

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

Community Engagement Report

February 2021



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Executive summary

Developing a community engagement policy

The City of Port Phillip is lucky to have an engaged and passionate community, and Council greatly values their feedback and insights. Our community has a deep well of knowledge and lived experience, and feedback allows Council to have a greater understanding of diverse points of view, values, concerns and priorities. It is a fundamental element of council decision making and essential in ensuring good governance.

The purpose of the City of Port Phillip Community Engagement Policy is to demonstrate Council's commitment and approach to community engagement and to meet its legislative obligations under section 55 of the *Local Government Act 2020*. The Policy demonstrates Council's commitment to facilitating genuine and transparent opportunities for the community to provide feedback and inform the decisions made by Council, and to drawing on the community's expertise to co-design solutions and build shared ownership and responsibility for outcomes.

Engagement approach

In February 2020 we asked our community through a series of neighbourhood-based pop-up engagements what community engagement meant to them and how they believed it contributes to future planning for our City. This feedback, combined with feedback received more broadly through other engagements informed development of the draft Community Engagement Policy.

The draft policy was and released for consultation in December 2020. The consultation ran from 4 December to 23 December 2020. The primary feedback tool was a survey, hosted online and available in hard copy. Fifty-one survey responses were received, with the majority of respondents being Port Phillip residents (43 respondents; 84%). Four submissions were also received via email.

The consultation was promoted via Council's communications channels, including Divercity, social media and newsletters. Posters and flyers were also distributed in local activity centres across the municipality and at Council's libraries and children's centres, and intercept surveyors also visited local activity centres to promote the consultation encourage people to participate in the consultation.

Engagement findings

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) at 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 as part of its decision-making process* – received 62.76% agreement.

Most of the qualitative (pen text) comments regarding the outcomes reflected how we might achieve these outcomes through implementation of the policy.

While survey responses regarding the proposed promises in the draft policy indicate broad support overall for the promises, 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.

Again, most of the qualitative (pen text) comments regarding the promises relate to considerations for successful policy implementation.

General comments about the draft policy indicate a desire for stronger articulation of how this policy will 'shift' engagement practice to a greater participatory level for the community, and include suggestions for more effective communications so the community can better understand Council's role and function and how they can be involved (and to what extent) in the decision-making process.

There was clear support across both quantitative and qualitative questions regarding more inclusive and accessible engagement opportunities.

While a formal submissions process was not undertaken, four email submissions were received during the consultation period. Common themes across the submissions included support for the establishment of ward-based meetings with Councillors, mechanisms for community to initiate engagement and co-design engagement approaches, and increased in-house capacity to cater for anticipated increase in deliberative engagement opportunities to reduce reliance on consultant expertise.

Introduction

Developing a Community Engagement Policy

The City of Port Phillip is lucky to have an engaged and passionate community, and Council greatly values their feedback and insights. Our community has a deep well of knowledge and lived experience, and feedback allows Council to have a greater understanding of diverse points of view, values, concerns and priorities. It is a fundamental element of council decision making and essential in ensuring good governance.

Community engagement involves having conversations and working with people in our community who are interested in or may be affected by Council's decision-making. It also provides opportunities for our community and Council to learn together and build shared knowledge through experiences, actions and learnings.

The purpose of the Community Engagement Policy is to demonstrate the City of Port Phillip's commitment and approach to community engagement and to meet its legislative obligations under section 55 of the *Local Government Act 2020*. The Policy demonstrates Council's commitment to facilitating genuine and transparent opportunities for the community to provide feedback and inform the decisions made by Council, and to drawing on the community's expertise to co-design solutions and build shared ownership and responsibility for outcomes.

Local Government Act 2020

Section 56 of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) outlines a set of community engagement principles. Council adopts these principles that guide how we will implement all community engagement processes undertaken by Council. Our commitment to the community builds on these principles and outlines our promise and expectations against the principles.

Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of community engagement on the draft Community Engagement Policy. It details the engagement techniques used and presents the findings from this engagement program.

Purpose of engagement

The purpose of this engagement program was to inform the community of the development of a new Community Engagement Policy in line with legislative requirements and to provide feedback on the draft policy prior to finalisation.

Communications

We communicated with our community about this engagement via Council's website and the Have Your Say site, and via Council's online Divercity newsletter.

Due to the closure of most Council facilities and COVID-19 restrictions, several distribution channels were unavailable, and promotion relied predominantly on online methods. An email was distributed to the Have Your Say database and information about the draft policy and how to provide feedback was also promoted via Council's social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn), and through various Council and community e-newsletters. Posters were displayed at Council libraries and children's centres, as well as at some local cafes and other key community locations across the City where possible.

Intercept surveyors also visited key activity centres to promote the engagement and encourage people to complete a survey.

Limitations

Limitations to the community engagement process include:

- Due to legislative requirements to adopt a community engagement policy by 1 March 2021, engagement on the draft policy occurred over a three week period in December prior to the Christmas holiday season.
- 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.
- Channels for promoting opportunities to provide feedback were predominantly online.
- Contributions to this engagement program do not constitute a representative snapshot of our community as people have self-selected to participate
- Consultative engagement provides only a high-level snapshot of community sentiment and does not reflect any deeper deliberation on the policy.

Engagement approach

This section details the community engagement approach in developing and consulting on the draft Community Engagement Policy.

In February and March 2020 we asked our community through a series of neighbourhood-based pop-up engagements and online channels what community engagement meant to them and how they believed it contributes to future planning for our City. Feedback received, combined with feedback received more broadly through other engagements informed development of the draft Community Engagement Policy.

Community feedback in February and March 2020 told us that the way Council engages with our community is important. This engagement must be meaningful, robust and effective; it should provide genuine opportunities to engage with local decision making and impact how Council responds to community issues and concerns.

We also heard that engagement with Council adds to a feeling of community belonging and connectedness. How we engage should be inclusive, representative and a critical ingredient in staying informed and sharing a vision.

This feedback was incorporated into the draft Community Engagement Policy, which was released for consultation from 3 December to 23 December 2020.

Who we engaged

A series of demographic questions were asked as part of the survey. The following provides a brief snapshot of who we engaged through the survey. Detailed demographic data is provided as Appendix A to this report.

- 32 survey respondents (62.75 per cent) were aged between 50 to 69 years, with the median age group being 50 to 59 years (18 respondents; 35.29%).
- There was an even number of male and female respondents (23 respondents each).
- The majority of respondents identified themselves as Port Phillip residents (43; 84.31%); of these residents, 19 respondents (44.19%) also identified as ratepayers and three respondents (6.98%) also identified as business owners.
- Most respondents (36; 70.59%) live in St Kilda, Ripponlea, Port Melbourne or Middle Park (9 respondents / 17.65% each), with the remainder living in mainly Elwood (8% 15.69%) or South Melbourne.

During the consultation period Council officers were invited to attend Multifaith Forum and Multicultural Advisory Committee meetings on 8 December 2020 to introduce the draft policy and explore how the policy could reflect a more inclusive, accessible and diverse engagement approach. A summary of the discussion points is included in the Engagement Findings section of this report.

How we engaged

The engagement program was hosted on Council's Have Your Say online engagement portal () and feedback was channelled primarily through a survey seeking feedback on the proposed outcomes and promises in the draft policy, and suggestions for improving the policy. Fifty-one responses were received, including nine hardcopy surveys. A copy of the survey questions is provided as Appendix B to this report.

Two online forums were also hosted on Have Your Say, to provide a space for the community to have a conversation with each other. The forum topics posed were "What does community engagement mean to you?" and "How does community engagement contribute to planning for our City's future?"

A 'Quick Poll' was also available on the Have Your Say project page, asking how people found out about this consultation. This question was also included in the survey, to help officers identify opportunities for more effective communications to our community about live consultations.

While there was no formal (statutory) requirement to undertake a submissions process, four email submissions were received. Three submissions were made on behalf of community groups and the fourth was an individual submission by a community member.

Engagement findings

Survey

Proposed outcomes

The draft Community Engagement Policy proposes the following engagement outcomes:

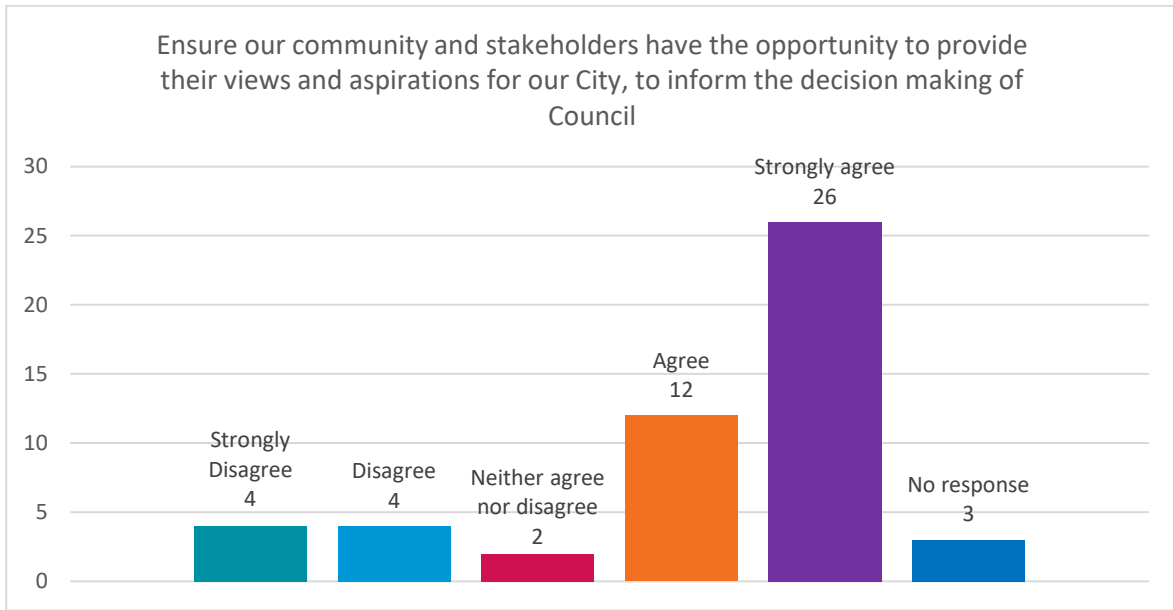
- ensure our community and stakeholders have the opportunity to provide their views and aspirations for our City, to inform the decision making of Council
- provide genuine opportunities for the community to provide feedback that will assist Council to deliver public value through its projects, strategies and services
- 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 as part of its decision-making process
- create opportunities for the community and stakeholders to build knowledge of Council activities to enhance their ability to engage with Council from an informed position
- raise awareness of the different ways our community and stakeholders can be involved in Council decision making, ranging from sharing information about a matter to coming together to co-create a solution
- ensure community engagement is as representative as possible by removing barriers to participation
- ensure an environment is created where diversity of view and thought is encouraged and safe to express, and that all participants, including Councillors and staff are treated respectfully
- ensure Council resources are applied effectively and efficiently.

