

Community Engagement Policy

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1. TITLE

Community Engagement Policy

2. OBJECTIVES

- 2.1. To set a consistent standard for how Glen Eira City Council will engage with our community to inform Council's decisions, programs and services.
- 2.2 To give effect to the community engagement principles set out at section 56 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.
- 2.3 To strengthen relationships and continue to build trust with the community through the delivery of good practice community engagement programs.
- 2.4 To provide a commitment to report on and close the loop with the community on the outcomes of engagement activities and how they inform Council decisions.

3. DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Term	Meaning
community engagement	Community engagement is a planned process. It involves Council working with individuals, communities, organisations, stakeholders to shape the decisions or actions in relation to a problem, opportunity or outcome. Good quality community engagement builds trust between Council and our community.
community	A group of people that share a common attribute or experiences. Broadly, our community includes people who live, work, access services, participate or contribute to community life in Glen Eira. Within this, there are many diverse communities, including communities of place, communities of interest, communities of affiliation, and communities of culture.
deliberative engagement	Deliberative engagement occurs when a group of people from the community consider relevant facts from multiple points of view, identify options and come to a group decision. It is one form of 'high influence' engagement. It is not an alternative to Council's role as a statutory decision-making body.
the Act	Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)
Council	Glen Eira City Council
the Policy	Community Engagement Policy
the Toolkit	Glen Eira City Council Community Engagement Toolkit
IAP2	International Association of Public Participation

4. CONTEXT

Council is committed to engaging with its community. Genuine and transparent engagement with residents, local groups, businesses, and organisations is critical to Council understanding the community's needs, seeking out new ideas, and building trust and relationships with our community. Good practice community engagement ensures Council decisions are well informed and services are highly valued.

5. SCOPE AND RESPONSIBILITY

- 5.1 The Policy sets the standard for how Glen Eira City Council engages with the community on Council decisions, programs and services.
- 5.2 The Policy guides Council's approach to community engagement programs to ensure consistency and good practice implementation.
- 5.3 Council acknowledges each community engagement program will be tailored to the topic, scope and stakeholders affected. The implementation of this Policy will involve a range of tailored approaches and methods.
- 5.4 The Policy applies to all departments across Council. It applies to all ongoing, term, casual, temporary and seconded employees, contractors, consultants and volunteers who may undertake community engagement.
- 5.5 The Policy will guide Council's delivery of community engagement where all community members, including children and young people, are empowered to participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
- 5.6 The Policy supports Council's commitment to the ongoing development and implementation of gender-equitable engagement processes.
- 5.7 The Mayor is Council's primary spokesperson on community engagement matters, consistent with Council's Media Policy.
- 5.8 Council's Public Affairs department leads and centrally coordinates community engagement programs across Council in partnership with other Council officers who may seek to undertake community engagement programs.
- 5.9 The Policy does not apply to community engagement programs that are subject to prescribed processes imposed by other Victorian legislation, such as land-use planning applications, or other Council processes such as service requests or complaints.
- 5.10 Council will comply with our obligations under the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*, and the Information Privacy Principles set out in that Act, in relation to all personal information collected through any community engagement process.

6. POLICY

6.1 Our principles and commitment

Council is committed to proactively and transparently engaging with the Glen Eira community. Four engagement principles guide how Council plans, delivers, and closes the loop on its community engagement programs.

The principles were informed by community feedback from Council's Community Engagement Advisory Committee. They are aligned to the IAP2 Core Values for the Practice of Public Participation, the Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) better practice principles, and the principles of the *Local Government Act 2020*, and Council's *Customer Service Charter* customer promises.

