Policy – Council – Community Engagement 2020

Date amended: February 2021

Date of next review: November 2021

Adopted by: Council

Date adopted: 16 February 2021

Responsible officer: Director Corporate & Community Services

1   POLICY STATEMENT

The genuine and deliberative engagement of the community is an integral part of local democracy as followed by the Pyrenees Shire Council. Council is committed to purposeful, accessible, representative, and informed community engagement to facilitate well-informed decision-making and maintain accountability, trust, and transparency.

1.1   Engagement Principles

The Pyrenees Shire Council will incorporate the Engagement Principles outlined in s56 of the *Local Government Act 2020* in all aspects of its community engagement:

a) a community engagement process must have a clearly defined objective and scope,

b) participants in community engagement must have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation,

c) participants in community engagement must be representative of the persons and groups affected by the manner that is the subject of the community engagements,

d) participants in community engagement are entitled to reasonable support to enable meaningful and informed engagement,

e) participants in community engagement are informed of the ways in which the community engagement process will influence Council decision-making.

3   PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This Policy applies to all Councilors and Officers of the Pyrenees Shire Council and should be applied to all community engagement undertaken on behalf of Council.

The purpose of this Policy is to articulate how Council will engage with its community in the making of important and relevant decisions, and:

- to demonstrate Council's commitment to strong engagement with its community,
- to provide guidance to the organisation when undertaking community engagement,
- to inform the Pyrenees Shire community about Council's approach to community engagement, and
- to foster and promote high quality engagement practices across the organisation.

Frameworks and tools to help implement this Policy are being developed in collaboration with the community over the next twelve months. This Policy should be read in conjunction with Council's Transparency Policy.

4   DEFINITIONS

Community	The term 'community' can refer to a group of people who are connected their place of residence or work, or by a shared interest or experience. When referring to the Pyrenees Shire Community, this reflects residents, businesses, rate payers and visitors. Specific communities of interest or experience might be a community of young people, or the arts community.
Community engagement	The participation of Council and its local community in problem solving, information gathering, and decision-making. Community engagement to a long-term collaboration on a project.
Consultation	The process by which information is gained or exchanged between Council and its community prior to a decision being made. Consultation is an active component of the community engagement process, allowing Council to receive advice or input that better informs decision-making processes.
Deliberative engagement	Engagement that provides a representative sample of the community an opportunity to consider an issue in detail and work together to develop solutions. Deliberative engagement will have a clear remit and the commitment to implement the outcomes of the deliberative process will be made prior to the undertaking engagement process.

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Public participation spectrum (IAP2)[1]	The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum defines the level of influence that a community engagement process will have on decision-making. The (IAP2) spectrum defines five different levels of community involvement in decision-making:
	1. **Inform:** Provision of balanced, objective and timely information to the public.
	2. **Consult:** Obtain feedback on options and alternatives; to listen, acknowledge and seek to understand concerns and opportunities.
	3. **Involve:** Work directly with the community throughout the decision-making or project process to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered.
	4. **Collaborate:** Partner with the public in each aspect of a decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.
	5. **Empower:** To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Stakeholder	A stakeholder is an individual, business or organisation or community of interest that has been identified to have a vested interest in the outcomes of a project.

5   POLICY

5.1   When will Council undertake community engagement?

Pyrenees Shire Council has an ongoing responsibility to engage with our community when making decisions that impact places, services, and infrastructure that affect our residents, businesses and visitors. We see our community as a resource with which we can gather information, collaborate and build solutions. Strategic, Policy, Planning, and Capital work carried out by the Pyrenees Shire Council should be assessed according to the level of impact on the Pyrenees Shire Council Community. Engagement should happen early in the process of planning changes of or the introduction of new services, facilities, policies or local laws that impact our community. Engagement strategies will then be identified, using the *IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum*, which articulates the level of influence the community may have over a given matter.

Council has statutory community engagement responsibilities and makes decisions under a wide variety of Victorian and Australian legislation. In many instances, the legislation sets standards and provides minimum requirements regarding notifications and referrals.