Survey respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with these proposed engagement outcomes.

1. **Ensure our community and stakeholders have the opportunity to provide their views and aspirations for our City, to inform the decision making of Council**

Thirty-eight of the 51 respondents (74.51%) indicated they strongly agreed / agreed with this as an outcome for the Community Engagement Policy, while eight respondents (15.68%) strongly disagreed / disagreed with this outcome. Three respondents did not complete this question.

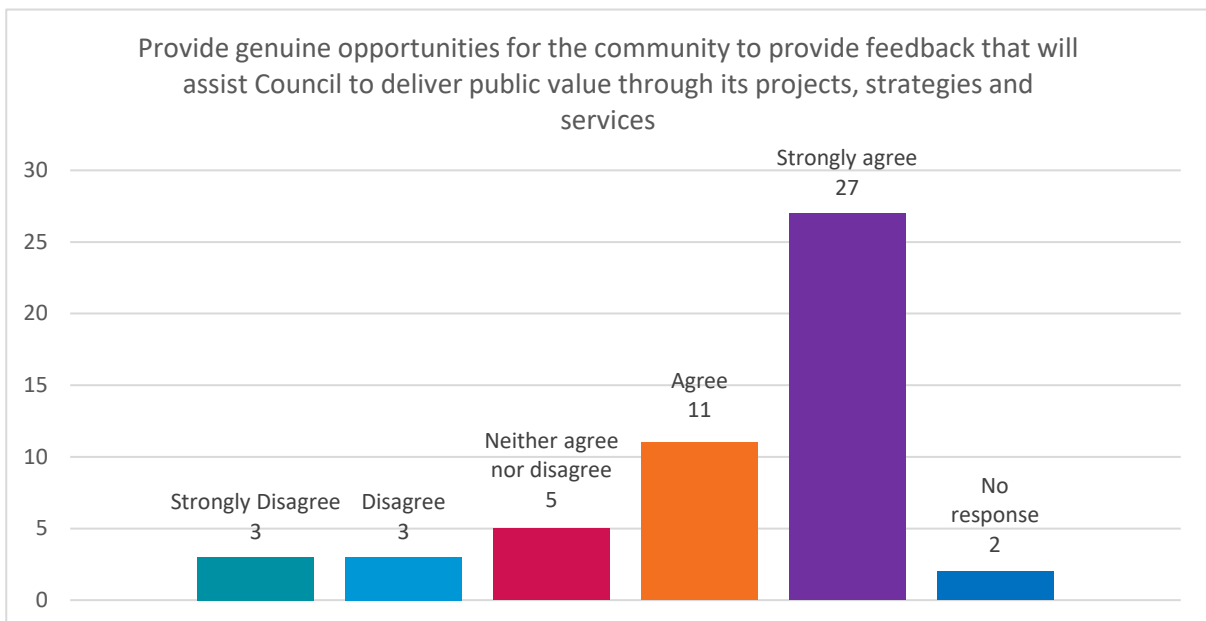
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
4	4	2	12	26
7.84%	7.84%	3.92%	23.53%	50.98%



- Provide genuine opportunities for the community to provide feedback that will assist Council to deliver public value through its projects, strategies and services

Survey results showed 38 (74.51%) respondents strongly agreed / agreed with this outcome and six respondents (11.76%) disagreed / strongly disagreed. Two respondents didn't complete this question.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
3	3	5	11	27
5.88%	5.88%	9.80%	21.57%	52.94%



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 as part of its decision-making process

Survey results showed 32 respondents (62.76%) strongly agreed / agreed with this outcome. Eight respondents (15.68%) disagreed / strongly disagreed, and two respondents did not complete this question.

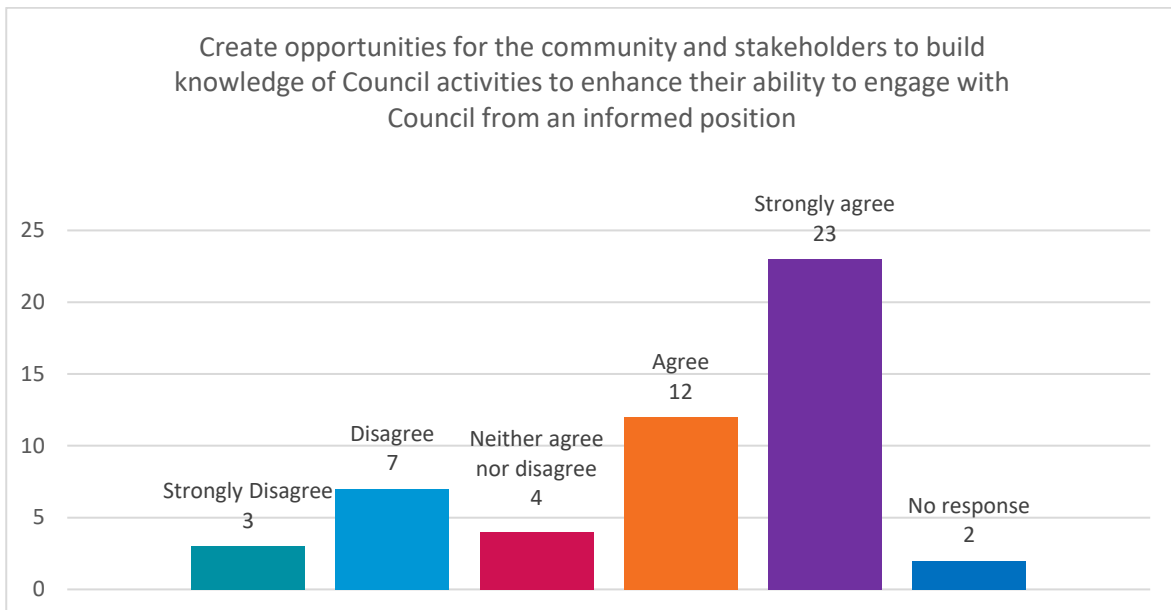
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
3	5	9	10	22
5.88%	9.80%	17.65%	19.61%	43.14%



4. Create opportunities for the community and stakeholders to build knowledge of Council activities to enhance their ability to engage with Council from an informed position

Survey results showed 35 respondents (68.63%) strongly agreed / agreed with this outcome, while 10 respondents (19.61%) strongly disagreed / disagreed. Two respondents did not complete this question.

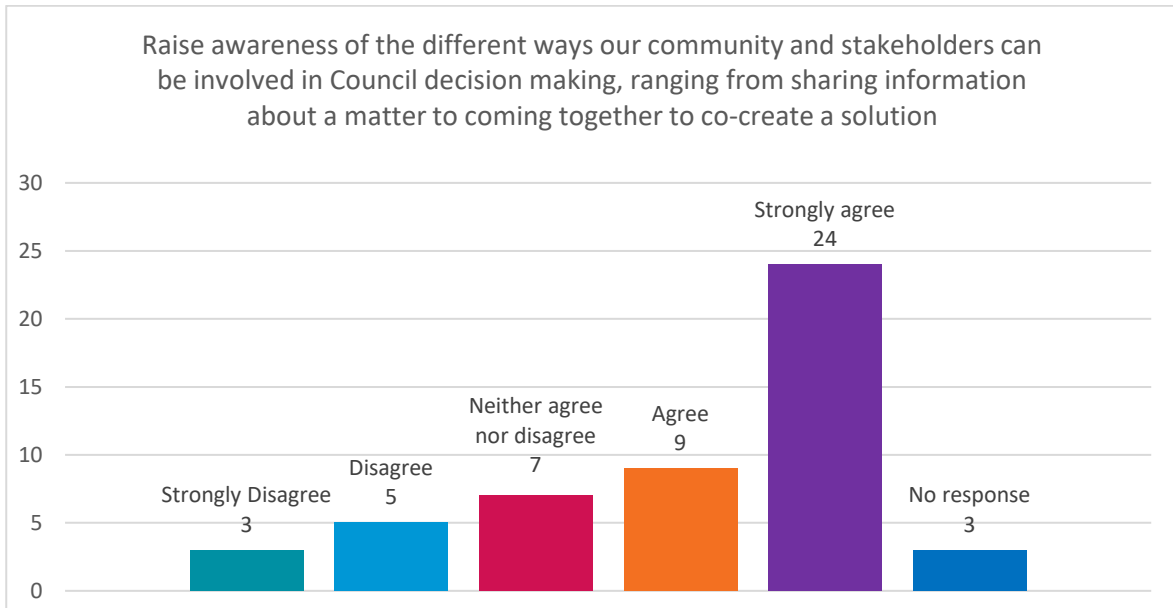
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
3	7	4	12	23
5.88%	13.73%	7.84%	23.53%	45.10%



5. Raise awareness of the different ways our community and stakeholders can be involved in Council decision making, ranging from sharing information about a matter to coming together to co-create a solution

Thirty-three respondents (64.71%) strongly agreed / agreed with this outcome and eight respondents (15.68%) strongly disagreed / disagreed. Three respondents did not complete this question.

