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Responsible Officer:	Community Engagement Advisor
Owner:	Community Partnerships
Responsible Director:	Health and Wellbeing
Relevant Legislation/Authority:	Local Government Act 2020
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1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- 1.1. detail the City's commitment to effective and relevant Community Engagement;
- 1.2. facilitate informed and sustainable decision making;
- 1.3. improve information delivery and sharing; and
- 1.4. promote a consistent inclusive and accessible approach to engagement.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The City is committed to ensuring that the Municipal Community is as well informed as they can be on major issues, plans and projects. Where the Municipal Community can influence part or all of a decision, that they are provided the necessary information to form an opinion and opportunity to provide input through a community engagement process.
- 2.2 Community Engagement plays a vital role in assisting Council and the City of Greater Bendigo as an organisation to work together with the Municipal Community and other stakeholders to achieve the vision: *Greater Bendigo – Creating the world's most liveable community.*
- 2.3 In May 2017, VAGO published the report *Public Participation and Community Engagement: Local Government Sector*. The report informs and guides best practice for Community Engagement in the Local Government Sector and this policy incorporates the recommendations.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to Councillors and all Workplace Participants.

4. DEFINITIONS

Act means the *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic).

City means the Greater Bendigo City Council, being a body corporate constituted as a municipal Council under the *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic).

Council means all of the Councillors collectively.

Councillor means the individual holding the office of a member of Greater Bendigo City Council.

Community Engagement means the process in which the City and Municipal Community connect with each other to exchange views, ideas and information to (i) inform decisions (ii) build capacity and (iii) strengthen relationships.

Deliberative Engagement means 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.

International Association for Public Participation Australasia (IAP2)

IAP2 is a leading organisation in public engagement practice and has a series of tools which support the delivery of engagement, specifically core values, public participation spectrum, code of ethics for public participation practitioners, and quality assurance standards.

IAP2 Spectrum of Participation defines the level of participation and the public's role in an engagement process ranging from inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower.

Municipal Community means:

- (a) people who live in the municipal district of the Council;
- (b) people and bodies who are ratepayers of the Council;
- (c) traditional owners of land in the municipal district of the Council; and
- (d) people and bodies who conduct activities in the municipal district of the Council.

VAGO means the Victorian Auditor-General Office.

Workplace Participants all employees, contractors, volunteers, consultants and any individuals or groups engaging with the community for or on behalf of the City.

5. PRINCIPLES

The following six principles underpin this policy:

- 5.1 **Transparency** - A Community Engagement process must have clearly defined objectives and scope.

- 5.2 **Clarity of purpose and scale** - Participants in Community Engagement activities are provided relevant and timely information in order to inform the level of participation and Community Engagement is scaled proportionate to the issue at hand.
- 5.3 **Inclusion** - Participants in Community Engagement must be representative of the people or groups affected by the Community Engagement subject matter.
- 5.4 **Access and Participation** - Participants in Community Engagement are provided a variety of engagement methods that suit their needs to enable meaningful and informed engagement.
- 5.5 **Closing the loop** - Participants in Community Engagement are informed of the ways in which the community engagement process has or will influence the City's decision making.
- 5.6 **Evaluation** – Community Engagement is evaluated to assess whether the objectives and outcomes have been achieved and for improvement opportunities.

6. POLICY

6.1 The Council and City is committed to:

- 6.1.1. ensuring that the purpose of Community Engagement is genuine and adheres to the principles of this policy;
- 6.1.2. using the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum to assist with selecting the level of participation;
- 6.1.3. ensuring there is consideration given to value for money, principles and scale of engagement required, in line with the IAP2 spectrum;
- 6.1.4. ensuring the information provided to the community is clear, easy to understand and accessible to all people, and delivered in consultation with the Communications unit;
- 6.1.5. clearly communicating which aspects of the engagement are negotiable, and which are not negotiable;
- 6.1.6. using various techniques and approaches to maximise public participation within reasonable timeframes;
- 6.1.7. informing the community about how their input has influenced the final outcome or decision; and
- 6.1.8. undertaking evaluation processes to learn from each Community Engagement experience and ensure continuous improvement of our consultation practices.

- 6.2 The City recognises that no single model or formula fits all situations. The method, extent and depth of Community Engagement will vary according to the scope and scale of the issue, strategy or plan.

7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of Councillors and all workplace participants to plan, design and deliver Community Engagement suitable for the scope and scale of the issues, strategy or plan and in line with the principles and commitments in this policy. Where a practice is prescribed by regulations, such as Deliberative Engagement, that it is delivered in accordance to the legislation.

8. RELATED DOCUMENTS

Readers are encouraged to access relevant documents and/or resources which are available as per the below.

These include:

- [Local Government Act 2020](#)
- [Planning and Environment Act 1987](#)
- [Essential Services Commission Act 2001](#)
- [Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008](#)
- [Road Management Act 2004](#)
- [Victorian Disability Act 2006](#)
- [Equal Opportunity Act 2010](#)
- [Gender Equality Act 2020](#)
- [Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006](#)
- [Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Amendment Act 2016](#)
- [Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010](#)
- [Multicultural Victoria Act 2011](#)
- [Department of Premier and Cabinet – Public Engagement Framework \(2020\)](#)
- [City of Greater Bendigo Community Plan \(2017-2021\)](#)
- [City of Greater Bendigo Health and Wellbeing Plan \(2017 – 2021\)](#)
- [City of Greater Bendigo Youth Strategy \(2017-2021\)](#)
- [City of Greater Bendigo Community Engagement Guidelines and Toolkit \(2016\)](#)

Further information or advice on this policy should be directed to Community Partnerships.

9. HUMAN RIGHTS COMPATIBILITY

The implications of this policy have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

10. ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

It is recognised that, from time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this document. Where an update does not materially alter this, such a change may be made administratively. Examples include a change to the name of a City unit, a change to the name of a Federal or State Government department, and a minor update to legislation which does not have a material impact. However, any change or update which materially alters this document must be made through consultation with the

staff Consultative Committee and with the approval of Executive Management Team or where required, resolution of Council.

11. DOCUMENT HISTORY

Date Approved	Responsible Officer	Unit	Change Type	Version	Next Review Date
<i>April 2016</i>	<i>LW</i>	<i>Health and Wellbeing</i>	<i>Development of Community Engagement</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2019</i>
<i>March 2020</i>	<i>FJ</i>	<i>Community Partnerships</i>	<i>Review</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2024</i>
<i>November 2020</i>	<i>RM</i>	<i>Legal Services</i>	<i>Administrative changes following commencement of Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2024</i>