engagement Plan.
- Engagement methods will be appropriate for the task.
- A clear statement on the engagement process will be developed with project managers and provided to the Council and community.
- Internal coordination will ensure Council ownership of the engagement.
- A clear statement outlining the role of Council and the role of participants in the engagement process.

3.3 Responsiveness

The Council will work to:

- Ensure engagement is transparent and accountable.
- Ensure all people involved have a clear understanding of how their feedback and comments are to be used.
- Understand, consider and respond to contributions from all participants.
- Maintain openness, consider expert advice and alter the course of actions if required.
- Make all reasonable attempts to resolve conflicts, if they arise, and reach a suitable solution.

3.4 Clear, Relevant and Timely Communication

The Council will ensure:

- Information relating to engagement will be readily available to allow participants to make informed and timely contributions in a productive manner.
- Information relating to engagement can be accessed easily by everyone involved before key decisions are made.
- Relevant information will be presented in an easily understood format and as required on more than one platform.
- In instances where full details about an issue may not be fully disclosed to the public because of its commercially sensitive or personal nature, ensure the reasons are clearly communicated to the public.

3.5 Implementation and Evaluation

The Council will ensure:

- All consultation processes will be evaluated after the decision making is complete for ongoing improvement.
- Participants will receive feedback about inputs received and how the final decision was reached.
- If a difference occurs between the engagement outcome and the final decision the reasons for this will be and communicated.


4. Levels of Participation

The principles are general to all engagement processes, but there are clearly different levels of community participation to meet different requirements.

Council is committed to following the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum designed to assist with the level of influence provided dependant on the community's or stakeholder's role in the engagement.

IAP2'S PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM

The IAP2 Federation has developed the Spectrum to help groups define the public's role in any public participation process. The IAP2 Spectrum is quickly becoming an international standard.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, 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	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, 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 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.

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Democratic local government, with its very broad charter, needs to consult across all levels. This may range from consultation on the future use of a specific site in the Town of Cottesloe, to consultation on the community's view of a State-wide issue which impacts on the community and therefore requires a Council position.

It should be noted that while Council will undertake community engagement wherever possible, engagement does not over-ride Council's responsibility to make decisions and its accountability for its decision making.

5. Related Documents:

- Communication Policy
- Cottesloe Council News Policy
- Disability Access and Inclusion Policy
- Social Media Policy

GUIDELINES AND POLICY PROCEDURES FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

1. Community Engagement Methodology

1.1 Introduction

The guidelines and policy procedures contained hereafter are intended to inform and assist The Town in the preparation, delivery of and evaluation of its engagement projects.

1.2 Why Engage

Well planned community engagement will enhance the outcome of a project. For this to be so you must know why you are engaging. Some examples are outlined below:

Site specific	Matters about a particular site, such as a change in use or sale of property. Excluding matters to be decided under the Planning and Development Act.
Area improvement	Matters that affect people in a neighbourhood, or precinct, eg change in local service delivery, traffic management plans, precinct plans and significant planning initiatives.
Service planning for the entire Town of Cottesloe	To develop or improve a service that would see a significant change in the level of service. The service could have an impact on the whole of the Town of Cottesloe.
Policy development	To develop or improve policies for Council's position on particular matters. Policies may affect the whole of the Town of Cottesloe. Does not including internal operating procedures.
Key strategic issues/ major development facilities	Projects of such a size that impact on the finances or future of the Town of Cottesloe e.g. aquatic facility or beachfront redevelopment.
Strategic Plan for the Town	Identifying strategic priorities for the Town
Statutory Requirements	Town Planning, Local Laws etc

2. Scoping a Project for Community Engagement

A successful engagement project requires the following steps:

2.1 Research

- Identify the range of issues that may be involved.
- Identify any policies or strategic plans of Council that may impact on any of these issues.
- Identify issues that are core to the consultation.
- Identify any residents' groups that may have an interest.
- Establish responsibilities of Council in relation to each of the identified core issues.

2.2 Setting the Framework for the Consultation

- Define the purpose of the consultation.
- List the specific aims of the consultation.
- Define all internal stakeholders who may have an interest in the consultation.
- Define all external stakeholder groups or individuals that need to be included.
- When an issue is likely to be controversial always consider including an independent expert who can develop credibility with both sides.
- Using the consultation matrix (Diagram 3.1) define the most appropriate entry point to reach audiences. Is it a policy, a major project or a strategic plan? Or does it relate to locality, a specific site or a neighbourhood issue?

2.3 Plan the Consultation Processes

- Using the matrix identify how to reach each of the audiences.
- Establish the order to reach them i.e. High priority – key stakeholder or Low Priority – third party.
- Prepare a realistic timetable for consultation.
- Establish a budget for the consultation process.
- Prepare initial information on which to base consultation.
- Circulate information or provide access points for all identified stakeholders.

2.4 During the Consultation

- Keep the community focussed; acknowledge side issues, always returning to the purpose of the consultation process. Be flexible to emerging or unplanned ideas that contribute positively to outcomes.
- When consultation has been completed advise all participants on the outcomes.

