GEN6   PUBLIC PARTICIPATION POLICY

POLICY:

The Council is committed to developing a culture that involves community participation in the decision making process..

This Policy, and its attachments, provides a framework that:
- allows the Council and staff be suitably informed regarding community and stakeholder views prior to making decisions regarding the Town's activities, projects, services and policies, where appropriate;
- encourages the community to have a shared understanding on the decision-making process;
- supports the need for each public participation opportunity to be tailor-made specific for each project, requiring deployment of a variety of different engagement techniques and tools;
- provides feedback on decisions made as a result of public participation;
- provides a system and guidelines to ensure that public participation is well-planned, consistent, inclusive and effective in reaching positive outcomes;
- creates a culture that fosters authentic participation opportunities in the decision-making process consistent with a best practice model;
- supports the Town complying with statutory requirements;
- integrates with best practice in project management and strategic relationship management .

It must be noted that when a decision is
- mandatory it is a compulsory obligation and the Town of Victoria Park shall comply with legislative requirements; and
- discretionary and deemed appropriate, the Council will engage in public participation.

The Policy is based on the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum, core values and ethics.

PROCEDURE:

Purpose:
Public participation is a way of including the views of the community in the planning and decision making processes so that together Council and the community can actively participate in identifying, understanding and developing strategies that deliver services which reflect community expectations.

Scope:
This policy and procedure applies to Elected Members, staff, contractors, consultants, working groups and committees of Council who are working on any project or program that require Council to engage (inform, consult and/or partner) with the community;

Keeping Elected Members informed
- Elected Members should be invited to attend public participation opportunities and should be provided with any supporting information prior to invitations being made to the community

- Opportunities for public participation should be identified to Elected Members through the Members' Information Bulletin; and/or Program Area Bulletins; and/or Councillors Workshop prior to any planned community participation engagements.

Integration of Public Participation with key processes and corporate documents

1.   Project Management

Integral to effective public participation is the ability to manage projects.   A Project Management suite of documents and tools is being developed and will incorporate a section that demonstrates the technique to be used.

2.   The Integrated Planning and Reporting Suite of Corporate documents

Community Actions and Priorities that emanate out of the Public Participation Process shall be used in development of the following Corporate documents:

1.   Strategic Community Plan;
2.   Work Force Plan;
3.   Asset Management Plans;
4.   Long Term Financial Plan;
5.   4 Year Corporate Business Plan;
6.   Annual Budget; and
7.   Annual Business Unit Business Plans

The table below outlines examples of mandatory and discretionary engagement:

Status	Basis	Examples	
Mandated	Legislation – Town Planning Scheme		• Advertising road closures • Informing neighbours of property changes • Advertising major trading undertakings • Council meeting dates
Discretionary	Policy Management Practice		• Development of Plans that affect the community • Gauging community opinion on services provided

When *do we engage?*

Before making a decision on who to engage and the method of engagement to be used, it is critical that the following considerations be made.

NOTE: Project Management templates and the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Matrix attached to this Procedure MUST BE USED.

STEP ONE - SCOPE

Decide whether or not to engage.

1. Confirm why you have made your decision
2. Keep your Objective simple
3. Identify and prioritise your issues
4. Be mindful of any constraints or limitations – these could be – budget, timeframe for completion, internal decisions that have already been made; any legal and policy requirements
5. Develop a list of stakeholders and chart the nature of relationships (collaboration and conflict)
6. Identify the appropriate participation method using the IAP 2 spectrum
7. Explore and define the purpose collectively with the project sponsor and team
8. Obtain in-principle approval of the Scope

Consider:

- the purpose of engagement because stakeholders may vary depending upon the type of project;
- characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, age, socio-economic background as well as special needs – each is equally important;
- the impact of not including people from different backgrounds;
- the desired level of participation and influence of stakeholders in the process
- what will maximise participation in the engagement process;
- what will be the most effective ways to reach out to different groups of stakeholders;
- what will be the most suitable method of engagement and tools/techniques to use; and
- a good Communication Plan that can go a long way to ensuring commitment to transparency and accountability as it provides stakeholders with an understanding of the technical aspects that impact the project as well as the engagement process;

STEP TWO - PLAN

1. Identify, map and prioritise stakeholders
2. Correlate stakeholders and issues
3. Conduct a risk assessment
4. Determine level of engagement
5. Establish the technique you will use
6. Establish your evaluation criteria

Note: It is extremely significant and important to ensure that adequate financial and human resources are assigned to the project.

In establishing the **evaluation criteria,** consider:
- The purpose of the evaluation;
- What indicators will be used;
- What evaluation method will be used;
- Who will carry out the evaluation; and
- How will reporting back to the community occur.

