Community Engagement Policy

DISCUSSION PAPER

Hepburn Together | *Hepburn* SHIRE COUNCIL

Introduction

During 2021 Hepburn Shire Council is embarking on a major strategic planning project; the Hepburn Together project.

The project will shape the vision and direction for Hepburn Shire over the next 10 years. We want to hear about your goals, aspirations, and suggestions for the places where you have chosen to live, work or visit. Your input about what you value and what you want to change can guide Council's planning and give priority to future projects.

The project includes the development of:

- Our Community Engagement Policy.

- Our 10-year Community Vision.

- Our 4-year Council Plan (incorporating Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan).

- Financial Plan and Asset Plan.

To reach as many people as possible Council has developed an Engagement Plan and launched the new Participate Hepburn website **https://participate.hepburn.vic.gov.au/**. Here you will find ways to participate and share your input, resources to help understand the project, times and dates for engagement activities (including face to face engagement opportunities), feedback and reporting on engagement activities and updates on the project.

The timelines for the Hepburn Together project are:

NOVEMBER TO DECEMBER 2020	1 Engagement Planning
JANUARY 2021	2 Community Activation
JANUARY TO MARCH 2021	3 Broad Community Engagement
MARCH TO APRIL 2021	4 Deliberate Engagement
APRIL TO AUGUST 2021	5 Develop Community Vision and Council Plan

Acknowledgement of Country

Hepburn Shire acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live and work, the Dja Dja Wurrung People and recognise their ongoing connection to the land and waterways. We also recognise the many other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members across the Shire who make up the vibrant communities to which our organisations provides services. Hepburn Shire pays respect to the wisdom of Elders, past, present, and emerging and share a commitment to engaging communities with a spirit of reconciliation and respect.

Commitment to our community

Hepburn Shire Council promises to:

Work with community leaders to ensure access to the engagement process is as broad as possible.	Use simple and clear language when we communicate.	Actively listen without judgement to what people say.
Respect diverse views and request mutual respect between all parties.	Value the creativity and expertise of the community in our decision making and problem solving.	Ensure all contributions are recorded.
Report back to the community on what we have heard.	Base the Hepburn Together framework on community recommendations to the greatest extent possible.	Provide feedback on where input has not been incorporated into the outcome and explain the reasons for our decisions.

Community Engagement Policy

The first step in the Hepburn Together project is developing our Community Engagement Policy ('the Policy').

The Policy is an important document that guides how Council engages with the community. Community engagement is a two-way conversation between the community and Council, so we want to ask your opinion before drafting the policy.

There are a few key areas that we would like your feedback on. These questions will help improve Councils community engagement activities and help us shape the policy.

- What areas of Councils community engagement practice is done well, and what areas need improvement?
- How can Council improve our community engagement practices?
- What deliberative engagement activities would best suit our community?
- What should be included in the Policy?

Why is this project needed?

The Hepburn Together project is a great opportunity for our new Council to work with the community to review our community engagement practices and build the strategic plans and priorities for the Council term. It comes at a time when Council is transitioning to the new Victorian Local Government Act ('the Act') which is a move away from a prescriptive and regulatory approach, to a principles-based approach. This gives our community the opportunity to shape our vision and direction for the future while enhancing community participation and transparency.

The Policy is an important part of our transition and will embrace the new community engagement principles, and the requirement of deliberative engagement for some strategic planning projects outlined in the Act. It will also help us meet our obligations to undertake long, medium and short term strategic planning to guide the direction of Council activities.

What is a Community Engagement Policy?

We recognise the importance of working with the community to ensure their voice is heard in the development of this Policy. We are engaging with the community prior to drafting the Policy to ensure your thoughts, opinions, and ideas are considered when drafting the Policy.

A Community Engagement Policy is a document that guides Council staff in relation to how Council will engage with the community and lets the community know what they can expect. The Policy will outline the roles of Councillors and staff when conducting engagement. It also highlights how we use community insights in our decision making, and how we inform the community of the outcome.

Not every project will have the same 'level of engagement'. We are seeking your input to determine what level of engagement is needed for each project later in this paper. There are several factors we consider, including the importance and impact on the community, and what resources Council has available to undertake the project.

Our Policy will apply to all strategies, plans, services or projects that require community engagement for their development.