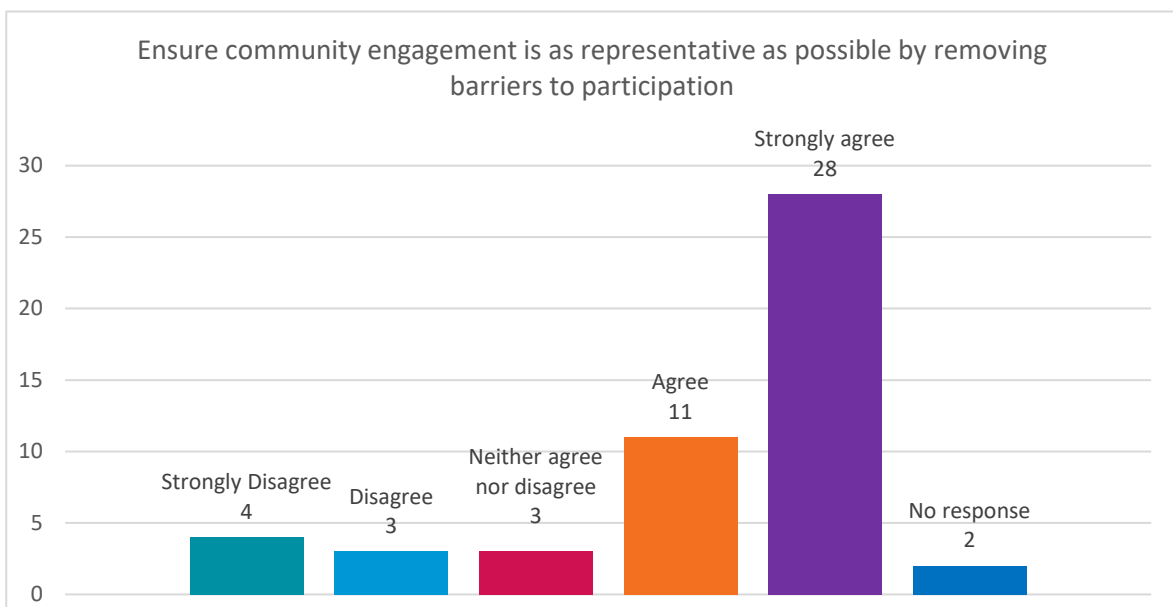
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
3	5	7	9	24
5.88%	9.80%	13.3%	17.65%	47.06%



6. Ensure community engagement is as representative as possible by removing barriers to participation

Thirty-nine respondents (76.47%) strongly agreed / agreed with this outcome and seven respondents (16.72%) strongly disagreed / disagreed. Two respondents did not complete this question.

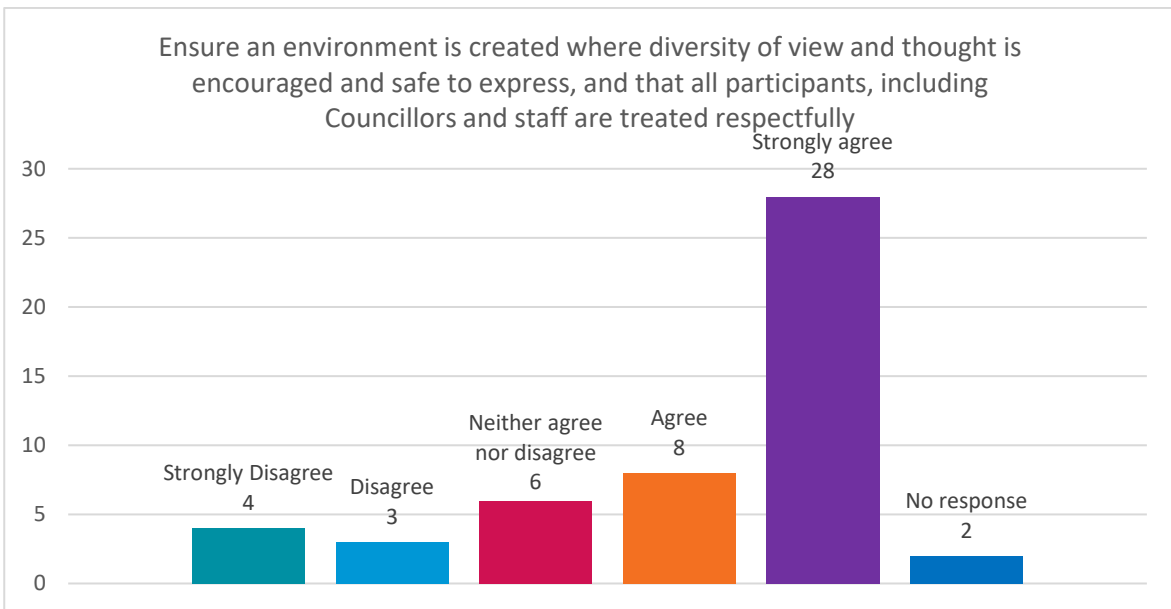
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
4	3	3	11	28
7.84%	5.88%	5.88%	21.57%	54.90%



7. Ensure an environment is created where diversity of view and thought is encouraged and safe to express, and that all participants, including Councillors and staff are treated respectfully

Thirty-six respondents (70.59%) strongly agreed / agreed with this outcome and seven respondents (16.72%) strongly disagreed / disagreed. Two respondents did not complete this question.

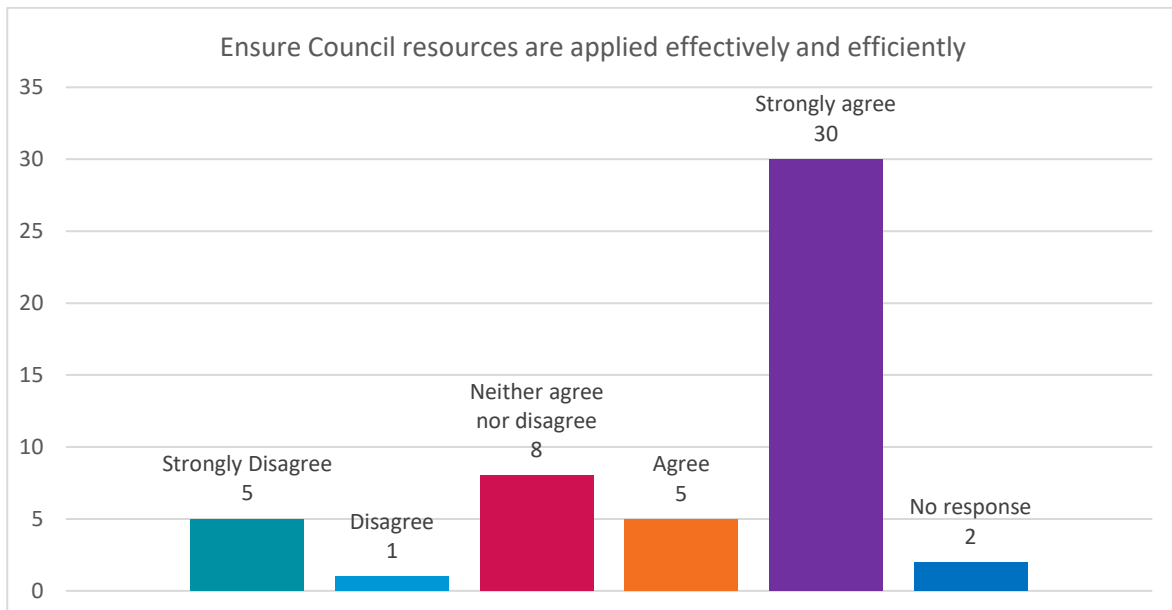
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
4	3	6	8	28
7.84%	5.88%	11.76%	15.69%	54.90%



8. Ensure Council resources are applied effectively and efficiently

Thirty-five respondents (68.62%) strongly agreed / agreed with this outcome. Six respondents (13.72%) strongly disagreed / disagreed. Two respondents did not complete this question.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
5	1	8	5	30
9.80%	3.92%	15.69%	9.80%	58.82%



Q. Do you have any comments about these outcomes, or do you think anything is missing?

Nineteen of the 51 survey respondents contributed to this open text question. Key or repeating comments are presented below, and verbatim responses are provided as Appendix C to this report.

- outcomes are important but very broad; examples of how these outcomes will be achieved should be included
- ensure engagement opportunities and outcomes are balanced and do not only consider vested interests of the minority; actively seek a diversity of views
- have clear systems and processes that protect the integrity of the engagement process, so engagement outcomes can't be manipulated by interest groups; be clearer around how equity and fairness will be incorporated into the decision-making process
- clear identification of stakeholders and their interests, and how this is considered in the decision-making process needs to be clearly communicated
- offer a broader range of options for engaging online
- move beyond just informing and consulting; there should be more opportunities for community involvement and collaboration
- better and more regular communication is needed around what Council is doing and how residents can have their say
- use plain language in your communications and strategies so they are easily understood
- be clear about, and focus on, local government responsibilities rather than issues / topics that are state or federal government responsibilities.

Proposed promises

The draft Community Engagement Policy proposes the following engagement promises to our community:

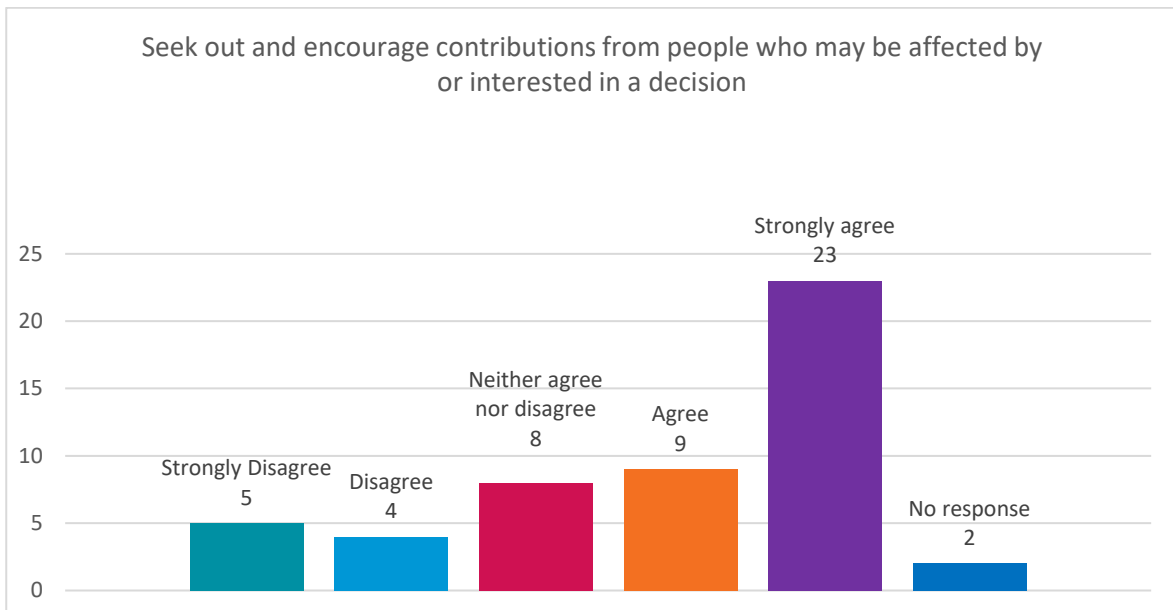
- seek out and encourage contributions from people, including those who may be affected by or interested in a decision
- provide clear, relevant, timely and balanced information for people to meaningfully contribute
- select a level and scale of engagement that appropriately reflects the issue at hand and opportunities for collaboration with our community
- explore new and emerging technologies that support greater, more interactive and engaging ways to contribute through different channels
- provide a variety of appropriate and accessible ways for people to have their say and speak honestly
- actively listen so that people’s ideas and input assist in making the final decision
- consider the needs and interests of all people in the decision-making process, and actively remove barriers to engagement
- acknowledge and give appropriate consideration to input from those who may be more impacted than others by a decision
- conduct engagement activities in ways that make efficient and effective use of Council’s available resources
- share the final decision, and how community input was considered making that decision.

