Community Engagement Policy

Aligned City Value/s	Approachable	Responsive	Transparent	Innovative
Responsible Directorate	Community Development			
Responsible Business Unit/s	Community Engagement			
Responsible Officer	Head of Community Engagement			
Affected Business Unit/s	All Business Units			

Objective

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Provide a clear statement of Council's commitment to best-practice community and stakeholder engagement.
- Define the guiding principles to ensure meaningful and inclusive engagement across the City of Stirling.
- Provide a set of definitions for consistent and clear communication
- Communicate the responsibilities for community engagement across Council.
- Promote transparency and accountability in Council's decision-making.
- Manage the impact of community engagement across our diverse communities.

Scope

This policy outlines the City of Stirling's commitment to community engagement.

It is supported by a suite of engagement resources that provide a step-by-step approach to designing, delivering, reporting on, and evaluating community engagement.

This policy applies to all Council service areas, teams and employees.

Policy

At the City of Stirling, community engagement focuses on informing the Council's decisions, sharing knowledge, and strengthening relationships with the community. It refers to the many ways in which the Council connects with communities in day-to-day interactions and in the development and implementation of policies, programs, and services.

The outcomes of community engagement activities might include informing decisions that result in improved service, design, facilities, or policy; strengthening relationships between the community and the Council; or facilitating the process of sharing knowledge between the community and the Council.

Principles

The City of Stirling has adopted guiding principles to underpin engagement with the community. These principles will help to improve service delivery, identify and respond to changing local needs, and maintain an ongoing dialogue with diverse community members.

The following seven principles guide the City of Stirling's community engagement:

1. We manage expectations with clear purpose and negotiables

2. We use best practice tools and methodology

3. We build trust and credibility

4. We lead with respect and understanding of what we already know

5. We identify our stakeholders and start where people are at

6. We close the loop with the community

7. We monitor and evaluate our engagement efforts and identify opportunities for improvement.

Each of the seven principles are described further below.

Principle	Description
We manage expectations with clear purpose and negotiables	• The purpose of the engagement is publicly communicated at the start of the engagement process. This includes the objectives, negotiables and non-negotiables. • The community is informed on how their involvement will influence the decision-making process at the start of the engagement. • Councillors have participated in the Engagement planning process and the setting of engagement objectives and negotiables.
We use best practice tools and methodology	• Best practice engagement is using tools and methodologies that are designed to be inclusive, accessible and coordinated. An inclusive and accessible process demonstrates respect and leads to diverse voices being heard by decision-makers and the broader public. • There is a mix of engagement types, including online and face-to-face, which reflect the community's preferences.
We build trust and credibility	• The community is supported to participate in the engagement, and the Council demonstrates that their involvement is valued. • There is evidence that the engagement outcomes have informed project decisions.
We lead with respect and understanding of what we already know	• Impacts associated with the engagement process are identified and managed. • The community has the knowledge, resources and opportunity to provide informed contributions to the engagement. This requires the participants to be provided with relevant, tailored and timely information about the project and their role in the decision-making process. • Throughout any engagement, all community members and their views are respected. • The engagement builds on the existing understanding of the community, and previous community engagement processes and outcomes.
We identify our stakeholders and	• The engagement planning involves understanding the community and the key groups who may have an interest or may be impacted by the

Principle	Description
start where people are at	engagement. This includes researching the community to identify who has and who has not contributed to past projects and actively seeking out and genuinely engaging those groups and cohorts in the community who are considered 'hard to reach'. • The engagement design identifies and addresses any barriers to community engagement and uses a range of engagement tools to provide people with options in how they participate.
We close the loop with the community	• Engagement outcomes and how decisions were made, will be shared with the community. • Updates and final outcomes of community engagement will be shared on key Council communication forums and channels.
We monitor and evaluate our engagement efforts and identify opportunities for improvement.	• The success of the engagement will be measured to understand what is working, what is not working and ideas for improvement. • Participants will be given the opportunity to provide feedback on the engagement, both on the process itself and their preferences for future engagement.

