

Policy – Council – Community Engagement & Communications

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Date amended: | May 2022 |
| Date of next review: | January 2024 |
| Adopted by: | Council |
| Date adopted: | |
| Responsible officer: | Director Corporate & Community Services |

1 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Wadawurrung, Dja Dja Wurrung, Eastern Maar and Wotjobaluk tribes, who are the Traditional Custodians of the land which makes up the Pyrenees Shire. We pay our respects to the customs, traditions, and stewardship of the land by the Elders past and present, and emerging leaders, and the people of these tribes.

2 POLICY STATEMENT

The Pyrenees Shire Council recognises and values the knowledge and experiences within our communities and is committed to placing the community at the heart of what we do.

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

Whenever Council is planning, delivering a project, or making a decision that significantly impacts the way our community experiences the shire or their interaction with Council, the community must have the opportunity to meaningfully participate in that process.

The policy supports the Enabling Principles within the Council Plan 2021-2025 to achieve Council's Vision 2025 to achieve sustainable and welcoming places and natural environments that create inclusive, happy, and healthy connected communities.

- Motivate and inspire community involvement
- Provide transparency and accountability
- Use resources efficiently and effectively

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Policy – Community Engagement | This document is uncontrolled when printed | | Responsible Officer: Director CCS |
| Version 2.1 DRAFT | Issue Date: May 2022 | Next Review: Jan 2024 | Page 1 of 10 |



2.1 Engagement Principles

The Pyrenees Shire Council has incorporated the Engagement Principles outlined in s56 of the *Local Government Act 2020* in the following Council Principles that underpin and are our guiding rules for community engagement and communications.

2.1.1 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.

2.1.2 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.

2.1.3 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.

2.1.4 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.

3 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The Community Engagement Policy outlines the Pyrenees Shire Council's commitment and approach to community engagement practice and:

- details the principles that will guide our work in delivering the objectives of the Pyrenees Shire Council Plan 2021-2025, incorporating shared problem-solving, open conversation and meaningful participation,
- outlines key aspects of the Pyrenees Shire Council Community Engagement Framework detailed in the Community Engagement & Communications Strategy 2022-2025, and
- is underpinned by theory and evidence through use of the IAP2 engagement spectrum.

The policy:

- seeks to develop and foster a stronger culture of public participation,

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Policy – Community Engagement | This document is uncontrolled when printed | | Responsible Officer: Director CCS |
| Version 2.1 DRAFT | Issue Date: May 2022 | Next Review: Jan 2024 | Page 2 of 10 |



- aims to deliver better decisions, through community engagement activity outcomes resulting in improved policy, facilities, and services, and
- aims to improve community satisfaction and wellbeing.

The policy is supported by a framework comprising of:

- Communications and Engagement Strategy 2022-2025
- Community Engagement Guidelines
- Community Engagement Plan Template

This policy applies to all persons engaged in engagement with our communities on behalf of the Pyrenees Shire Council.

4 THE IAP2 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SPECTRUM

Community engagement occurs for a wide variety of reasons, across the entirety of Council functions, for example: strategic, urban or land planning; service delivery; infrastructure asset design; strategy and plan development, and more.

Pyrenees Shire Council uses the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Engagement to guide our planning for consultation and engagement. The IAP2 Spectrum is a widely recognised tool that defines the level of influence that an engagement process will have on decision-making. For each level there is a corresponding goal, and role for Council and its community.

| | <i>inform</i> | <i>consult</i> | <i>involve</i> | <i>collaborate</i> | <i>empower</i> |
|---------------------|--|---|---|--|---|
| <i>goal</i> | To provide balanced and objective information in a timely manner | To seek and consider feedback on issues, alternatives, and proposed decisions | To work with stakeholders to ensure concerns and aspirations are considered and understood | To partner with stakeholders in each aspect of the decision-making process | To place final decision-making in the hands of stakeholders |
| <i>Council role</i> | To keep you informed | To listen and acknowledge your feedback whilst exploring options | To work with you to ensure your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the decisions made | To seek from you, advice and innovation and incorporate this into decisions as | To ensure appropriate information and tools are available for you to meaningfully identify solutions, |