3. Communication Tools

There are a number of ways to commence a dialogue with the community. These are outlined in the table below.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Web Sites• Online 'Have your say' consultation	Information will be placed on the Internet at www.cottesloe.wa.gov.au
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cottesloe Council News and other Council communications:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Social media▪ Mayor's Newsletter▪ Email database	<p>Cottesloe Council News is the regular publication of Council, published in the local Press. It can carry articles on a policy or issue. If it is used for community engagement, then the article must inform and encourage feedback.</p> <p>The Mayor's newsletter is an important means of advising the community about the matter under consultation and how the community might have input.</p> <p>The Town's email database is an important vehicle to communicate with engaged residents and ratepayers on issues concerning the Town.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertisements in the local newspapers 	Advertisements in the local papers can be an important means of advising the community about the matter under consultation and how the community might have input.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a letter 	This is a personally addressed letter to all affected households. It outlines issues and invites comment. It always indicates where the comment should be directed within Council.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ratepayer and other community groups 	Community organisations are a valuable means of receiving feedback on a range of issues.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media release 	<p>This involves issuing media releases and conducting interviews with local journalists. If it is part of the engagement process, the Council spokesperson should always indicate to the media representative that feedback from the community is valued.</p> <p>The media release will be made available to local newspapers.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey • Deliberate Polling 	This is a statistically accurate survey of particular attitudes, beliefs or information. It may be done by phone, written survey or door knock of individual households.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letterbox drop • Fact Sheets 	This is a non-addressed leaflet or flyer that summarises the issues and invites feedback to Council. The flyer indicates how that feedback can be given. These will only be used in the affected area.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal briefings 	These are held at the request of a member/s of the local community to discuss a particular issue with a responsible officer. Personal briefings may include the Mayor and/or Councillors.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus groups/review groups • Advisory Groups 	These are discussion groups of around 15-20 people, usually led by a trained person (facilitator). The participants are invited because they are residents or because they have a particular interest, involvement or stake in the subject being discussed. The group may comprise professionals or residents with particular skills and competencies relevant to the issue. The purpose is to find out the range of opinions that exist on a particular topic. Focus groups cannot measure how widely those various opinions are held in the community.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information session • Public Meetings 	<p>This may be held at a community venue, on site of the matter under consultation, or at Council offices. Invitations will be sent by one or more of the following methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertising in local papers • Letterbox drop • Media

3.1 Community Engagement – Communications Matrix

	Ad in Paper	Web Page	Mayor's News letter	Letter	Ratepayer Group	Media Release	Survey	Letter drop	Personal Briefing	Focus Groups	Info Session	Town's Email Database
Site Specific	2	1	1	3	3	3	5	3	3	5	5	1
Area Improvement	2	2	2	3	2	4	5	4	3	3	5	2
Service Planning	2	1	2	4	2	3	4	4	3	2	4	2
Policy Development	2	1	1	5	2	2	3	3	3	3	4	1
Key Strategic Issues – Major Projects	2	1	1	4	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	1
Strategic Plans	2	1	1	5	2	2	2	3	3	1	1	1

1 – every time

2 – will in most circumstances

3 – may depending on the program

4 – on the odd occasion

5 – in the rarest of circumstances

4. Statutory Community Consultation

4.1 Consultation

Consult sits at the second level of public participation on the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum.

Wherever the Act prescribes community consultation, the Council will endeavour to:

- Ensure community has a variety of accessible ways in which to provide their feedback;
- Keep community informed about the process;
- Acknowledge community concerns and expectations;
- Thank and provide summary feedback to residents via press release and email newsletter;
- Provide the community with how public input influenced the decision; and
- Thank and provide summary feedback direct to consultation participants where contact details are available.

5. Form of Submission

The Cottesloe community can submit feedback in a number of ways and are encouraged to do so by the Town. Whilst not always requested, for some **formal submissions** can be a preferred method of providing feedback during an engagement period. This is recognised and accepted for all engagement activities.

A formal submission can be provided in the following ways:

- Mail (via Australia Post to PO Box 606, Cottesloe 6911)
- Hand delivered to the Cottesloe Civic Centre
- Via email council@cottesloe.wa.gov.au
- Via the Town of Cottesloe website (Have A Say)

5.1 Community Demographic

Knowing who the community are is key to effective decision making following engagement. Requesting a participants' personal information provides demographic data that encourages the Council to think more broadly about who their decision making is affecting.

To ensure a demographic baseline of participants is available to the Council when considering public feedback, as a minimum the 'Personal Information Pro-Forma' (5.2) will preface all community engagement participation forms including surveys.

The form will be available on the Town's website. Alternatively, the form is available in hard copy at the Cottesloe Civic Centre.

It is to be noted that to ensure engagement remains inclusive the provision of personal information is optional with the exception of the participants' postcode.

5.2 Pro-Forma - Personal Information

Your Personal Information

Privacy Statement

Any personal information collected by the Town of Cottesloe in the course of community engagement will be used solely for the purpose of gaining demographic insight to assist Council with its decision making.

Information that identifies a person **will not** form any part of publically available data or documents related to the engagement.

The Town of Cottesloe will not seek to involve you further unless you have registered to remain involved (forums, focus groups, workshops etc.) or have asked to be kept informed about engagement outcomes.

1. Please provide your name (Print)

2. What is your residential location?

Street address

Postcode

3. What age group are you in?

☐ Under 18

☐ 45-54

☐ 18-24

☐ 55-64

☐ 25-34

☐ 65+

☐ 35-44

Adopted	26 November 2019
Expected date of review	November 2021

6. References:

- City of Vincent – Community Consultation Policy No: 4.1.5
- Town of Victoria Park – Community Engagement Policy
- Townsville City Council (Qld) – Community Engagement Policy
- International Association of Public Participation (IAP2)
- Wicked Strategies