Survey respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with these proposed promises.

1. **Seek out and encourage contributions from people who may be affected by or interested in a decision**

Thirty-two respondents (62.75%) strongly agreed / agreed with this promise. Nine respondents (17.64%) strongly disagreed / disagreed and two respondents did not complete this question.

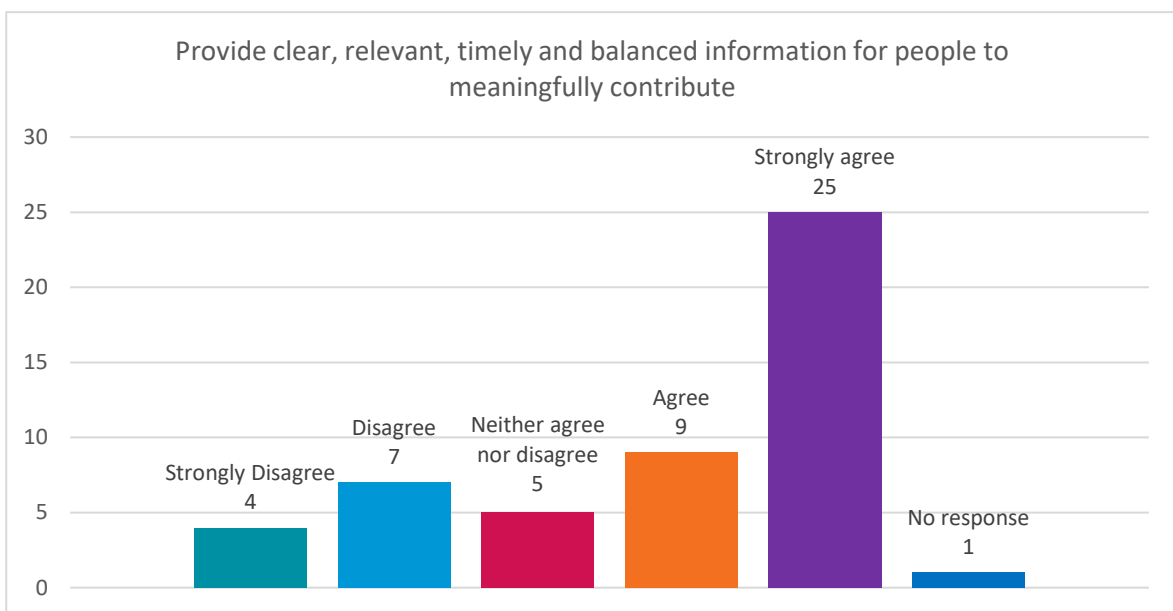
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
5	4	8	9	23
9.80%	7.84%	15.69%	17.65%	45.10%



2. Provide clear, relevant, timely and balanced information for people to meaningfully contribute

Thirty-four respondents (66.67%) strongly agreed / agreed with this promise and 11 respondents (21.57%) strongly disagreed / disagreed. One respondent did not complete this question.

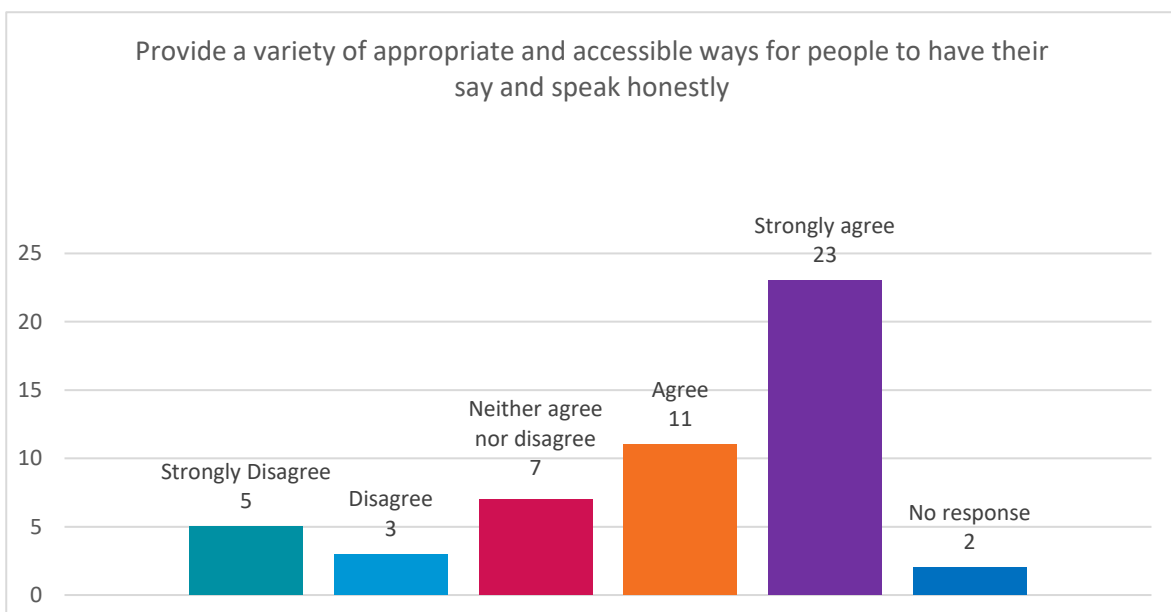
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
4	7	5	9	25
7.84%	13.73%	9.80%	17.65%	49.02%



3. Provide a variety of appropriate and accessible ways for people to have their say and speak honestly

Thirty-four respondents (66.67%) strongly agreed / agreed with this promise. Eight respondents (15.68%) strongly disagreed / disagreed. Two respondents did not complete this question.

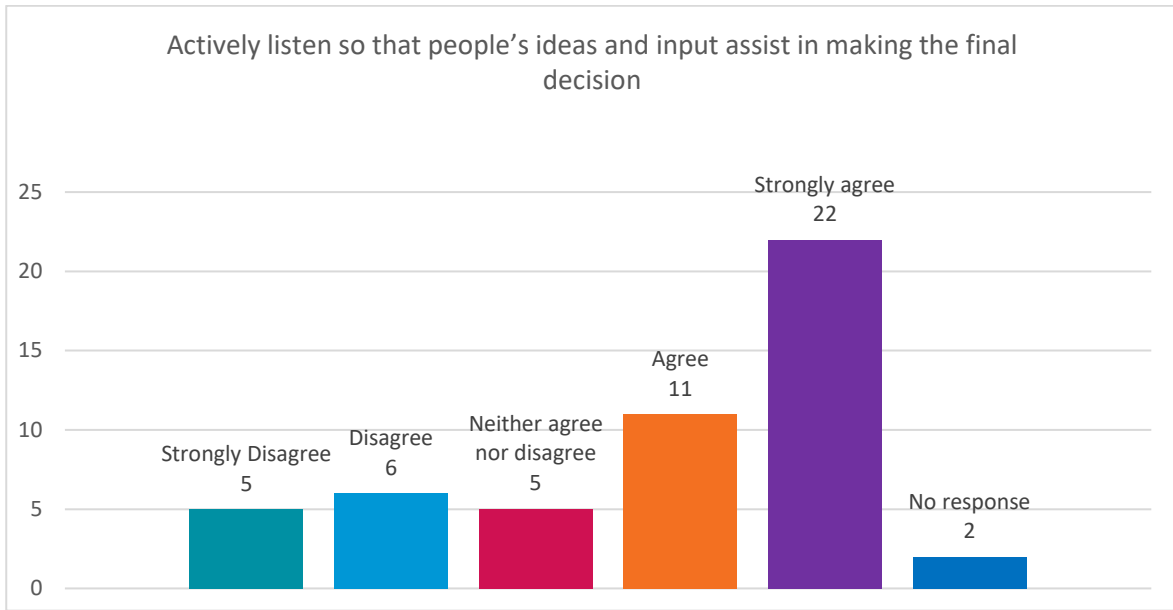
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
5	3	7	11	23
9.80%	5.88%	13.73%	21.57%	45.10%



4. Actively listen so that people's ideas and input assist in making the final decision

Thirty-three respondents (64.71%) strongly agreed / agreed with this promise. Eleven respondents (21.56%) strongly disagreed / disagreed and two respondents did not complete this question.

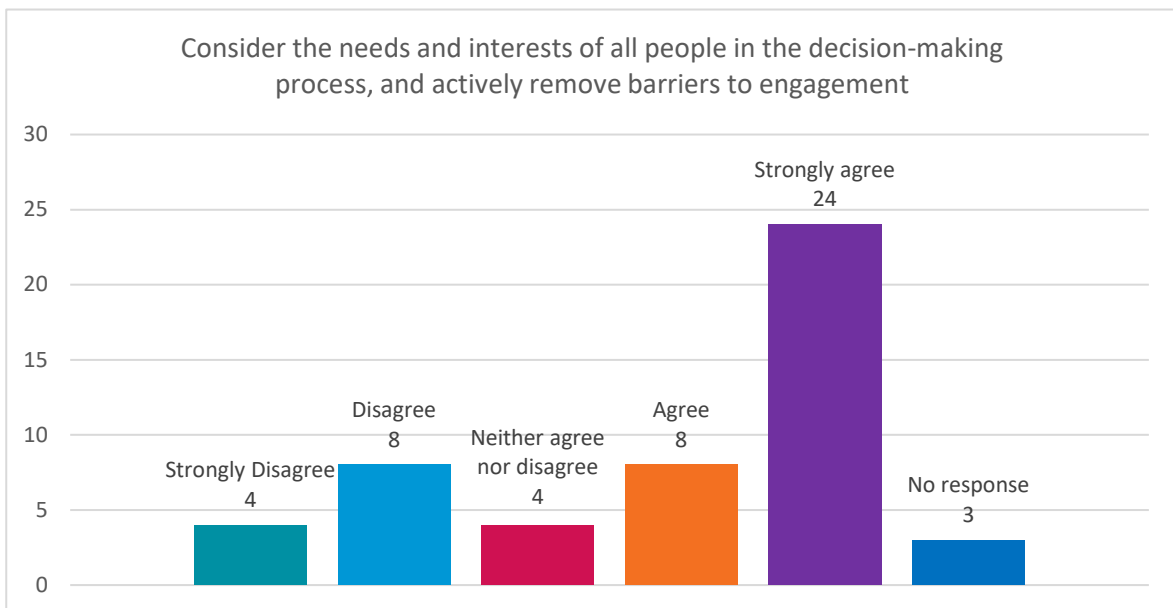
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
5	6	5	11	22
9.80%	11.76%	9.80%	21.57%	43.14%



5. Consider the needs and interests of all people in the decision-making process, and actively remove barriers to engagement

Thirty-two respondents (62.75%) strongly agreed / agreed with this promise and 12 respondents (23.53%) strongly disagreed / disagreed. Three respondents did not complete this question.