Context and background

The new Act sets out some rules and principles for the development of our Community Engagement Policy in sections 55 and 56. Under the Act, Councils must adopt a Community Engagement Policy by 1 March 2021 in consultation with the community that:

- Gives effect to the Acts community engagement principles.
- Can be applied to the making of local laws, budgets, and policies.
- Describes engagement to be used based on the complexity and significance of the subject matter – along with the resources available.
- Outlines deliberative engagement practices to be used when developing Council' s Community Vision, Council Plan, Financial Plan and Asset Plan.

The Act outlines key principles for Councils to follow when they are conducting community engagement. They are:

- Provide clearly **defined** objectives and scope.
- Provide objective, relevant, and timely **information** to inform participants.
- Ensure participation is **representative** of affected persons and groups.
- Provide reasonable support to enable **meaningful** and informed engagement.
- Inform participants about how the process will **influence** Council decision making.

What is community engagement?

At its core community engagement is about a conversation between Council and the community about important projects and plans that will impact our community. The purpose of community engagement is for Council to hear the communities voice, unearth opportunities and explore challenges and solutions. It can relate to Council's roles and responsibilities, but also matters that are important to the community that are outside of Council's responsibilities that the community is seeking Council to advocate for, or work in partnership with other organisations to achieve.

Timeframes

The timeline for consultation on the Community Engagement Policy is:

- A video presentation, online survey and this discussion paper will be available on Participate Hepburn on 25 January 2021.
- Engagement will be open from 25 January to 7 February 2021.
- Following the engagement period, we will analyse your input and draft the policy.
- The policy will then be listed for adoption at a Special Council Meeting on the 23 February 2021.

We understand that these are tight timeframes! All Councils are working to a legislative deadline of 1 March 2021. It is important to Council that the community is involved in the development of our Policy, and that is why we are seeking your input prior to drafting our Policy. Thank you for taking the time to participate and have your say on this project.

Next Steps

Provide your feedback before 7 February 2021.

Read and complete this Discussion Paper and:

- Complete the online survey at **www.participate.hepburn.vic.gov.au** (same questions as in this discussion paper)

- Email your responses to **hepburntogether@hepburn.vic.gov.au**, OR

- Complete the questions in this document and post it to **PO Box 21, Daylesford, 3460**, OR

- Submit your responses to a **Council Library** or a **Council Customer Service Centre**.

Attend a community engagement event:

Friday 29 January		
3:30 – 6:30pm	**Clunes pop-up**	Outside The Warehouse Clunes | Fraser St, Clunes
Saturday 30 January		
8:30 – 11:30am	**Creswick pop-up**	IGA Park | Albert St, Creswick
2:00 – 5:00pm	**Daylesford pop-up**	Coles Walkway | Bridport St, Daylesford
Sunday 31 January		
8:30 – 11:30am	**Glenlyon pop-up**	Glenlyon General Store | Barkly St, Glenlyon
2:00 – 5:00pm	**Trentham pop-up**	Trentham Town Square | High St, Trentham
Tuesday 2 February		
4:00 – 6:00pm	**Daylesford pop-up**	Town Hall | Vincent St, Daylesford
Wednesday 3 February		
4:00 – 6:00pm	**Creswick pop-up**	Creswick Hub | Albert St, Creswick
4:00 – 6:00pm	**Trentham pop-up**	Trentham Library | Albert St, Trentham
Thursday 4 February		
4:00 – 6:00pm	**Clunes pop-up**	The Warehouse Clunes | Fraser St, Clunes
4:00 – 6:00pm	**Glenlyon pop-up**	Glenlyon Hall | Daylesford-Malmsbury Rd, Glenlyon

Want to know more?

To have your say online visit Council's "Participate Hepburn" page at **www.participate.hepburn.vic.gov.au.**

Paper copies of this document are available at **Council Libraries** and **Council Customer Service Centres.**

If you have any questions regarding the project, please do not hesitate to contact Michelle Whyte (Coordinator Community Partnerships) via **hepburntogether@hepburn.vic.gov.au** or **03 5755 0555**.

Have your say

Hepburn Shire Council is seeking your input on the development of its Community Engagement Policy.

