

## Communications and Engagement Policy

<b>POLICY STATEMENT</b>	<p>1.1 Council acknowledges that effective communication and engagement are essential foundations of a strong community and promote active citizenry, participation and a healthy democracy.</p> <p>1.2 Council also recognises that good communication and engagement underpins our democratic system of government. It improves service delivery, manages expectations, informs Council's policy development and enhances community participation in government.</p> <p>1.3 Engagement enables a closer relationship between Council and its community through an active exchange of information and ideas promoting shared understanding, innovation and decisions, which better represent the interests of the broad community.</p> <p>1.4 Council seeks to demonstrate transparent, honest, open and accountable leadership. We will engage the community's talent, knowledge and resources to help encourage and support a safe, healthy and connected community.</p> <p>1.5 Council involves community in interest- and issue-based engagements; consultation for changes to service delivery, policy and strategy development; infrastructure and capital works projects; to seek solutions for issues; and legislative requirements.</p> <p>1.6 Council's engagement projects will seek input from community members and stakeholders in designing how they participate as appropriate.</p> <p>1.7 Engagement projects are underpinned by the promise that the information shared is ethically motivated and that the public's contribution will inform recommendations presented to Council. The outcomes of how the public's contribution has affected decisions will be communicated back to participants.</p> <p>1.8 Major decisions will continue to be subject to debate and a vote at Council Meetings.</p> <p>1.9 This policy has been developed to provide a consistent approach across Council to communicate and engage with the community.</p> <p>1.10 This policy will contribute to the improvement of knowledge and skills of staff, and coordination of communications and community engagement.</p> <p>1.11 The community expects that Council will listen to its views, priorities, needs and expectations and to be provided with opportunities for participation. Local government authorities are accountable to their communities and that accountability depends on people's understanding of Council's role and decision-making processes.</p> <p>1.12 The information provided by Council to the community during engagement projects will be ethical, accurate and honest, and will provide the community with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.</p>
<b>DEFINITIONS</b>	<p>2.1 "Communications" means the provision of one-way information to advise the community and stakeholders about a project, initiative or issue. It can also involve two-way dialogue with community and stakeholders to achieve a particular outcome.</p> <p>2.2 "Community" means all residents, ratepayers, landowners and members of the public including individuals, groups, visitors, organisations, government and business.</p>

	<p>2.3 "Engagement" is an expression representing the variety of methods used by Council to inform, consult, and involve the community in the development of policies, services and infrastructure within the Council.</p> <p>2.4 "Public Participation" means the involvement of those affected by a decision in the decision-making process.</p> <p>2.5 "Stakeholder" means a person, group or organisation who may be affected by, have a specific interest in, or influence over, a council decision or issue under consideration.</p>
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	<p>3.1 Council aims to make sure its strategies and processes will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Promote the contribution Council makes to the quality of life for ratepayers and residents;</li> <li>▪ Keep ratepayers and residents informed about services and opportunities provided by Council;</li> <li>▪ Manage Council's reputation by promoting the Council's role and maintaining good relationships with the media;</li> <li>▪ Build a sense of place through the positive promotion of Kingborough and life in the municipality;</li> <li>▪ Use a variety of methods to communicate and to provide information in formats that accommodate the needs of all residents and consumers;</li> <li>▪ Engage and listen to Kingborough's residents and consumers through effective engagement;</li> <li>▪ Encourage ratepayers and residents to participate in Council's engagement projects;</li> <li>▪ Develop and maintain a council approved framework for engagement practices and principles based on procedural fairness, transparency and accountability;</li> <li>▪ Train staff to engage with community members and stakeholders by using simple and effective tools;</li> <li>▪ Provide a clear and consistent approach, which will make sure stakeholders and then community members are involved in projects relevant to them and contribute to decision-making;</li> <li>▪ Analyse and report outcomes of engagement activities; and</li> <li>▪ Focus on collaboration when addressing contentious issues.</li> </ul> <p>3.2 Council's communication and engagement strategies will also assist Councillors and employees to work more effectively through positive two-way communications with the community.</p>
<b>SCOPE</b>	<p>4.1 This policy applies to the implementation of the Council Strategic Plan 2020-2025 and the development of the Council policies, strategies and infrastructure, major projects, issues and interests, and service delivery to benefit the wellbeing of Council communities.</p> <p>4.2 The General Manager will be accountable and responsible for the review and promotion of this Policy. The Communications and Engagement Advisor will be responsible for the implementation of the Policy.</p> <p>4.3 All Councillors and Council employees are responsible for the implementation of this policy.</p>
<b>PROCEDURE (POLICY DETAIL)</b>	<p>5.1 Engagement and consultation training will be offered and or included in: Project Management, Staff induction, and Councillor induction to aid implementation,</p> <p>5.2 Council will develop and endorse a Corporate Communications and Engagement Framework and Strategy.</p>