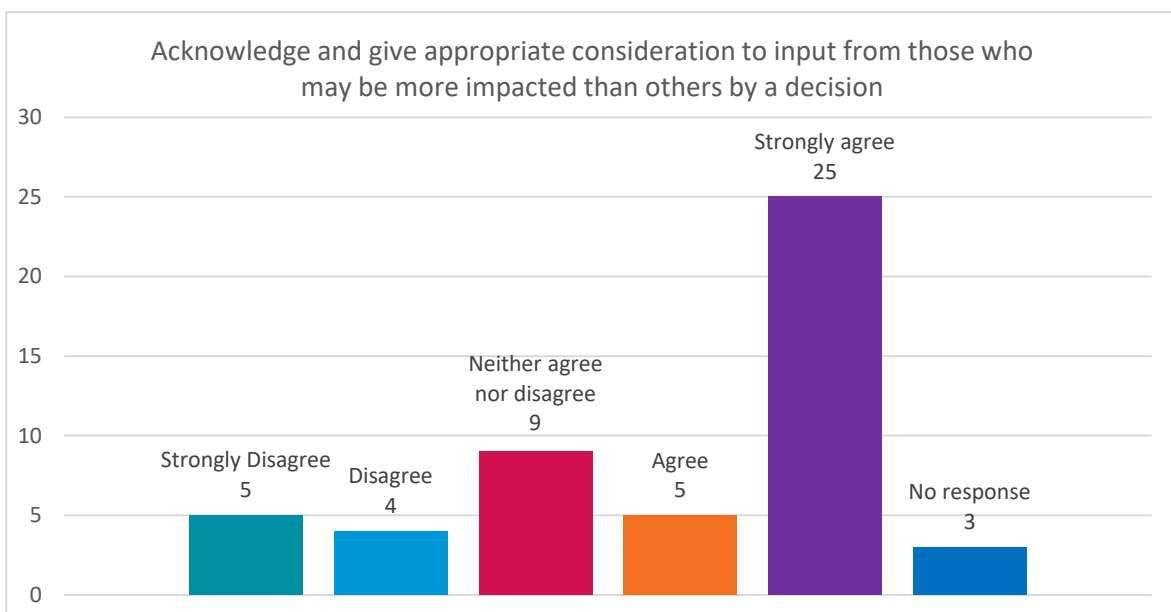
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
4	8	4	8	24
7.84%	15.69%	7.84%	15.69%	47.06%



Acknowledge and give appropriate consideration to input from those who may be more impacted than others by a decision

Thirty respondents (58.82%) strongly agreed / agreed with this promise. Nine respondents (17.64%) strongly disagreed / disagreed. Three respondents did not complete this question.

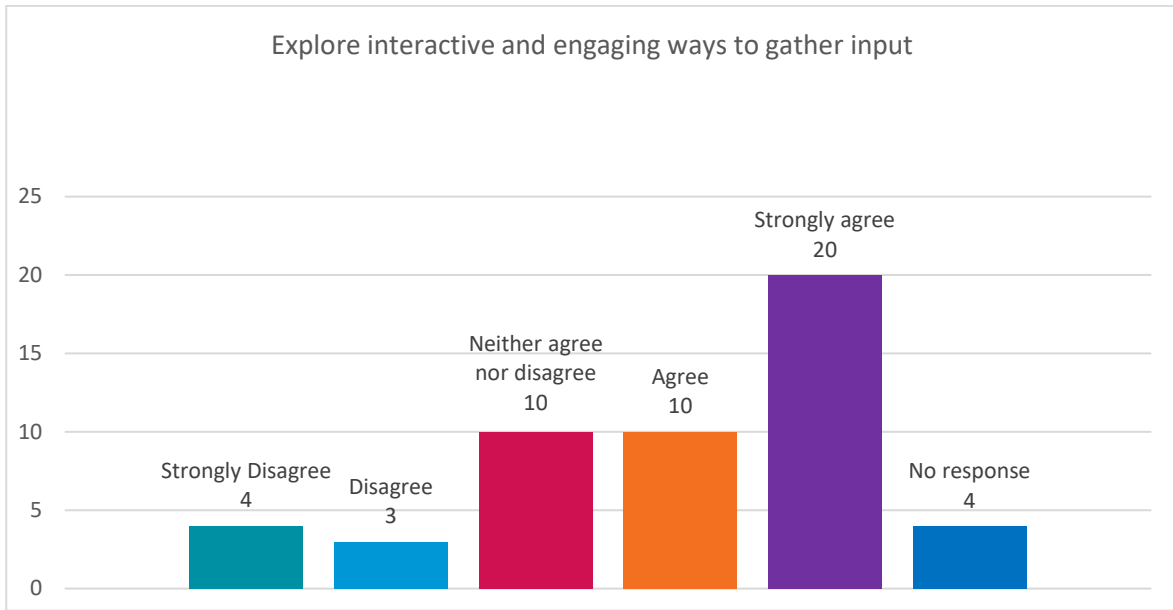
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
5	4	9	5	25
9.80%	7.84%	17.65%	9.80%	49.02%



6. Explore interactive and engaging ways to gather input

Thirty respondents (58.82%) strongly agreed / agreed with this promise. Seven respondents (13.72%) strongly disagreed / disagreed. Four respondents did not complete this question.

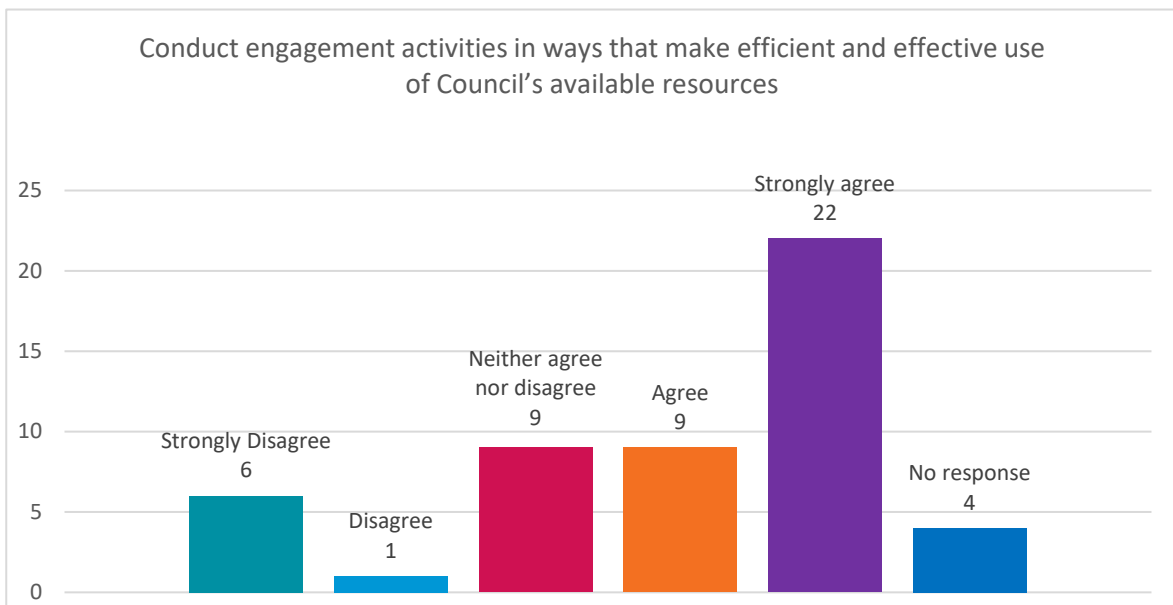
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
4	3	10	10	20
7.84%	5.88%	19.61%	19.61%	39.22%



7. Conduct engagement activities in ways that make efficient and effective use of Council's available resources

Thirty-one respondents (60.79%) strongly agreed / agreed with this promise, while seven respondents (13.72%) strongly disagreed / disagreed. Four respondents did not complete this question.