This survey has 19 questions, and we estimate it will take 7 minutes to complete. Please note that your responses to this survey are anonymous. You don't have to complete the whole survey for your response to be valid.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Your details

1. **Age:**

    ☐ Under 15 years   ☐ 15 – 19 years   ☐ 20 – 24 years   ☐ 25 –29 years   ☐ 30 – 34 years   ☐ 35 – 39 years

    ☐ 40 – 44 years   ☐ 45 – 49 years   ☐ 50 – 54 years   ☐ 55 – 59 years   ☐ 60 – 64 years   ☐ 65 – 69 years

    ☐ 70 – 74 years   ☐ 75 – 79 years   ☐ 80 – 84 years   ☐ 85 years and over

    ☐ I am completing this survey on behalf of a community group

2. **Gender:**

    ☐ Male   ☐ Female   ☐ Non binary   ☐ Intersex   ☐ Other   ☐ Prefer not to say

3. **Location:**

    ☐ **Birch Ward**, including Daylesford, Hepburn, Basalt, Dry Diggings, Kooroocheang, Leonards Hill, Musk Vale, Sailors Flat, Shepherds Flat, and Yandoit.

    ☐ **Cameron Ward**, including Clunes, Campbelltown, Evansford, Glengower, Lawrence, Mount Beckworth, Smeaton, Ullina, and Werona.

    ☐ **Coliban Ward**, including Trentham, Bullarto, Fern Hill, Little Hampton, Lyonville, Musk, Newbury, North Blackwood, Spring Hill, Trentham East, and Tylden.

    ☐ **Creswick Ward**, including Creswick, Allendale, Blampied, Broomfield, Cabbage Tree, Creswick North, Dean, Eganstown, Kingston, Langsdon Hill, Mollongchip, Mount Prospect, Newlyn, Smokey Town, Springmount, Sulky, and Rocklyn.

    ☐ **Holcombe**, including Glenlyon, Coomoora, Clydesdale, Denver, Drummond, Drummond North, Guildford, Mount Franklin, Porcupine Ridge, Strangways, and Wheatsheaf.

    ☐ I am a Hepburn Shire Council **ratepayer but live outside the shire**.

    ☐ None of the above.

Strengths and weaknesses

4. **Have you previously participated in Council community engagement activities (e.g. listening posts, workshops, surveys)?**

    ☐ Yes   ☐ No (please go to Q8)

5. **Overall, how satisfied are you with Council's community engagement activities?**

    ☐ Very satisfied   ☐ Satisfied   ☐ Somewhat satisfied   ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

    ☐ Somewhat dissatisfied   ☐ Dissatisfied   ☐ Very dissatisfied

6. **Please provide an example of when you've been satisfied with Council's community engagement practice.**

_____

_____

_____

7. **Please provide an example of when you've been dissatisfied with Council's community engagement practice.**

_____

_____

_____

8. **How can Council improve its community engagement practice? (please provide up to 3 solutions)**

    1. _____

    2. _____

    3. _____

9. **Do you have any further comments about Council's community engagement practice?**

_____

_____

_____

Preferences

10. **What are your preferred engagement activities? (please choose up to 2)**

    ☐ One-to-one   ☐ Small group   ☐ Large group   ☐ Drop-in

    ☐ Surveys   ☐ Online   ☐ Artwork   ☐ Community education

    ☐ Other _____

11. **What are your preferred engagement methods? (please choose up to 5)**

    ☐ Interviews   ☐ Telephone hotline   ☐ Semi-structured conversations   ☐ Vox pop (voice of the people)

    ☐ Focus group   ☐ Walking tour   ☐ Field trip   ☐ Kitchen table discussion

    ☐ Meetings   ☐ Briefings   ☐ Workshops   ☐ Forums

    ☐ Listening post   ☐ Festival   ☐ Information session   ☐ Display

    ☐ Online survey   ☐ Phone survey   ☐ Hard copy survey   ☐ Take home survey

    ☐ Online forum   ☐ Website   ☐ Facebook   ☐ YouTube

    ☐ Murals and sculptures ☐ Multi-media   ☐ Visioning activities   ☐ Photos

    ☐ Performance   ☐ Leadership days   ☐ Mentor days   ☐ Training and skill development