Principle	Commitment
Timely	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We engage the community early so they can genuinely influence decision-making.• We provide objective, relevant, and timely information that clearly explains what the community can influence within each engagement program.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We provide reasonable support to enable meaningful and informed engagement. • We value diverse ideas and perspectives and respect the time our community puts into participating in community engagement programs.
Accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We provide convenient and easy engagement options for people of all ages and abilities. • We are committed to building representation, equitable inclusion, and participation. • We take steps to ensure groups who may be harder to reach or face physical, social or cultural barriers can participate in our engagement programs. • We build relationships with community groups and organisations to ensure that each engagement opportunity is broadly promoted across the municipality. • We provide information in plain English, accessible formats and in other languages where needed.
Inclusive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We empower a diverse range of people by taking a more inclusive and targeted approach that is relevant to the audiences. • Everyone has a right to be involved in decisions that affect where they live, work and visit. • We strive to support all members of our community to contribute their voice regardless of age, gender, sexuality, income, education, cultural background, language skills or disability. • We work to ensure those affected by and interested in the subject of the engagement are provided the opportunity to have their say. • We adhere to the Victorian Child Safe Standards to ensure children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them, and are taken seriously.
Transparent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We proactively and transparently deliver engagement programs, and publicly and impartially report on their outcomes. • We have genuine conversations with the community about the matters that interest and impact them. • We work to ensure that every community engagement program has a clearly defined objective and scope, that is articulated in the planning process and communicated throughout the program. • We actively listen and are receptive to community feedback. • We have a process to inform participants in community engagement of the influence their feedback will have on our decision-making. • We share other factors that may influence our decision-making, such as plans and strategies, budgetary implications, evidenced-based data, or Victorian Government requirements. • We close the loop with our community by explaining what we asked, what they said, and what we did. • Insights from our community engagement programs inform Council's evidence-based advocacy on behalf of the community.

6.2 How we engage

Council's community engagement is underpinned by the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum. The IAP2 Spectrum helps Council to select the right level of participation for a community engagement program.

Council carefully analyses the stakeholders, individuals, population groups and community groups who are most impacted by or interested in the decision or outcomes of an engagement. Council tailors the level of participation and engagement approach to the project and the stakeholders using the five levels of the IAP2 spectrum outlined in the table below.

Table 1. IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower*
Public participation goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis alternatives and/or decisions	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and identification of the preferred solution	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public
Our promise - we will	Keep you informed	Keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	Work with you to ensure your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	Look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible	Implement what you decide
Examples of engagement activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Have Your Say</i> Glen Eira website • Drop-in and pop-up sessions • Community engagement e-newsletter • <i>Glen Eira News</i> • Social Media • Glen Eira City Council website • Other Council-run E-newsletters • Media releases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drop-in and pop-up sessions • Information sessions • Interviews • Workshops • Meetings with key stakeholder / groups • Polls • Surveys • Community Voice Online Panel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus groups • Citizen panels • Visioning • World café meetings • Polls • Surveys • Community Voice online community pane • Community Engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen panel • Roundtables • Forums • Working Groups • Consultative budgeting • Co-design processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen panel • Project Committees

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letterbox drop • Posters/postcards • Displays • Emails 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written or email submissions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory Committee • Field trips 		
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* Council cannot ‘Empower’ where it cannot delegate decisions.

Table 1 is not an exhaustive list of engagement activities. The examples outlined above are applied using a building block approach; inform-level activities are carried through to the other levels of the spectrum and so on.

There are many other methods and tools Council can use, and Council will continue to investigate and invest in innovative ways to engage with the community. For example, to boost participation of people with disability, we can make sure that our online survey is compatible with screen readers, that our workshop venues are accessible to mobility aids, and that participants are aware we can arrange support staff (e.g. Auslan and language interpreters). Where projects impact children and young people, we can work with our local early years and youth service providers and school communities, and use age-appropriate methods.

6.3 Type of community engagement

Community engagement can take place at multiple levels of the IAP2 spectrum across different stages, depending on the size and scope of the project. The type of engagement can be broadly described as either deliberative or consultative engagement.

6.3.1 Deliberative engagement

Deliberative engagement places people closer to the decisions of Council. It generally aligns with the ‘Involve’ to ‘Empower’ levels of the IAP2 spectrum.

Deliberative engagement encourages people to critically test, weigh up and debate with a range of perspectives, inputs and evidence.

It aims to avoid asking people for feedback on a matter that may not be front of mind for them, which leads to uninformed responses. Instead, deliberative approaches seek informed, quality, meaningful outputs.

6.3.2 Consultative engagement

Consultative engagement refers to forms of engagement which generally align with the ‘Inform’ to ‘Consult’ range of the IAP2 spectrum.