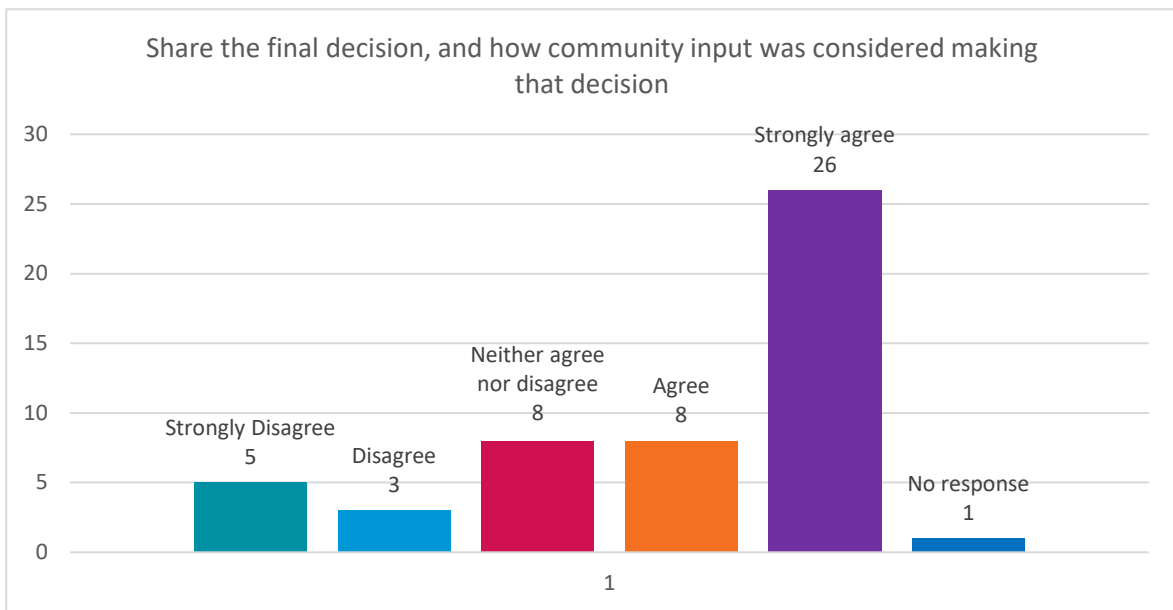
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
6	1	9	9	22
11.76%	1.96%	17.65%	17.65%	43.14%



8. Share the final decision, and how community input was considered making that decision

Thirty-four respondents (66.67%) strongly agreed / agreed with this promise and eight respondents (15.68%) strongly disagreed / disagreed. One respondent did not complete this question.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
5	3	8	8	26
9.80%	5.88%	15.69%	15.69%	50.98%



Q. Do you have any comments about these promises, or do you think anything is missing?

Twenty-three survey respondents contributed to this open text question. Key or repeating comments are presented below, and verbatim responses are provided as Appendix D to this report.

- these are important promises to the community; Council needs to demonstrate how it will keep these promises to address community scepticism about the integrity of its engagement practice in the decision-making process
- engagement should go well beyond just mandatory obligations and needs to consider the needs of all community members
- broad consultation about council activities is needed across the whole municipality, with a diverse cross-section of the community - not just at a local level
- all community members should be encouraged to participate, and engagement made more accessible through appropriate consideration of potential barriers to engagement
- a stronger presence on social media would help promote greater community involvement in decision making processes and support genuine and authentic communication.
- greater transparency is required around the decision-making process and how community input was considered.

Suggestions for improvement

Q. What do you think would make this draft policy better?

Twenty-two survey respondents contributed to this open text question. Key or repeating comments are presented below, and verbatim responses are provided as Appendix E to this report.

- increase community input and involve stakeholders in designing a process that will work for them
- increase access to materials and information through more extensive publication in different formats and at more locations
- undertake better quantitative and qualitative research to understand community views, supported by statistically valid data
- have a clear framework for how different stakeholder interests will be addressed and managed, including conflicting interests of different stakeholder groups
- communicate Council's role / function and extent of authority so the community can have a better understanding around expectations
- communicate the actions Council will take to deliver this policy.

Submissions

Four email submissions were also received during the consultation period. Key or repeating comments are presented below, and a copy of the submissions received are provided as Appendix F to this report.

- Limited timeframe for community to provide feedback on draft policy
- Current engagement practice is not enough to meet legislative requirement and deliver policy outcomes
- Community members should have a role in deciding what topics they are engaged on and how they are engaged
- In-house capacity and expertise to successfully deliver deliberative engagement must be developed to reduce reliance on external expertise and cost
- Council should always aim for a collaborative level of engagement
- Engagement needs to be more inclusive and accessible, and information should be presented in easy-to-read and understand formats
- Need more information about how stakeholders will be identified and be clear about how their stake was considered against other stakeholders in the decision-making process
- Initial research on what the community thinks about engagement with Council is needed to establish a baseline for improvement
- Introduce regular ward-based meetings with councillors
- Continue to engage with the community on the policy beyond its adoption, including through regular policy review
- Need to include information on how the policy will be implemented.

Meetings

Officers were invited to attend the December 2020 meetings of the Multicultural Advisory Committee and the Multifaith Forum. Key points raised at these meetings included:

- Need to make information more accessible, easy to understand and available in different formats to meet a range of needs
- Desire to understand where advisory committees sit within the policy
- Clearer communication of outcomes and the rationale behind decisions, as well as how the community's feedback was considered
- Explanation of how Council will manage conflicting views through engagement
- Appropriate measures are needed to track how well Council is meeting its promises
- Consideration of adequate time for the community to prepare and understand the issue/s at hand, for more meaningful and informed contributions to the process

Next steps

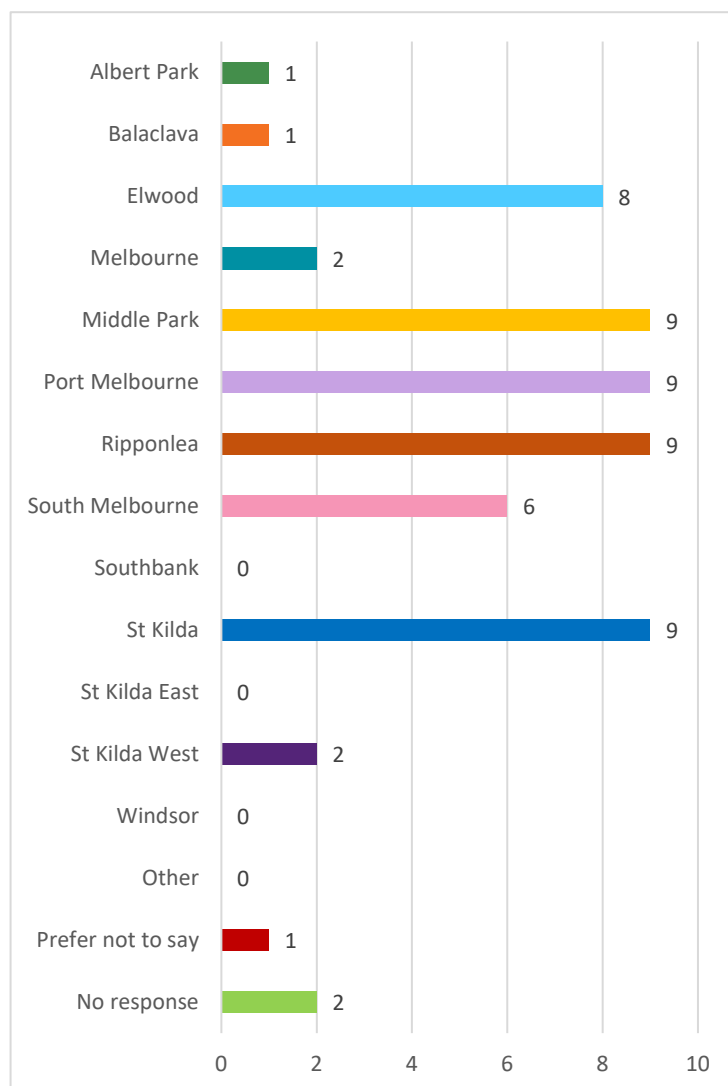
This report and the draft Community Engagement Policy will be presented to Council at the 17 February 2021 Ordinary Council Meeting, where Council will consider adopting the Policy.

Appendices

Appendix A: Survey respondent demographic data

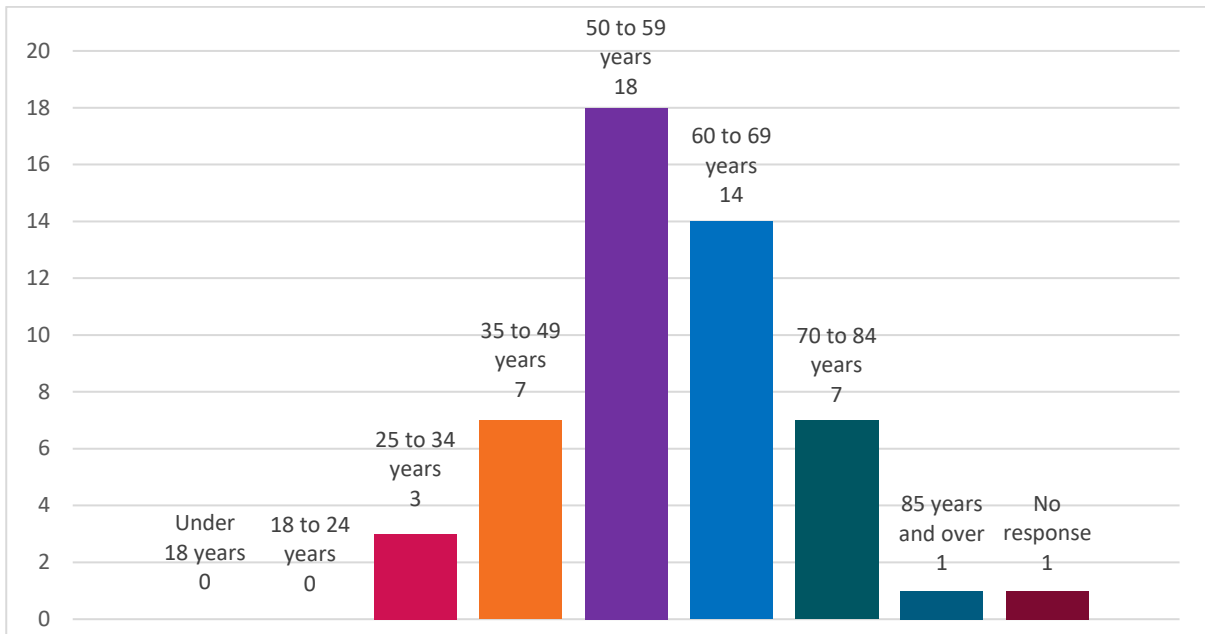
What is your residential suburb?