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Policy – Community Engagement | This document is uncontrolled when printed | | Responsible Officer: Director CCS |
| Version 2.1 DRAFT | Issue Date: May 2022 | Next Review: Jan 2024 | Page 3 of 10 |



| | inform | consult | involve | collaborate | empower |
|------------------------|---|---|--|---|---|
| | | | | much as possible | lead & deliver change |
| <i>Community role</i> | To listen and keep in touch | Contribute ideas and feedback | Participate in the engagement process by sharing ideas, concerns, and aspirations | Partner with Council to develop solutions | Collaborate with Council to identify solutions and/or implement agreed decisions |
| <i>Engagement type</i> | Informative | Contribute | Deliberative | Deliberative | Deliberative |
| <i>Example methods</i> | Signage / public exhibition, newsletters, social media, mail, email lists | Listening posts, Council cuppas, Surveys, social media, call for feedback on draft documents, door knocking, webinars | Working groups, advisory or reference groups, workshops, conversation forums, symposia, online discussion forum, voting, mapping | | Co-design, deliberative democracy processes, participatory budgeting, voting, citizen panel |

More than one level of engagement may be used across a project, depending on the scope, timeline, and impact identified.

5 MEDIA RELATIONS

5.1 Media relations

Council's Mayor or Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is the designated spokesperson for Council. A director or manager can be delegated to this role if they are considered a subject matter expert in the area. The Mayor can nominate another Councillor to speak in their place.

The Chief Executive Officer will provide permission for any interview or photographic opportunity prior to engagement with a journalist.

Media relations are carried out by the Communications Department. All media calls must be directed to the Communications Department.

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Policy – Community Engagement | This document is uncontrolled when printed | | Responsible Officer: Director CCS |
| Version 2.1 DRAFT | Issue Date: May 2022 | Next Review: Jan 2024 | Page 4 of 10 |



Staff are not permitted to speak to media on behalf of Council. If staff are asked by media for their opinion on a matter, they must direct this query to the Communications Department. In the event that Communications Officers are unavailable to speak to media, the Executive Assistant to the CEO can log the request and liaise with the CEO on a potential response.

The delegated spokesperson will be provided with speech notes provided by the Communications Department if required.

5.2 Media releases

Council officers can propose ideas for media releases, as well as content for other Council publications. Officers should discuss ideas with their line manager and relevant director, prior to engaging with the Communications Department.

Communications officers will work with staff members to format and edit content to fit with media release pro forma. Communications officers will have the final say on content before final CEO approval. The Communications Department will seek approval on final content from the relevant director and CEO before release to the media.

5.3 Councillors and the media

Every Councillor has the right to express a private opinion on any issue, whether or not that opinion reflects Council's official position, but Councillors must carefully identify the role in which they speak or make comment. Whenever Councillors publicly express their own opinions, they must clarify they are speaking on their own behalf (unless delegated by the Mayor) and not on behalf of Council, unless they are supporting an agreed Council position.

When Councillors speak on behalf of the Council, when delegated by the Mayor, they must express and support Council's entire policy or position on the issue at hand.

Councillors have the opportunity to write a weekly column for the *Pyrenees Advocate*, which is rotated fortnightly between the Mayor and the remaining Councillors. This column can be generated on any topic, but Council reserves the right to edit the column to ensure compliance with current policy positions. Councillors understand small amendments can be made without checking with them, however wide-ranging changes will be confirmed with them before publication.

6 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

6.1 When will we undertake community engagement?

We must engage with our community when making decisions that impact places, services, and infrastructure that affect our residents, businesses, and visitors. 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.

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Policy – Community Engagement | This document is uncontrolled when printed | | Responsible Officer: Director CCS |
| Version 2.1 DRAFT | Issue Date: May 2022 | Next Review: Jan 2024 | Page 5 of 10 |



We should see our community as a resource from which to gather information and collaborate and build solutions with. Development of Council strategy and policy; strategic planning; service planning; capital works and infrastructure planning should all be assessed according to the level of impact on our communities.

Engagement should happen early in the process of planning changes of or the introduction of new services, facilities, policies, strategies, or local laws that impact our communities. Appropriate engagement strategies should be identified, using the Community Engagement Toolkit which provides guidance on the level of community influence is appropriate over a given matter.

6.2 When might we 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.

6.3 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.

6.4 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.

7 ANNUAL COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT PLAN

An Annual Communications & Engagement Plan will be developed by the Communications Team, in collaboration with the Senior Leadership Team.

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Policy – Community Engagement | This document is uncontrolled when printed | | Responsible Officer: Director CCS |
| Version 2.1 DRAFT | Issue Date: May 2022 | Next Review: Jan 2024 | Page 6 of 10 |



The Annual Communications & Engagement Plan will provide a summary of planned communications and engagement for the Calendar year. The Plan will be published on Council’s website and updated as needed throughout the year.

