

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY

DIVISION	BUSINESS UNIT	RESPONSIBILITY AREA
Strategic Development	Strategic Development	All Council Units

OBJECTIVE

This policy will guide the delivery of community and stakeholder engagement activities across the organisation to achieve the following objectives to:

- Provide the public with a clear understanding of Council's commitment to community and stakeholder engagement.
- Achieve good governance by facilitating open and honest communication with stakeholders and the community on programs, projects and initiatives that may impact their lives.
- Raise awareness of Council decisions and community aspirations surrounding programs, projects, and initiatives.
- Allow for informed decision-making to achieve an improved quality of life in the Shire of Plantagenet by planning for projects where they are needed and supported by the community.
- Ensure more members of our community will feel encouraged build local networks and participate in civic life with a greater understanding of the role of local government.

POLICY

The Shire of Plantagenet commits to the implementation of this Policy to ensure that:

1. As an organisation, we understand wider community views when making decisions.
2. The community can express their views and participate in the decision-making process.
3. We regularly reach out and stay up to date with changing opinions and situations our community is living and working in each day.
4. We can be a responsive organisation.

In planning a community engagement process, the Shire will determine the potential impact of the proposal (table 1 below) and at which level they will engage and what corresponding commitment they will make to the community and/or stakeholders (table 2 below).

High – Level 3

- There is a *high level of impact of risk* (perceived or real) on the Plantagenet region; or sections of the communities.
- There is *potential for decisions to create controversy* and / or have varying levels of acceptance within the community.

Medium – level 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a <i>medium level of impact or risk</i> (perceived or real) on the Plantagenet region; or sections of the communities. • It is <i>likely that the decision will be accepted by the majority</i> of the community impacted; however, the decision may be an inconvenience for some sections of the community.
Low – Level 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a <i>low level of impact or risk</i> (perceived or real) on the Shire of Plantagenet Region, or section of the communities. • It is <i>likely that the decision will be widely accepted</i> by the community and seen as having a positive outcome or being required.

Table 1: Potential Impact Table

The application of the community engagement levels listed below and applying the associated engagement tools will be utilised to ensure that community members have genuine opportunities to participate in Council decision-forming processes about matters that affect them.

Our engagement activities will be accessible and inclusive and include online and offline methods that are designed to suit the project and its stakeholders.

Level	What the language sounds like	Examples of engagement tools
Inform	‘Here’s what’s happening’	<i>website notice, Facebook posts, fact sheets, information sessions</i>
Consult	‘Here are some options, what do you think?’	<i>Letters to residents, written submissions, focus groups, surveys, public meetings, Plantagenet News advert</i>
Involve	‘Here’s a problem, what ideas do you have?’	<i>Workshops, resident voting, deliberative polling, expert panels</i>
Collaborate	‘Let’s work together to solve this problem’	<i>Advisory Committees, expert working group</i>
Empower	‘You care a lot about this issue and are leading an initiative, how can we support you?’	<i>Citizen Juries, ballots, delegation decision</i>

Table 2:

The selection of those which are relevant will be determined by Shire staff using the Community Engagement Toolkit. This decision is likely to impact the nature and methods of engagement, the final decision rests with the Shire of Plantagenet Officers.

Council decision-making processes are influenced by several factors such as financial and resource considerations, political directives, and environmental and social concerns. As such, if a difference occurs between the engagement outcomes and the Council’s final decision, the reasons will be clearly stated.

The impact rating and consultation level rating will be included within Council reports for information and consideration by Council.

Scope

Council will undertake community engagement activities for any of the following purposes:

- When community input can enhance decision making or project outcomes.
- To gain new information about community needs, aspirations, and concerns.
- When there will be a real or perceived change to existing services, programs or the use of public spaces and facilities.
- When community members, business communities or other groups would have a particular interest in the outcome of a decision, project or development.
- When Council resolves to consult the community.
- When legislation, policy or other agreement mandates.

Council will seek participant feedback to monitor and evaluate engagement and continue to adapt and improve our processes.

ADOPTED: 23 NOVEMBER 2021