Albert Park	1
Balaclava	1
Elwood	8
Melbourne	2
Middle Park	9
Port Melbourne	9
Ripponlea	9
South Melbourne	6
Southbank	0
St Kilda	9
St Kilda East	0
St Kilda West	2
Windsor	0
Other	0
Prefer not to say	1
No response	2



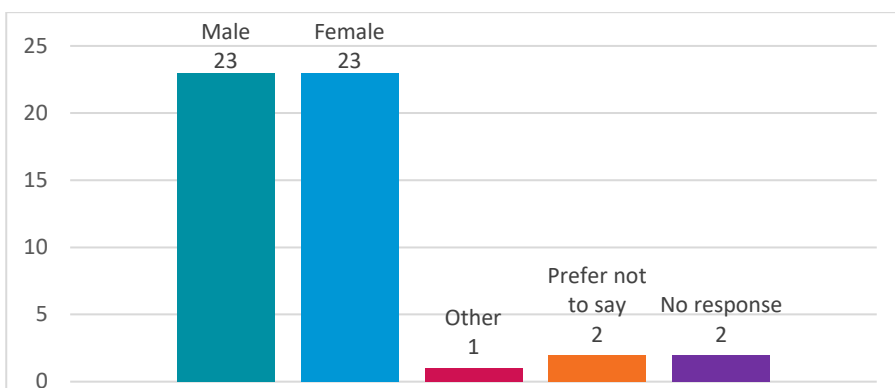
Please indicate your age group

Under 18 years	18 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 49	50 to 59	60 to 69	70 to 84	85 and over	No response
0	0	3	7	18	14	7	1	1



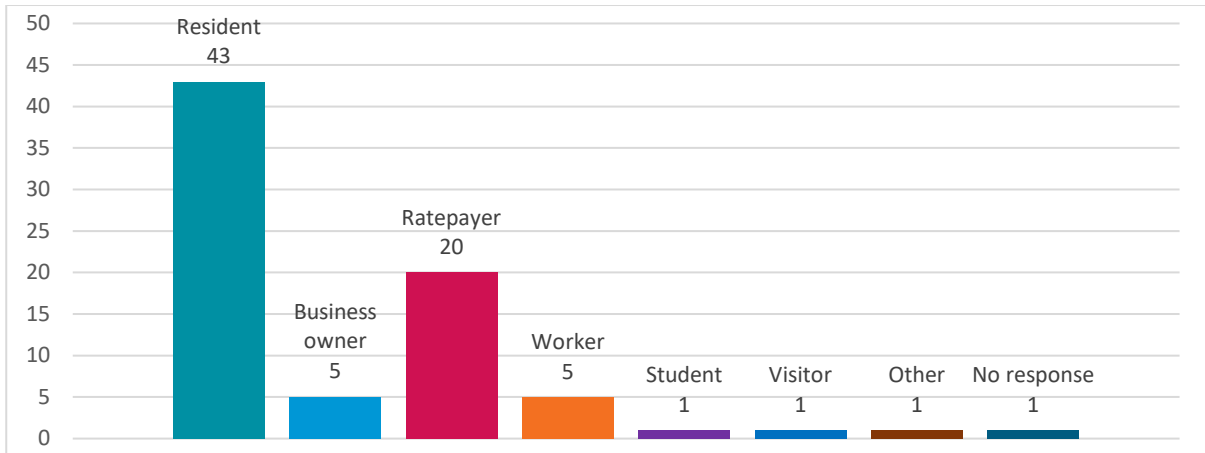
Which gender do you identify with?

Male	Female	Other	Prefer not to say	No response
23	23	1	2	2



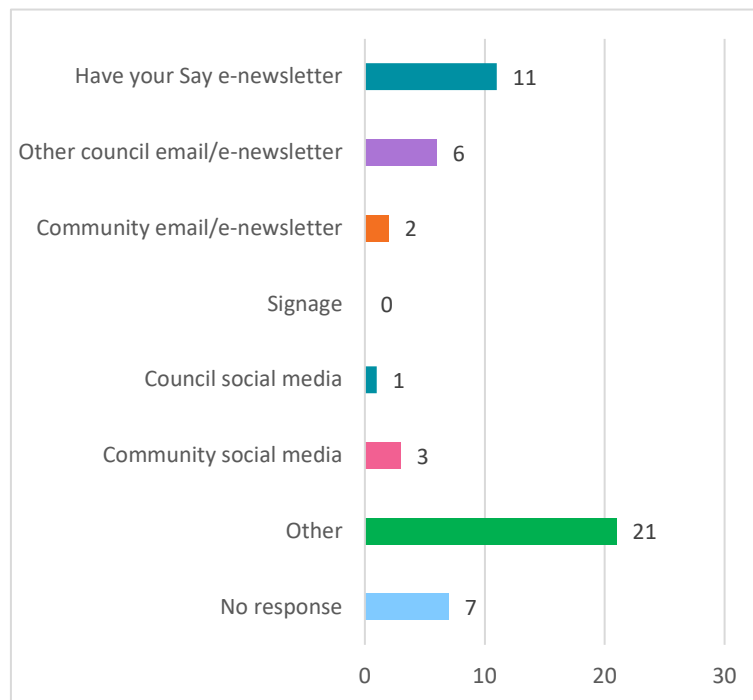
Which of the following describes your connection to the City of Port Phillip? Select all that apply

Resident	Business owner	Ratepayer	Worker	Student	Visitor	Other	No response
43	5	20	5	1	1	1	1



How did you hear about this consultation?

Have Your Say e-newsletter	11
Other council email / e-newsletter	6
Community email / e-newsletter	2
Signage	0
Council social media	1
Community social media	3
Other	21
No response	7



Appendix B: Survey questions

Why should we engage with our community?



Draft Community Engagement Policy

Your feedback is important and will help shape a Community Engagement Policy that demonstrates Council's commitment to facilitating genuine and transparent opportunities for our community to provide feedback and inform the decisions made by Council.

Let us know what you think of the outcomes we seek to achieve, the promises we make to our community and anything else you think will help Council demonstrate its commitment to engaging with its community.

The survey will take around 10 minutes to complete and all feedback is anonymous.

Please complete and return the survey to Council using the reply-paid envelope by Wednesday 23 December 2020.

Outcomes we want to achieve

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following outcomes of the draft policy.
(Tick the boxes)

Outcomes	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Ensure our community and stakeholders have the opportunity to provide their views and aspirations for our City, to inform the decision making of Council					
Provide genuine opportunities for the community to provide feedback that will assist Council to deliver public value through its projects, strategies and services					
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 as part of its decision-making process					
Create opportunities for the community and stakeholders to build knowledge of Council activities to enhance their ability to engage with Council from an informed position					
Raise awareness of the different ways our community and stakeholders can be involved in Council decision making, ranging from sharing information about a matter to coming together to co-create a solution					

Why should we engage with our community?



Ensure community engagement is as representative as possible by removing barriers to participation					
Ensure an environment is created where diversity of view and thought is encouraged and safe to express, and that all participants, including Councilors and staff are treated respectfully					
Ensure Council resources are applied effectively and efficiently					

Do you have any comments about these outcomes, or do you think anything is missing?

Our promise to the community

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following promises Council makes to the community and stakeholders. (Tick the boxes)

Outcomes	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Seek out and encourage contributions from people who may be affected or interested in a decision					
Provide clear, relevant, timely and balanced information for people to meaningfully contribute					
Provide a variety of appropriate and accessible ways for people to have their say and speak honestly					
Actively listen so that people's ideas and input assist in making the final decision					
Consider the needs and interests of all people in the decision-making process, and actively remove barriers to engagement					
Acknowledge and give appropriate consideration to input from those who may be more impacted than others by a decision					
Explore interactive and engaging ways to gather input					

Why should we engage with our community?



Conduct engagement activities in ways that make efficient and effective use of Council's available resources					
Share the final decision, and how community input was considered making that decision					

Do you have any comments about these promises, or do you think anything is missing?

What do you think would make this draft policy better?

Why should we engage with our community?



A bit about you

We'd like to understand who we're talking to, and appreciate you taking the time to answer the following demographic questions.

The personal information provided in this section is being collected by Council for the purpose of providing a demographic snapshot of contributions to this project. Demographic data allows Council to assess whether it is providing all areas of the community with an opportunity to become involved and be heard. Your personal information will be used solely by Council for this primary purpose or directly related purposes. Demographic data may be published and used as part of a Council report. Your details will be used to provide you with project updates and will be kept confidential. For more information contact Council's Privacy Officer via ASSIST on 9209 6777.

What is your residential suburb? Required

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Albert Park | <input type="checkbox"/> Port Melbourne | <input type="checkbox"/> St Kilda East |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Balaclava | <input type="checkbox"/> Ripponlea | <input type="checkbox"/> St Kilda West |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Elwood | <input type="checkbox"/> South Melbourne | <input type="checkbox"/> Windsor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Melbourne | <input type="checkbox"/> Southbank | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Middle Park | <input type="checkbox"/> St Kilda | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |

What gender do you identify with? Required

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Male | <input type="checkbox"/> Other | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|

Please indicate your age group. Required

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Under 18 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 35 to 49 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 70 to 84 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 18 to 24 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 50 to 59 years | <input type="checkbox"/> Over 85 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 25 to 34 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 60 to 69 years | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |

Which of the following describes your connection to the City of Port Phillip? Select all that apply. Required

- | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resident | <input type="checkbox"/> Worker | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)
_____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business owner | <input type="checkbox"/> Student | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ratepayer | <input type="checkbox"/> Visitor | |

How did you hear about this consultation?

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have Your Say e-newsletter | <input type="checkbox"/> Community email/e-newsletter | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Social Media |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other Council email/e-newsletter | <input type="checkbox"/> Signage | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)
_____ |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Council Social Media | |