When the City of Stirling may engage

The City of Stirling will undertake engagement when decisions or plans are likely to impact the community. This may include situations where Council is:

- Creating a new plan or updating an existing plan

- Making a change that will impact the community

- Making a decision that is likely to impact people and the places they live, work, invest or visit

- Seeking to address an issue impacting the community that has been raised and requires a decision

- Hearing from the community that they have an interest in a policy, initiative or service

- Requiring assistance to identify community needs, values or aspirations

- Seeking to provide information to increase knowledge and change behaviour

- Seeking new, or wishes to strengthen, existing relationships with the community
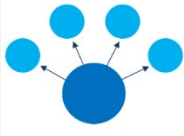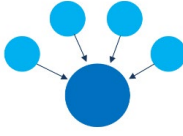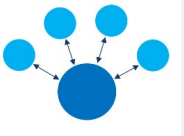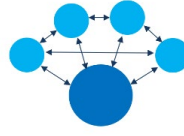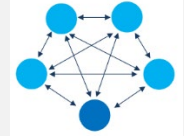
- Required by law to do so.

Engagement Spectrum

The City of Stirling's engagement approach is guided by the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum, which describes five levels of engagement, from Inform to Empower.

The Spectrum below includes a commitment to the community in terms of their involvement and influence on the Council's process. Many projects will involve more than one level of engagement. This is because the community can have different levels of influence at different stages of the project and different groups within the community may be more directly impacted than others.

The Spectrum also includes a description of Consultation, Engagement, and Empowerment. These outline how the levels of engagement could be used in the Council's decision-making process.

The table below describes the five levels of the Spectrum and the roles of Council and community.

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Levels					
Goal	To provide balanced and objective information to make our community aware of something that has happened or will happen.	To listen to our community's feedback on options or a potential decision and consider their views in our decision.	To seek input to identify issues, concerns and aspirations to inform decision-making and show how that input has informed the decision	To work with our community to develop a detailed understanding of all the issues and opportunities and identify agreed solutions at every step of the process.	To build the capacity of our community to identify solutions and/or lead change.
Commitment	We will keep you informed.	We will listen to and acknowledge your concerns.	We will work with you to exchange information, ideas and concerns	We will seek advice and innovation from amongst the various stakeholder groups	We will work with you to implement agreed decisions.
Description	**Consultation** The engagement levels of Inform and Consult typically occur when a decision has been made, and Council wants to either communicate that decision to the community, or seek opinions on the decisions. **Business Units Responsibility**		**Engagement** The engagement levels of Involve and Collaborate involve two-way information flows and include sharing knowledge within and across the community during the decision-making process. When committing to undertaking Engagement, decision makers are using the community's feedback to inform the decision and the outcome. **Community Engagement Team Responsibility**		**Empowerment** The engagement level of Empower is where decisions are made jointly between Council and the community. This is where decision-making authority has been delegated to a group, which includes both representatives of Council and the community.

When engagement may not be sought

There are some situations when it may not be effective or appropriate to engage with the community or stakeholders:

- Legal constraints exist (e.g. confidentiality).
- Council is required to act in a timeframe which precludes consultation for example, an issue of public safety or it is an emergency.
- The matter delivers a policy-driven decision where previous engagement with the community and stakeholders has occurred.
- Council is not the decision-maker and has no ability to influence the decision.

- The matter concerns public safety or is an emergency.

Where it is determined that feedback will not be sought, Council will clearly communicate to inform the impacted stakeholders why feedback was not sought.

Responsibility of Business Units

To ensure a consistent approach to community engagement, Business Units are required to develop consultation procedures for when a decision has been made and BUs want to either communicate with the community (Inform) or seek feedback on the decision (Consult).
As a minimum, these procedures will include the following areas:

- Legislative requirements (if applicable)
- Decision-maker
- Background and context
- Consultation requirements
- Method and timing of feedback and communication
- Advertising time-frames
- Impacted consultation radius
- Signage and content requirements.
- How submissions are considered
- What matters can be considered
- Reporting format for feedback on decisions including consultation tables.

The procedure and related structure will be reviewed annually to ensure relevance and practicality.

Responsibility of the Community Engagement Team

The Community Engagement Team sets the strategic community engagement vision and leads the planning, coordination, and management of projects and program shaping our City.