8 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

| | |
|---|---|
| Community, business, and other stakeholders | Support community engagement processes and Council decision-making by proactively seeking information, actively participating in engagement activities, submitting ideas, and promoting consultation opportunities to other stakeholders. |
| Mayor and Councillors | Champion the commitment and principles of engagement through leadership and inclusive decision-making. |
| CEO, Directors | Champion and foster a culture that encourages engagement and model the engagement principles through leadership, process, and implementation of this policy. Monitor the implementation of this policy and conduct periodic reviews to drive continuous improvement. |
| Senior Leadership Team | Manage teams and projects to ensure community engagement is undertaken which is consistent with this policy and the Community Engagement & Communications Strategy. Ensure that staff involved in community engagement are appropriately resourced, trained, and supported. |
| Employees | Ensure community engagement planning and delivery is consistent with this policy and the Community Engagement & Communications Strategy, as appropriate to their role. |

9 DEFINITIONS

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Authorisation | The process by which the Chief Executive Officers decides and approves a response to media. |
| Co-design | A partnership with community to develop an agreed model or design of public infrastructure, facility, or service delivery. Co-design can also refer to the co-design of the engagement process itself to ensure it is fully transparent and works for all stakeholders. |
| 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. |

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Policy – Community Engagement | This document is uncontrolled when printed | | Responsible Officer: Director CCS |
| Version 2.1 DRAFT | Issue Date: May 2022 | Next Review: Jan 2024 | Page 7 of 10 |



| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Community engagement | A planned process with the specific purpose of working with individuals and groups to encourage active involvement in decisions that affect them or are of interest to them. |
| 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. |
| Media | Journalists and the organisations they work for: news websites, newspapers, television, radio etc. |
| Participatory decision-making | A process that includes a broad range of people in the making of a decision. It includes both 'public participation' and 'community engagement'. |
| Public participation | The involvement of people who live, work, create, visit, or study across the Pyrenees Shire in Council decisions and planning. Participants know how they can influence a decision and are encouraged and supported to participate. |
| Spokesperson | Person authorised to speak to media on behalf of Council. |
| 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. |

10 REFERENCE

10.1 Council framework

This Policy provides mandatory compliance requirements on the following documents that form the Pyrenees Shire Council Community Engagement & Communications Framework:

- Community Engagement & Communications Policy 2022
- Community Engagement & Communications Guidelines
- Communications & Engagement Strategy 2022-2025
- Photography & Images Procedure
- Community Engagement Plan Template

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Policy – Community Engagement | This document is uncontrolled when printed | | Responsible Officer: Director CCS |
| Version 2.1 DRAFT | Issue Date: May 2022 | Next Review: Jan 2024 | Page 8 of 10 |



10.2 Legislative obligations

Some community engagement work is guided by Victorian Government legislation which sets specific engagement requirements for some activities. The Local Government Act 2020 outlines a set of overarching principles and requirements to guide the engagement approach of councils, in particular those relating to long-term strategy council planning and budgeting, amendments to the planning scheme, development of public health and wellbeing plans, local law making, land acquisition and sale, and some road reviews.

Other relevant legislation includes:

- Aged Care Act 1998
- Aged Care Quality Standards
- Charter of Aged Care Rights
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005
- Disability Act 2006
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- Gender Equality Act 2020
- Local Government Act 1989
- Multicultural Victoria Act 2011
- Planning and Environment Act 1987
- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014
- Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008
- Road Management Act 2004
- Subordinate Legislation Act 1995

10.3 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 in February 2022. Community members who provided feedback were informed of the outcomes of their feedback which **resulted ...**

11 VERSION HISTORY

| Version Number | Issue date | Description of change |
|----------------|------------|-----------------------|
| 1.0 | 28.11.2020 | Initial release. |

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Policy – Community Engagement | This document is uncontrolled when printed | | Responsible Officer: Director CCS |
| Version 2.1 DRAFT | Issue Date: May 2022 | Next Review: Jan 2024 | Page 9 of 10 |



| | | |
|-----|------------|--|
| 2.0 | 05.02.2021 | Amendments in response to community feedback. |
| 2.1 | May 2022 | Review and further amendment to align with engagement framework and strategy development. Includes replacement wording for 'Spokesperson Policy' in 'Media Relations' section. |
| | | |

DRAFT

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Policy – Community Engagement | This document is uncontrolled when printed | | Responsible Officer: Director CCS |
| Version 2.1 DRAFT | Issue Date: May 2022 | Next Review: Jan 2024 | Page 10 of 10 |