    ☐ Other _____

12. What are your preferred methods of finding out about community engagement opportunities? (please choose up to 5)

☐ Letter ☐ Email ☐ Brochures ☐ Fact sheets

☐ Newsletters ☐ Media release ☐ Advertisements ☐ Public notices

☐ Banners ☐ Signs ☐ Reports ☐ Stickers

☐ Facebook ☐ Newspaper ☐ Other _____

13. What prevents or stops you from participating in engagement activities?

☐ Language and literacy ☐ Physical or mental health issues ☐ Disability or sensory impairments

☐ Mobility ☐ Confidence ☐ Geographic isolation

☐ Financial concerns ☐ Time concerns ☐ Access to internet

☐ Digital literacy/ using a computer ☐ Values and beliefs ☐ Community divisions

☐ Lack of interest in the subject ☐ Benefits of engagement unclear ☐ Engagement activites not well promoted

☐ Not enough information provided ☐ Too much consultation happening

☐ Other _____

Deliberative Engagement

Deliberative engagement is a more in-depth form of community engagement that harnesses the community's creativity and expertise to unearth community priorities and solutions. It provides opportunity for participants in to develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter and work together to reach a representative or common view.

The new Act requires Council's to conduct deliberative engagement for the development of the Community Vision, Council Plan, Financial Plan and Asset Plan.

Some of the key characteristics of deliberative engagement are:

- **Community role.** It is clear what the project is, what information we are seeking, what questions we will be asking and how findings and recommendations will be used.

- **In depth exploration.** The subject matter will often be considered in more than one round of engagement to help us capture a broad range of views and refine priorities and actions.

- **Informed.** Participants are provided with information to inform their views, aspirations and feedback. Participant views will be considered along with the views and needs of the broader community, Council's roles and responsibilities and other guiding documents such as regional, state, and national policies and legislation.

- **Representative.** . It is important that participants in deliberative engagement is representative of the population of the Council area. This allows for a broad range of views to be taken into account and the needs of the whole population are considered when making recommendations.

- **Transparent.** Engagement findings, and how they were used in the development of plans or decision making are made available to the community.

- **A common view.** Participants in deliberative engagement work together to develop a position by weighing and balancing the perspectives of all. Although it may not be a consensus view, all participants have the right to be heard. There are different types of deliberative engagement activities. However, all deliberative engagement aims to have group of participants that are representative of the Council area demographics and who are informed and have access to information and pathways to seek further information.

Some examples of deliberative engagement activities include:

Online deliberative polling:

The representative group completes an initial questionnaire. Participants then attend a session/s where they will be briefed about the project by local experts and conduct conversations and deliberations with the group. Participants then complete the initial questionnaire again with input being analysed, and common views distilled.

Deliberative facilitated workshop:

A Deliberative engagement workshop would take place over two days. Workshops are be characterised by participants working in smaller groups, refining and prioritising their recommendations, sharing with the group, and working to frame a response together.

Deliberative mapping:

In addition to a representative group of community members, local experts from service providers, business, government, policy, and other relevant matters are also recruited to take part in the process. The community and expert groups come together to decide a criterion for examination of priorities and options unearthed in broad engagement. The groups then take part in separate facilitated workshops before attending a joint session where they will work together to form recommendations.

Deliberative conference:

A deliberative conference breaks the engagement into different sessions based on the themes unearthed during the broad engagement. Participants can commit to an area of interest, without committing to the whole process. Participants will attend sessions (1 day minimum) and work in small and large groups to refine options and priorities and form recommendations. A final full day session will then consider the findings from the themed sessions and seek consistency when forming final recommendations.

14. **To be representative, do you think participants for deliberative engagement activities should be recruited by:**

☐ Invitation (a random selection of residents who are representative of the Council's demographics are invited to take part in the process).

☐ Expression of interest (Residents who wish to take part in the deliberative process submit an expression of interest to take part in the engagement. From these expressions of interest a group that is representative of Council demographics will be recruited to take part in the process).

☐ Mixed recruitment (Residents will be selected from both a by invitation and an open expression of interest process).

Level of engagement

IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation outlines the different levels of engagement. Each level has different objectives and levels of influence when seeking community feedback. Not every Council project will have the same level of engagement. The level of engagement for each Council project will depend the circumstances of each project and its strategic importance, impact, complexity, risk, community sentiment and level of influence. The higher the level of engagement, the greater the resources and funding that will need to be allocated to the Council project. Different tools can be used across the spectrum, however deliberative engagement activities sit within the involve, collaborate, and empower levels of engagement.

