



14.2 ADOPTION OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: KYLIE BENNETTS, GENERAL MANAGER, CITY GROWTH AND ORGANISATIONAL CAPABILITY

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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To inform Council of the feedback received on the draft Community Engagement Policy following community consultation. A copy of the draft Community Engagement Policy can be found in **Attachment 1**.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 Council is required to adopt a Community Engagement Policy by 1 March 2021.
- 2.2 This report outlines the results of community engagement that occurred on the draft Policy in December 2020 and presents a final policy for endorsement by Council.
- 2.3 In summary, while there were some limitations outlined by participants on the community engagement process, overall, those members of the community who provided feedback were generally supportive of the draft Policy. Those who responded were also keen to understand in more detail how engagement will be implemented and transformed as result of the policy and legislative requirements. This will be an iterative process that officers will work on in the coming months.

3. RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 3.1 Adopts the Community Engagement Policy as outlined in **Attachment 1**.
- 3.2 Thanks those who gave feedback for their contribution.
- 3.3 Notes officers will incorporate where possible feedback received on the way community engagement is planned, structured and delivered into future community engagement processes.
- 3.4 Delegates authority to the Chief Executive Officer to make minor amendments to the documents to correct drafting errors that do not materially alter the intent of the policy.

4. KEY POINTS/ISSUES

- 4.1 Pursuant to Section 55(3) of the Local Government Act 2020 (the Act) Council must adopt a community engagement policy on or before 1 March 2021.
- 4.2 Relevantly Section 55 of the Act prescribes the criteria that must be met by the policy; and Section 56 defines a set of principles that guide how community engagement processes will be undertaken by Council.
- 4.3 A draft Community Engagement Policy was presented to Council at its Ordinary Council Meeting on 2 December 2020 and was endorsed by Council as a draft to enable community engagement to occur.
- 4.4 The draft policy was released for community consultation from 5 December 2020 until 23 December 2020.



- 4.5 Consultation with the community involved developing a survey that was divided into two parts. The first section focussed on the outcome statements in the draft policy and sought to understand if the community agreed or disagreed with the proposed outcomes of the policy.
- 4.6 The second section sought to understand if the community was aligned with the proposed promise statements that Council makes to the community in the policy.
- 4.7 Both sections of the survey also provided an opportunity for the community to offer suggestions for improving the policy.
- 4.8 While no formal submission process was arranged, four email submissions were received. Three of these were made on behalf of community groups and the fourth was an individual submission by a community member.
- 4.9 In addition, to the survey, officers were invited to attend the December 2020 meetings of the Multicultural Advisory Committee and the Multifaith Forum. Full details of this feedback can be found in **Attachment 2**.
- 4.10 A full copy of the survey results, details on the demographics of the community participating in the survey and submissions can be found in **Attachment 2**.
- 4.11 Limitations of the engagement process on the draft policy include:
 - 4.11.1 Due to legislative requirements to adopt a community engagement policy by 1 March 2021, the Council caretaker period and induction program, engagement on the draft policy occurred over a three-week period in December prior to the end of year festive season.
 - 4.11.2 Due to COVID-19 restrictions there were limited opportunities for face-to-face engagement activities during the consultation period and digital engagement was the main delivery mode.
 - 4.11.3 Channels for promoting opportunities to provide feedback were predominantly online.
 - 4.11.4 Contributions to this engagement program do not constitute a representative snapshot of our community as people have self-selected to participate.
 - 4.11.5 Consultative engagement provides only a high-level snapshot of community sentiment and does not reflect any deeper deliberation on the policy.

5. CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDERS

- 5.1 Consultation was undertaken via Council's *Have Your Say* online engagement portal <https://haveyoursay.portphillip.vic.gov.au/local-government-act-2020>. The project page provided a copy of the draft policy, background information including the legislative requirement for Victorian councils to have a community engagement policy, key dates, and what opportunities existed to provide feedback.
- 5.2 Consultation was promoted through Council's community networks and social media channels, Council's online *Diversity* newsletter. Posters were displayed at Council libraries and childcare centres and at participating cafes and local businesses. Intercept surveyors handed out flyers in local activity centres and encouraged people to complete the survey. Council officers also shared information about this consultation with their stakeholders and communities of interest.
- 5.3 These efforts resulted in fifty-one survey responses.



- 5.4 Survey responses regarding the proposed outcomes in the draft policy indicate broad support overall, with support for all outcomes between 62 to 77 per cent. Outcome 6 – Ensure community engagement is as representative as possible by removing barriers to participation – received the greatest indication of agreement (strongly agree / agree) 76.47%, while Outcome 3 – Build community and stakeholder trust and confidence in the Council as the Council is aware of and actively considers the lived experience and feedback of the community – received 62.76% agreement.
- 5.5 Most qualitative comments regarding the outcomes reflected how we might achieve these outcomes through implementation of the policy.
- 5.6 While survey responses regarding the proposed promises in the draft policy indicate broad support, levels of support were generally lower, ranging from 58 to 67 per cent. Results for 'Neither agree nor disagree' were slightly higher overall for proposed promises than for proposed outcomes; as were results for Strongly disagree / disagree.
- 5.7 Most of the qualitative comments regarding the promises relate to considerations for successful policy implementation such as ensuring engagement is genuine, engagement goes beyond what is mandated and is both representative and accessible.
- 5.8 All feedback received has been considered. Most feedback relates to how engagement will be conducted, and officers will consider how this can be incorporated in the planning of future engagement activities with Council.
- 5.9 There have some modest changes made to the Policy. These changes include firming Council's commitment to work with the community to identify relevant stakeholders, and design and deliver an engagement approach that appropriately reflects their level of impact and ability to influence the decision to be made. The Policy has also been amended to emphasise Council's role to inform the community in circumstances where engagement cannot occur. Finally, a review process to ensure continuous improvement in community engagement processes is included.
- 5.10 Officers will also incorporate where possible feedback received on the way community engagement is planned, structured and delivered into future community engagement processes as this was a common theme amongst respondents.

6. LEGAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Council is required to adopt a Community Engagement Policy by 1 March 2021.

7. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 7.1 Funding to support engagement activities is considered through the budget process.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 8.1 None as a result of this report.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 9.1 The key objectives of the Policy as they relate to the community are to:
 - 9.1.1 facilitate genuine and transparent opportunities for the community to provide feedback to, co-design solutions with and inform the decisions made by Council
 - 9.1.2 help our community understand what role they can play in our decision making



9.1.3 ensure all members of our community can have a say in planning for the City's future.

10. ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICY

10.1 Strategic Direction 6 - Our Commitment to You

11. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

11.1 TIMELINE

11.1.1 The Policy takes effect from the passing of this resolution.

11.2 COMMUNICATION

11.2.1 A copy of the Policy will be made available on the Council's website.

11.2.2 The Policy and outcomes of the community engagement will be communicated via Have Your Say and through other communication channels as appropriate.

11.2.3 Direct communication will occur with the stakeholders that made submissions, as well as the Multicultural Advisory Committee and the Multifaith Forum. Communication will thank them for their contribution and advise how their feedback will be used.

12. OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT INTEREST

12.1 No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any direct or indirect interest in the matter.

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ATTACHMENTS

1. Community Engagement Policy February 2021
2. Community Engagement Report