The team encourages an approach to ask early, ask everyone, ask for advice and take the time to listen. The team has developed the Stirling Way Community Engagement Management Practice, to guide how we engage with our community and Locally-led Stirling to get everyone involved in shaping what it means to be 'a local'.

Definitions

Collaboration	To work with our community to develop a detailed understanding of all the issues and opportunities and identify agreed solutions at every step of the process.
Communication	Imparting or exchanging information or ideas, utilising a range of channels and mediums.
Community	A group of people who live in the same geographical area or have a shared background, interest, affiliation or membership.
Compliance	Understanding and meeting regulatory and/or legal requirements.
Consultation	To listen to our community's feedback on options or a potential decision and consider their views in our decision.
Consultation Tables	A summary table for reports that consolidates community support and opposition by proximity to the project location (100m, 200m) and extended community. The purpose

	is to enhance consistency in relation to how Council reviews and interprets local consultation submissions.
Deliberation	A method of engagement process with a select group of participants. The process focuses on a defined issue. It weighs up options and provides recommendations to decision-makers.
Diverse community	The different types of people that make up a community. Diversity includes race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, disability, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies.
Engagement	A process to strengthen relationships, increase local knowledge and inform decision-making.
Hard-to-reach	Individuals and groups that may be more difficult to involve in public engagement and/or may have many barriers to engagement. These barriers may include disability, location, language, culture, time, and resources.
IAP2	International Association for Public Participation. The leading professional organisation advancing the practice of public participation globally by promoting the right of those affected by a decision to have a say in the decision-making process, highlighting the benefits of this to organisations, governments and individuals, and providing training programs.
Inclusion	The practices that allow all people to feel valued and respected, irrespective of age, disability, gender, religion, sexual preference, or nationality, are evident when anyone who wishes to can fully participate. This means they can access, understand, and contribute their perspectives and talents to the engagement.
Locally-led	Locally-led approaches are defined by a geographic location. They are collaborative, long-term approaches to listen and respond with a local focus.
Partnership	Two or more people or organisations working in a formalised relationship with a clear sense of purpose. Accountabilities and responsibilities are shared.
Process	A relationship between key steps, activities, tasks, policies and/or resources.
Program	A group of related projects, subprograms and program activities managed in a coordinated way to obtain benefits not available from managing them individually.
Project	An endeavour undertaken to create a unique product, service or result. Projects have a definite beginning and end, and a desired outcome. Projects could be the development of a service, change in business structure or process, delivering information technology, construction of infrastructure or enhancing a policy.
Public	Individuals who live, work, visit or have an interest in a defined place.
Stakeholders	Individuals or organisations, which affect, or can be affected by project decisions. Organisations can include not-for-profit and community-based groups, business and industry, and volunteer networks. They may also include other departments or agencies across federal, state and local government.
Submission	A submission is a formal written response process to understand the community support and/or opposition for a proposed decision or plan during a consultation period.
Tacit Consent	Tacit consent is whereby a non-response is treated to be a response in the affirmative for the purpose of decision-making. The City does not use this methodology.

Relevant management practices/documents

- Stirling Way Community Engagement Management Practice
- Engagement Planner Tool
- Shaping our City Website
- Communication and Reporting Templates
- Local Focus Library
- Access and Inclusion Plan
- Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)
- Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework
- 6.18 Planning Consultation Policy
- Risk Management Policy
- Sustainable Stirling 2022–2032
- Customer Service Charter
- Customer Engagement Strategy

Legislation/local law requirements

- WA Local Government Act 1995 and Regulations
- Health Act 1911 and associated regulations
- Planning and Development Act 2005
- Planning and Development (Local Planning Schemes) Regulations 2015
- Heritage Act 2018
- Environmental Protection Act 1986
- Bush Fires Act 1954 and associated regulations
- Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare Act 1984 and associated regulations
- Privacy Act 1998
- Disability Services Act 1993 and Equal Opportunity Act 1984

Office use only				
Relevant delegations	Not Applicable			
Initial Council adoption	**Date**	2 July 2019	**Resolution #**	0719/020
Last reviewed	**Date**	15 October 2024	**Resolution #**	1024/009
Next review due	**Date**	2026		