Consultative engagement typically occurs when feedback or ideas are sought on a particular project, strategy or plan.

6.4 Statutory requirements

Statutory requirements direct how Council undertakes community engagement in specified matters. For example, under the Act, Council has a statutory obligation to develop a long-term Community Vision, Financial Plan and Asset Plan, as well as a four-year Council Plan in accordance with our deliberative engagement practices. Under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*, Council has a statutory requirement to develop a four-year Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

The level of an engagement program will be determined by the significance and complexity of the project and the level of resourcing. Table 2 below outlines engagement matters, the form and minimum level of engagement.

Table 2. Engagement examples and relevant type of engagement

Engagement example	Type of engagement	Minimum level of community engagement
Develop or review the Community Vision	Deliberative engagement	Collaborate
Develop or review the Council Plan	Deliberative engagement	Collaborate
Develop or review the Financial Plan	Deliberative engagement	Involve
Develop and adopt or review the Asset Plan	Deliberative engagement	Involve
Budget and any revised Budget (subject to section 96(2) of the Act)	Consultative engagement	Consult or Involve
Making of a local law	Consultative engagement	Consult
Purchase or compulsory acquisition of land under section 112 of the Act	Consultative engagement	Inform
Lease of land where section 115(4) of the Act applies	Consultative engagement	Inform
Selling or exchanging land where section 114 of the Act applies	Consultative engagement	Inform
Other forms of strategy development, strategic decision making or policy development	Level to be selected depending on the complexity of the matter	
Engagement that is subject to a submission process under section 223 of the Local Government Act 1989	Form of engagement is to be selected having regard to the significance and complexity of the matter and the level of resourcing required	Consult

6.5 When we engage

Council may initiate a community engagement program in situations such as:

- Council makes a proposal that requires community input before making a decision.
- A decision will come before Council which requires community input.
- Another level of government makes a significant proposal and asks for Council's view.
- Council would like the community's views on a topic to inform future decision-making.
- Council has a legislative obligation to engage on a proposal.

This list is not exhaustive, and Council may engage whenever it seeks the community's views.

6.6 Who we engage

We will strive for all members of our community to be supported to contribute their voice regardless of age, gender, sexuality, income, education, cultural background, language skills or disability. The people and groups we may target include:

- Residents, including groups such as:
 - Children under the age of 12

- Young people aged 12-17
- Older people
- Parents and their children
- People with limited literacy
- People facing disadvantage
- People with a disability, vision or hearing impairment and their carers
- Multicultural community members
- LGBTIQ+ community members
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- Other minority groups
- Ratepayers
- Businesses
- Community clubs and groups
- Community organisations
- Federal, state and local government bodies
- Council Advisory Committees

6.7 Engagement reporting and closing the loop

Council will report on engagement activities and close the loop with residents and stakeholders on the outcomes of engagement programs. Where possible, reporting will demonstrate how their feedback informed Council's decision-making.

Council recognises transparent decision-making depends on sound evidence, community input and representation. All views gathered through community engagement activities are considered, balanced and assessed, giving consideration to any other relevant data, advice, strategies or legislation. Council uses appropriate communications channels, including both digital and print platforms, to close the loop.

Council will prepare a summary report of the findings from each engagement program and make them available to Council officers, Council and the community. This delivers transparency in community engagement outcomes and in Council's decision-making processes. All engagement summary reports will be published and shared with the community using appropriate communications channels.

7. HUMAN RIGHTS CHARTER COMPATIBILITY

This Policy has been assessed as being compatible with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic).

8. ASSOCIATED INTERNAL DOCUMENTS

- Glen Eira Council and Community Plan 2021-25
- Glen Eira's Community Engagement Framework

9. EXTERNAL REFERENCES/RESOURCES

- *Local Government Act 2020*
- *Local Government Act 1989*
- International Association of Public Participation – Core Values for Public Participation and associated resources
- Public Participation in Government Decision-making: Better Practice Guide (January 2015)

- Public Participation and Community Engagement: Local Government Sector (May 2017)
- Public Participation in Government Decision-Making (January 2015)
- *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*
- Victorian Child Safe Standards – *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*
- *Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic)*