Remember to gather quantitative and qualitative data to ensure comprehensive evaluation

> ### _STEP THREE – ASSESS THE LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION_
>
> 1 Assess internal and external expectations
> 2 Review the participation level chosen from the IAP2 Spectrum
> 3 Design your engagement strategy
> 4 Validate and confirm your strategy
> 5 Confirm objectives, scope and accountability

- Include internal and external stakeholders such as Elected Members, the community and other staff involved in the wide implementation of the project.
- Check to ensure that the project team is clear on the outcomes of the engagement planning process and that there is clarity about responsibility and roles within the team.
- Use the Project Management Suite of Templates.

> ### _STEP FOUR – DEFINE THE DECISION PROCESS AND PARTICIPATION OBJECTIVES_
>
> 1. The existing decision process
> 2. Set Participation Objectives for each step in the process
> 3. Compare decision process with objectives
> 4. Check to confirm objectives meet needs

Ensure that
- all stakeholders including internal stakeholders such as the project team and Elected Members are kept informed of the process;
- there are adequate resources and that community resources are used efficiently and effectively; and
- project team members are appropriately trained eg: in cultural awareness and facilitation techniques

STEP FIVE - DESIGN THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

1   Determine plan format
2   Identify public participation techniques
3   Plan for evaluation
4   Report on engagement outcomes (include internal and external stakeholders)

Ensure that the:

- engagement process is documented;
- quantitative and qualitative data collected during the process is used to determine the need and timing for further engagement;
- results on the outcomes are communicated to all stakeholders;
- provide feedback on community input. Clearly state reason for final decision taken; and
- publish decision on the Web, in the newspapers

STEP SIX – LEARN AND IMPROVE

1   Document your learnings (what worked well; what could be improved); and

2   Assess implications of the engagement process and ensure that this information is captured and used in future public participation processes

Financial and Human Resource Implications:

- All identified public participation engagements should form part of a wider Project Plan approved by the Project Sponsor.   The Project Plan should specifically include an engagement budget, human resource allocation and resource requirements commensurate with project and public participation needs.

- As one of the Town of Victoria Park's roles is Advocacy, there may be circumstances where public participation is not undertaken and this should be recorded in Council Minutes.

Statutory Implications:
It should be noted that when a decision is mandatory the Council shall comply with statutory requirements. An example of this is the Strategic Community Plan, Sections 1.7 and 1.8 of the *Local Government Act 1995* refer.

Evaluation of the Policy and Procedure:
An evaluation shall occur every 2 years and is the responsibility of the Chief Executive

Officer.

RELATED POLICES:	GEN3 Community Consultation
DELEGATION:	Delegated to CEO – Sub-delegation – Yes
AUTHORITY:	Council Meeting 11 June 2013 – version 1
REVIEW:	July 2013 August 2015 August 2015

Attachments to GEN6 – Public Participation Policy

Examples of techniques used in the Town of Victoria Park – based on the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)

Method of Engagement	Promise to the public	Examples of techniques for consideration
INFORM		
To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives or solutions	We will keep you informed	1. Policy changes 2. Planning Applications for contentious issues 3. Road works – 'Like-for-Like' example – replacing bitumen
CONSULT		
To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives, or decisions	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge your concerns, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. We will seek your feedback on drafts and proposals.	1. Parking Hotspots 2. Planning Applications for contentious issues 3. Road works - roundabouts
INVOLVE		
To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public and private concerns are consistently understood and considered	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	1. Events Strategy 2. Website

Method of Engagement	Promise to the public	Examples of techniques for consideration
COLLABORATE		
To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	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	1. Events Strategy 2. Major Land Transactions – example Town Centre Re-development 3. Community Group Projects
EMPOWER		
To place final decision making in the hands of the public	To place final decisions making in the hands of the public	Community Group Projects

More examples of engagement techniques

Method of Engagement	Promise to the public	Types of engagement techniques (examples)
INFORM		
To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives or solutions	We will keep you informed	1. Media advertisement 2. Fact sheets & Brochures 3. Direct email or mail-out 4. Newsletters 5. Briefings 6. Open Days 7. Web based engagement 8. Progress reports 9. Information kiosks/ displays 10. Open House
CONSULT		
To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives, or decisions	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge your concerns, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. We will seek your feedback on drafts and proposals.	1. Focus groups 2. Open days 3. Surveys 4. Public comment 5. Feedback forms 6. Resident feedback registers 7. Interviews 8. Ishikawa (Fishbone) 9. Brainstorming
INVOLVE		
To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public and private concerns are consistently understood and considered	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	1. Stakeholder meetings 2. Seminars 3. Workshops 4. Tours and field trips 5. Deliberative Forums 6. Panels 7. Open space technology

COLLABORATE		
To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	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	1. World café 2. Open space meetings
EMPOWER		
To place final decision making in the hands of the public	To place final decisions making in the hands of the public	1. Voting 2. Authorised panels 3. Citizen juries 4. Advisory Committees 5. Participatory budgeting