	<p>5.3 The Framework provides the methodology for communication and engagement planning. It will be underpinned by a core set of values and principles that establish the standard and tone of Council’s communications and engagement projects.</p> <p>5.4 The Strategy will incorporate projects which actively support communications and engagement activities through a combination of methods incorporating both media, marketing and engagement activities.</p> <p>5.5 The Strategy will align with the key corporate objectives as outlined in Council’s Strategic Plan.</p> <p>5.6 In determining performance measures for communication and engagement activities, the Strategy will focus on both internal and external target audiences.</p> <p>5.7 For Council’s internal audiences, the Strategy will make sure that employees are well informed, that they are aware of Council’s values, strategies and priorities, and that employees have access to appropriate information to support their work.</p> <p>5.8 For Council’s external audiences, the Strategy will ensure that all communications are published to Council’s corporate standards in a clear, professional and accessible manner whilst offering value for money.</p> <p>5.9 The Strategy will also ensure that Kingborough’s residents and consumers are well informed about Council’s services and have the opportunity to fully participate in the democratic process.</p>
<p><b>GUIDELINES</b></p>	<p>The Corporate Communications and Engagement Strategy follows the Communications and Engagement Framework to make sure we communicate and engage effectively. The methodology is outlined in Section 3 of the Framework.</p> <p>6.1 Why - Establishes why we are communicating or engaging. Are we informing or are we learning? This step identifies the project details, associated risks and what the objectives of the project are. Both of the communications and engagement processes follow the same framework; however they will have simple and unique templates to assist staff in developing the appropriate methods for their activity. When developing a strategy for an engagement project, the Community Engagement Model and level of community involvement will be defined during this first step</p> <p>6.2 Who - Identifies who we need to inform, or listen and learn from. A Stakeholder Analysis will be created to identify affected stakeholders and target audiences, which will inform appropriate communication and engagement plans. Stakeholders are those who are directly or indirectly affected and may have an interest or an ability to influence an outcome. They include people, organisations, businesses or agencies within or external to the Council local government area. As well as identifying stakeholders and the level of their interest, staff are required to consider if there is any priority order in which stakeholders need to be engaged. Staff must consider including existing reference groups and/or advisory committees currently working with Council.</p> <p>6.3 How - Identify the channels of communication and the engagement methods that will be used for each project. The channels and methods for engagement projects will be determined from the Stakeholder Analysis and the preferences indicated by the participants.</p> <p>6.4 What - Clarify what we are saying and what information the community and stakeholders need to know. Key messages for external communication and engagement projects will be developed in alignment with key priority areas identified in the Strategic Plan 2020-2025. All communications and engagement messages must adhere to the guiding principles and make sure the community are provided with honest and accurate information. They will also include a clear scope, and will define the what is negotiable and what is</p>

	<p>not for engagement projects. Internal communication will keep councillors and staff informed of council decisions, policies and achievements.</p> <p>6.5 When - A targeted communications and/or engagement plan will detail activities for each project. The plan will include the timing, activity, audience, location, required resources, responsible officers and evaluation methods.</p> <p>6.6 Evaluate - Each communications and/or engagement plan will be evaluated to see how effective they have been. Feedback will be sought using the Engagement Evaluation Template as a guide.</p> <p>6.7 Report - The most important part of any community engagement activity is demonstrating to participants that their views have been heard and that their time and input is valued. A process must be established and the community advised upfront so participants can understand how their information will be used throughout the project. Closing the loop is essential in building trust and transparency in the decision-making process.</p>
<b>COMMUNICATION</b>	7.1 All employees and Councillors will be briefed on this policy as required.
<b>LEGISLATION</b>	8.1 The following legislation should be considered in conjunction with this policy: 8.1.1 <i>Local Government Act 1993 (Tasmania)</i>
<b>RELATED DOCUMENTS</b>	9.1 The Communications and Engagement Framework 9.2 The Corporate Communications and Engagement Strategy
<b>AUDIENCE</b>	10.1 The Communications and Engagement Policy applies to all Councillors and employees. 10.2 The policy is publicly accessible via Council's website.