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[1] Council might use IAP2 terminology and processes when discussing community engagement strategies and approaches. It should be noted that general reference to 'consultation' in this document and by Council refer to the previous definition and not to IAP2 Level 2 – Consult. Where Council is referring to the IAP2 level, it will clearly outline the nature of that reference for clarity.

5.2   When might Council not undertake community engagement?

Engagement might not take place when:

- The existing Council Plan or other existing Council Policy mandates a particular course of action,
- There has been prior engagement and the content and environment remains essentially unchanged,
- The Council is bound by legal, commercial, or legislative constraints and/or considerations such as statutory requirements, funding requirements or policy requirements of other levels of government,
- The issue relates to internal operational matters, or
- Critical incidents which pose immediate risk or emergency management events which require an immediate response and action by Council.

5.3   How will Council engage with the community?

Council's community engagement activities should always consider the three core principles of purposeful, accessible, representative.

5.3.1   Purposeful

Community engagement should have a clearly defined purpose. Participants can better engage with Council when they understand the purposes and expected outcomes of an engagement activity. The aim of community engagement is to gather meaningful input from community into decision-making processes.

5.3.2   Accessible

Engagement should be accessible and undertaken in a way that allows participation by all members of the community, regardless of age, ability, education, culture, language, gender, or socioeconomic position. We will work with our community to understand barriers to participation and ensure that these are identified and managed.

5.3.3   Representative

We will aim to engage across all persons, groups, and demographic cohorts of our community to ensure that participation is representative of the population likely to be impacted by a particular project.

5.3.4   Informed

We will ensure that our community has access to information to guide their input into community engagement activities. We will communicate with our participants and our community to keep them informed of engagement outcomes and communicate the ways in which community input has been used to inform decision-making.

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5.4   Community engagement methods

The methods used for community engagement will be selected to suit the project's objectives, scope, and level of impact. When selecting engagement methods, consideration should be given to the three principles outlined in section 4.3. This may require multiple methods to be deployed simultaneously.

Table 1. Example of tools and methods that may be used according to the IAP2 Public Participation *Spectrum*.

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Example methods	• Signage or public exhibition • Pyrenees Shire Council Newsletter • Social Media • Mail • Email lists • Notice in local media • Website	• Listening posts • Council Cuppas • Surveys • Social media • Call for feedback on draft plans or documents on public exhibition • Door knocking • Webinars	• Working Groups • Advisory or Reference Groups • Workshops • World Café / Conversation Cafe; Forums; Symposia • Online discussion forum • Voting • Mapping (online or in-person) • Photo-visioning		• Co-Design • Deliberative democracy processes • Participatory budgeting • Voting • Citizen panel

5.5   Reporting

After carrying out engagement activities we will report back to the Community on whether and how the engagement resulted in changes to the course of the project. We will clearly articulate what decisions were made and why, and how these will be implemented. Council will report on its community engagement activities quarterly via reports to Council meetings.

5.6   Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation will identify whether the outcomes generated through a community engagement process are sufficient for Council to make decisions. Monitoring and Evaluation activities will be guided by the engagement plan.

6   REFERENCE & RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Local Government Act 2020
- Pyrenees Shire Council Community Vision (under development)
- Pyrenees Shire Council Plan

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6.1   Consultation and impact

Pyrenees Shire Council is committed to consultation and cooperation between management and its employees. Development of this Policy was conducted in consultation with relevant staff and consultative committees prior to approval. It is considered that this Policy does not impact negatively on the rights identified in the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities (2007).

A draft version of this policy was put out for exhibition and feedback from the public was invited from 10 December 2020 to 15 January 2021. Community members who provided feedback were informed of the outcomes of their feedback which resulted in four amendments to the policy being made.

7   VERSION HISTORY

Version Number	Issue date	Description of change
1.0	28.11.2020	Initial release
2.0	05.02.2021	Amendments in response to community feedback

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