COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

POLICY NUMBER	COMMUNITY – 59
Date Adopted	18 August 2015
Scheduled for review	August 2016

PHILOSOPHY UNDERLYING THE POLICY

The following principles will underpin Council's approach to community engagement.

1. Be open and inclusive
   a. Recognises community participation as a right of all citizens and an integral component of informed decision-making;
   b. Creates, supports and promotes opportunities for the community to actively participate in decision making;
   c. Encourages involvement from a wide cross-section of the community using engagement processes that are accessible and inclusive;
   d. Operates under the key value of openness and is committed to ensuring that the community is well informed about Council's service delivery, planning and decision making processes.
2. Create mutual trust and respect and be accountable
   a. Treats all participants in the engagement process with respect and dignity;
   b. Approaches engagement from an impartial perspective, free from bias toward any stakeholder involved in the process;
   c. Is accountable, accessible and ethical in all dealings with the community.
3. Engage early and be clear
   a. Seeks early engagement and regularly involves the community in decision making
   b. Communicates clearly the objectives of the engagement process and provide community members with all available and relevant information as part of the consultation engagement process to ensure informed discussion;
   c. Communicates the parameters of the engagement process to participants from the outset, including legislative requirements, Council's sphere of influence, conflicting community views, policy frameworks and context, budget constraints etc.;
   d. Acknowledges that planning is a critical process to deliver successful outcomes and is committed to developing and implementing community engagement plans.
4. Consideration and feedback
   a. Is committed to demonstrating that we have considered all community contributions and relevant data, prior to making any decisions that affect the local community;
   b. Is committed to providing participants with feedback at key stages throughout the project and upon completion and how community input influenced the decision.
5. Skills and Resources
   a. Endeavours to ensure that sufficient timeframes and adequate resources are allocated to engagement processes;
   b. Coordinates its community engagement processes where possible to optimise resources, ensure efficiency and avoid duplication;
   c. Recognises the skills required to undertake community engagement, and will provide staff with opportunities for further skill development and training.

PURPOSE

To set the framework for community engagement activities conducted by the Shire of Campaspe.

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POLICY IN EXPRESSED TERMS

1. Policy Statement

Campaspe Shire recognises that community engagement and participation processes are a vital part of local democracy. Effective engagement is good business practice and critical to good government. For this reason Council is committed to engaging with the Campaspe community.

Community engagement is about involving the community in decisions which affect them. It is critical in the successful development and implementation of acceptable policies and decisions and for improving services by being responsive to the needs of the community.

Community engagement does not necessarily mean achieving consensus. However it does involve seeking broad informed agreement and the best possible solution for Council and the community.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all facets of Council's operations including Council's corporate, land use social, community and financial planning and Council's day to day business activities and service delivery.

It defines the principles underpinning Council's engagement activities, the role of Councillors and staff in engaging with the community and the methods which Council will use to engage with the community.

Council's approach to community engagement is based on the spectrum of engagement activities as advocated by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). The five levels of engagement are:

- Inform
- Consult
- Involve
- Collaborate
- Empower

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.

The level of engagement should be determined prior to the commencement of any community engagement actions. It is important that the community and stakeholders have a clear understanding about the purpose of the community engagement, eg. if the purpose of engagement is to 'involve' but not 'empower' this should be stated at the commencement of the engagement or activity. The assessment and determination of the appropriate level of engagement will be determined through the use of a decision-making tool, the Community Engagement Matrix, that considers the complexity, opportunities, issues and/or constraints of the activity.

3. Policy Objectives

a. To ensure the Campaspe community is well informed about issues, strategies or plans that may directly or indirectly affect them.

b. To ensure the Campaspe community have the opportunity for genuine involvement in Council's decision-making and policy development.

c. To seek the views of a wide cross-section of the community, selecting engagement methods that are flexible, inclusive and appropriate to those being engaged.

d. To provide members of the community with the opportunity to hear each other's opinions and to recommend appropriate solutions to community issues.

e. To ensure Council is meeting its legislative requirements regarding community consultation in all areas of its service delivery.

f. Recognise that there is diversity in the activities and projects across Council and the type of engagement undertaken should vary accordingly.

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4. Community Engagement - The benefits

The benefits of effective community engagement include:

a. Increased community awareness about Council's services, planning and program delivery;

b. Increased awareness across Council of community views and the issues that should be considered as part of the decision-making process;

c. Increased awareness of the needs, priorities and diversity of the local community, which in turn ensures that Council's service provision and planning functions are aligned appropriately;

d. Increased level of community ownership and acceptance of decisions affecting the local government area (LGA);

e. Council and the community working together to address local issues;

f. Potential for time, resource and cost savings for Council.

EXCLUSIONS

Nil

HUMAN RIGHTS

This report has considered and complies with the Human Rights and Responsibilities contained in the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.

DEFINITIONS

Community	Includes all the people who live, work, study, own property, conduct private or government business, visit or use the services, facilities and public spaces and places of the Campaspe Shire. The community can be referred to as stakeholders or comprise of stakeholders
Engagement	A broader term which includes all levels of participation for including the community in decision making. Consultation is one level of engagement
Consultation	Is a process of community engagement that seeks to inform the community or draw out the views and preferences of the community. These views are used to inform decision makers and should provide a guide to decision making
Communication	Generally refers to the exchange of information from Council to the community, and can also include the exchange of information or views from the community to Council
IAP2 International Association of Public Participation - Web site - www.iap2.org.au	
Submission	A submission is a formal response to a public document made during the public exhibition or notice period

RELATED LEGISLATION

Nil

ATTACHMENTS

Nil

REVIEW PERIOD	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER
One year	Communications and Public Affairs Manager

APPROVED

Adopted	22 July 1999	Minute Book Reference No	3769 (Item 12.1)
Revised	12 September 2000	Minute Book Reference No	4658 (Item 12.1)
Revised	11 September 2001	Minute Book Reference No	5565 (Item 12.2)
Revised	13 August 2002	Minute Book Reference No	6305 (Item 12.1)
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Revised	19 November 2013	Minute Book Reference No	1539 (Item 6.14)
Revised	19 August 2014	Minute Book Reference No	878 (Item 6.1)
Revised	18 August 2015	Minute Book Reference No	905 (Item 6.2)

Chief Executive Officer ……

Dated ……

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