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defined the public's role in any public participation process. The spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

Increasing impact on the decision

	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 that 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 the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the public	We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

Source: IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

In some circumstances projects or Council initiatives may not have a community engagement element for the following reasons:

- When community engagement feedback is unable to impact decision making.
- When Council is not the lead agency for a project.
- When responding to natural, social, or economic disaster and the timeliness of response takes precedence.

When deciding the level of community engagement required for Council projects, some of the factors we should consider are:

- **Strategic importance:** Does the policy, plan or strategy relate to one of the aspirations or goals outlined in the Community Vision?
- **Impact:** Will the project, plan or strategy have an impact on the residents, ratepayers, and stakeholders of Council and to what degree?
- **Complexity:** Is the project, plan or strategy complex and will it require information and education regarding the subject matter for the community to provide informed feedback.
- **Risk:** Has the planning for the project indicated a high level of organisational or community risk?
- **Community sentiment:** Does the community have a high level of interest regarding the subject matter of the project, plan, or strategy?
- **Influence:** What level of influence will community feedback have on decision making.

The following questions will help us understand your engagement preferences and expectations when deciding what level of engagement is needed for Council projects.

15. What topics would you like to be consulted about (please choose your top 3)?

☐ Planning decisions   ☐ Council Policy   ☐ Master planning

☐ Small capital works   ☐ Large capital works   ☐ Strategic (long term) planning

☐ Service changes and planning   ☐ Changes to local laws   ☐ Finance and budgets

☐ Change of use of public features of spaces   ☐ Major projects or initiatives   ☐ Selling, exchanging, acquiring or leasing land

☐ Other _____

16. What level of engagement would you most likely get involved with?

☐ Inform   ☐ Consult   ☐ Involve   ☐ Collaborate   ☐ Empower

Community engagement planning

Planning for community engagement is an important step in ensuring that we capture the information, and the community can provide input into decision making. Our initial engagement will Council officers has unearthed factors to be considered when planning for community engagement. We considered these factors when developing our Strategic Engagement Plan available on Participate Hepburn – so it is a good reference. The factors for community engagement planning are:

- The purpose and objective of the project.
- History and context (local, legislative, and jurisdictional).
- Impacted residents, ratepayers, stakeholders and representativeness.
- What information do we need from stakeholders, demographics and target audience?
- Key messages.
- Level of engagement.
- What level of influence will the community engagement findings have on decision making?
- Budget and resources.
- Timeframes for completion.
- Strategic importance.
- Risk.
- Engagement activities.
- Accessibility.

17. Are there any other items that Council should consider regarding community engagement planning?

☐ Yes (explain below)   ☐ No

_____

_____

_____

_____

Continuous improvement

Council is committed to continuously reviewing and improving our community engagement activities to change and adapt over time where needed. We have considered what aspects of community engagement activities need to be reviewed and have developed some areas for consideration.

- **Community satisfaction:**
  – Engagement activities.
  – Communication.
  – Outcomes.

- **Objectives:**
  – Were objectives outline in engagement plan met?
  – Did we gather the information needed for informed decision making?

- **Participation:**
  – How many people participated/what was the response rate?
  – Were they representative of people affected by the subject matter?
  – Were there any gaps in participation?

- **Level of engagement:**
  – Was the level of engagement outlined in the plan reached?

- **Transparency:**
  – Were the findings from engagement made public?
  – Did we advise community of how feedback was used?

- **Staff and community experience**
  – Did staff and the community feel safe and supported during the rollout of the project?

- **Achievements:**
  – What were the achievements of this engagement?
  – What lessons can we learn and implement in future projects?

18. **Are there any other aspects of community engagement activities that we should assess for continuous improvement?**

    ☐ Yes (explain below)   ☐ No

    _____

    _____

    _____

19. **If you would like more information about the development of our Community Engagement Policy and the Hepburn Together project, please add your details below (this is optional).**

    Name: _____

    Email address: _____

THANKS FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION AND INPUT!

More information or questions:

Visit Council's **'Participate Hepburn'** page at **www.participate.hepburn.vic.gov.au.**

Contact Michelle Whyte (Coordinator Community Partnerships) via
hepburntogether@hepburn.vic.gov.au or **03 5755 0555.**