Appendix C: Verbatim responses to open text survey question

Q. Do you have any comments about these outcomes, or do you think anything is missing?

It has been disappointing regarding the lack of community consultation regarding the Middle Park library. It is a critical community hub.
The outcomes are very broad, it would be great to see what this looks like in practice with clear examples, even if they are just hypothetical examples.
These are important activities.
<p>The entire community engagement system needs to be scrapped and re-designed. It is nonsensical to think that the current system does anything but get captured by vested interests. You could even say that Council officers (yes, you!) are being deliberately blind to the faults of the current system.</p> <p>Most residents and ratepayers are apathetic and will only be "engaged" when the item in question directly affects them. For example, a community netball club may alert its members to the haveyoursay item, so that they can overwhelm it with their views eg encouraging Council paying to install lighting at the netball club's courts.</p> <p>Moreover, there are zero ways that Council can actually technically stop people commenting or filling out a survey infinite times. All it would take is to change one's IP address, or use TOR, etc, and they would be able to surreptitiously complete feedback numerous times.</p> <p>Indeed there are no controls in place to prevent people who do not live/work in Port Phillip, and are not non-resident ratepayers, from completing the surveys.</p> <p>Should Council be relying on blind faith when it comes to feedback on things that directly, and sometimes financially, effect survey respondents? For example: feedback on funding the ecocentre could be completed by staff employed by the facility (which itself relies on the largesse of Council), and they could get their network (pecan) of associated groups to also provide feedback, thus overwhelming the survey with one-sided responses.</p> <p>The system is completely broken. All survey results are invalid. Yes, even this one (ha!).</p>
<p>This sounds fine in theory but the reality for me is over the past 5 years every issue I have raised with the Council (usually via Assist) has invariably been met with apathy, direct resistance or a lack of comprehension of the essence of the complaint. Whether it be public safety, inappropriate venue or event noise on residential doorsteps or streetscapes. If it involves traders they always get priority.</p> <p>I have lost complete faith. The latest being the granting of a permit/license to the... <i>[edited to remove identity references of businesses, individuals and staff]</i> effectively operating as a nightclub with heavy bass electronic music till 3am without consultation with 40 plus residents that live almost next door.</p>
As long as diversity of views are accepted then real, balanced arguments can be accepted.
All great but these are just words. How will council make this happen? Can I see examples on how each item will be delivered.?
I really hope, that all the above goals will be achieved in the next years. That council pays more attention to its residents and not only to its small businesses..
Feel they should go into 21st century and do more online
<p>The table in the policy that outlines the 5 categories from inform to empower is really good.</p> <p>I would like to see this put in use clearly.</p> <p>My experience is that council work is mostly in the inform and consult, where involve and</p>

collaborate are much much less. Empower is used obviously at election stage.
More opportunities for residents to get involved would be great to have. As well as, educating residents on how they can have their say considered.
CoPP in St Kilda act on behalf of a minority vulnerable group supported by a loud group of activists... <i>[edited to remove identity references of businesses, individuals and staff]</i> . The majority residents and ratepayers are not heard, not listened and their issues around community safety and amenity are ignored... <i>[edited to remove identity references of businesses, individuals and staff]</i>
They are great motherhood statements but there isn't enough exploration of the 'how' and this is what is critical. The essence is the process by which differing and opposing views will be arbitrated, ameliorated and amalgamated. This is a political process and attention has to be given to how interests of variously powered groups will be heard and implemented. How do for example, the views of the dehoused stack up against business interests and how will the consultation process make listening fair?
Council resources priorities, value etc is no clear in draft. In terms of engagement - new ideas/ policies/ blueprints etc - draft should include framework for declarations of COI, lobbying, etc and how it will be managed.
Generally it is hard to find out what council is doing. Council needs better Comms and regular newsletters - eg push the ceo report out to people. Do more and better pushing of info. Also the questions asked are all important, no one could argue. Who created the questions? They don't give anything other than what you want to hear.
Express the outcome in more commonly used language - not business speak. You are creating barriers for those who would struggle to understand your terminology an the way the strategies are expressed.
Council are not involved in any of the above-mentioned activities
Final outcome addition: ensure Council resources are applied effectively, efficiently and fairly / equitably across the municipality. Eg. We cannot help noticing that Middle Park and surrounding areas are in much better condition than St Kilda streets; trees & footpaths. They deserve better as heavily used. So, insert a 'fairness' element. This may not be based on population, but equity of amenity.
Just do the job you were elected to do at a local community level. Stop wasting my money of federal and state government responsibilities

Appendix D: Verbatim responses to open text survey question

Q. Do you have any comments about these promises, or do you think anything is missing?

Did not seem to apply regarding Middle Park library
In the past, the community feedback didn't appear in council documents, so in this instance, "Closing the loop" should mean that we will be able to appreciate the breadth and depth of feedback from the different communities in CoPP. The feedback needs to go well beyond the mandatory regulations re proposed planning decisions. Quality feedback is contingent on the visions that Council has for the amenity in our neighbourhoods as well as scope for different developments, like Water savings, increased tree plantings to reduce the heat island effect. I cite these 2 examples because each fits into a much larger vision for a cooler city, and numerous factors will feature in any such plan
These are important activities.
These surveys are done to meet Council's obligation to engage. No matter the outcome, Council officers do what they want. What a farce.
Consider the needs and interests of all people in the decision-making process, and actively remove barriers to engagement -Ensure that all community members have their say and are given appropriate consideration eg. disabled people, parents of young children, linguistically diverse people and that the manner in which consultation takes place is adapted for these groups.
See above
Unfortunately Council and Council officers have paid lip service to these sort of worthy promises, so it is difficult to believe that they will change their ways. The proof is in the pudding
Hopefully participation is encouraged from all citizens in the municipality.
Q1/ Seek out and encourage contributions from people who may be affected or interested in a decision - I am worried that this smacks of self interest and or pandering to minority groups that have existed relationships with council. The greater community should be consulted prior to any decisions being made. Greater transparency is required Q7/ Explore interactive and engaging ways to gather input - Again I am concerned here as Council needs to get out and smell the roses and not conduct a virtual survey for a virtual outcome. People make Port Phillip and council workers need to better engage with a diverse cross section of the community that resides here. Q9/ Share the final decision, and how community input was considered making that decision. - To me this could be constituted as a fait d'accompli. I believe interested stakeholders need to be included in the journey.
I COULDN'T register my preferred answer. How is this done ? Is my computer faulty ?
Listen to residents. Hear their voices. Less noise, more green spaces, community initiatives, gardens, sheds...
Need to consider all community members, need to address homelessness, disability services. Engage local indigenous leaders.
Council is dishonest and doesn't tell the truth. Provides false information, and doesn't consider the opinions of residents when it comes down to decision making.
More presence on social media would help the community in engaging in decision making processes.

Ratepayers and residents views are ignored as this council panders the loud left green minority.
Stop with the progressive driven political agenda in Council decisions, it's destroyed St Kilda as a result.
How will all this be achieved especially now when we have a new council which is almost perfectly divided between the 'spenders' and 'non spenders'. It's a great wish list. My sense of council is that processes are very tightly orchestrated and there's very little opportunity for genuine and authentic communication. It's ticking the boxes stuff, eg allowing 2 minutes for people to address council or consultations run by outside consultants, again highly orchestrated.
How can there be any answer except strongly agree.? Question do not tease out issues
It is all ok by me. Helping the other people need help... building bridges
This is in regards to the parklets on Ormond Rd Elwood [personal contact details removed]
Council needs to create a process that involves the community
Missing?? Maybe?? More engagement about council activities across whole of Port Phillip, not just for locals. Mindful, that it is important to consult more substantially with locals who are affected by a decision, but broad consultation is also needed.

Appendix E: Verbatim responses to open text survey question

Q. What do you think would make this draft policy better?

More consideration to community views , value and existing uses , for example the Middle Park library rather than making changes that just suit the Council.
What actions council will develop if they do not commit to the statements.
Language is always a factor in how we listen and communicate our ideas. If we are faced with "bureaucratise" ..ie the standard program reporting requirements and key performance indicators, many people will not engage as this type of language is a barrier..it is dependent on who knows and understands what is behind this language. It would not necessarily gel with people of different educational achievements nor the population from diverse cultures and age groups
I am concerned about the future of the Middle Park Library. It is important for all local and visiting people to be able to access books at reasonable times and to have access to other library services.
The entire community engagement system needs to be scrapped and re-designed. It is nonsensical to think that the current system does anything but get captured by vested interests. You could even say that Council officers (yes, you!) are being deliberately blind to the faults of the current system. Most residents and ratepayers are apathetic and will only be "engaged" when the item in question directly affects them. For example, a community netball club may alert its members to the haveyoursay item, so that they can overwhelm it with their views eg encouraging Council paying to install lighting at the netball club's courts. Moreover, there are zero ways that Council can actually technically stop people commenting or filling out a survey infinite times. All it would take is to change one's IP address, or use TOR, etc, and they would be able to surreptitiously complete feedback numerous times. Indeed there are no controls in place to prevent people who do not live/work in Port Phillip, and are not non-resident ratepayers, from completing the surveys. Should Council be relying on blind faith when it comes to feedback on things that directly, and sometimes financially, effect survey respondents? For example: feedback on funding the ecocentre could be completed by staff employed by the facility (which itself relies on the largesse of Council), and they could get their network (pecan) of associated groups to also provide feedback, thus overwhelming the survey with one-sided responses. The system is completely broken. All survey results are invalid. Yes, even this one (ha!). To fix: Council needs to redesign a system that produces statistically valid results that are not able to be captured by vested interests.
To be written in clear concise language. The process that you describe is one that allows Council to appear to be doing the right thing. If you really want to know what residents think, you should hire the best professionals to carry out quantitative and qualitative research.
Actions speak louder than words - when the rhetoric is actioned then policy will be better.
My goodness where do I start... call me as this is my area of expertise -[personal contact details removed] - happy to help
Extensive publication of draft in as many forms and locations as possible. Reach out. I only came across the Have Your Say as I was prompted when reading Divercity.
If everything mentioned in this policy is met, we will have a wonderful place to live in.

Listen to residents. Hear their voices. Less noise, more green spaces, community initiatives, gardens, sheds...
More community input.
Need to see the next steps in how the policy will be put in place. Policy reads fine.
CoPP need to engage with the real residents and ratepayers, look at the mess CoPP have created in St Kilda. What a disaster.
Yes
More about the 'hows' and fleshing out the euphemisms. Phrases such as 'people who may be affected' - how is this decided and by whom? Various groups will be affected variously, what is the process of working between conflicts of interest?
Framework for managing declaration and management of special interest groups - professional, business or otherwise. Early escalation for discussion/engagement - recent "discussions" appear to be after options already locked in - Stkilda harbour redevelopment etc. Not clear regarding mandate of functions of council - so that resident expectations of what they can / cannot expect in terms of contributions and council authority.
Having an action to have 50% of the community engaged regularly with council.
Solving thei issues!! And helping the community!! Together!! Helping people when they need help!! Explore loud music... disco music...
See my first comment - Express the outcome in more commonly used language - not business speak. You are creating barriers for those who would struggle to understand your terminology an the way the strategies are expressed.
Talk to the stakeholders about a process that will work for them: - residents - retail - other business
There is a bit of overlap and repetitiveness. Understand the need for nuance though.
Just collect my garbage (only 2 bins), look after the parks and roads, support good libraries, pensioners, child care and baby health services. Climate change and so-called refugees are not local responsibilities.

Appendix F: Submissions received



Response to the City of Port Phillip's Draft Community Engagement Policy from the Community Alliance of Port Phillip (CAPP), 22 December 2020

CAPP welcomes the opportunity to comment on Council's Draft Community Engagement Policy, while noting that the very short timeframe for comment is not ideal.

We understand the new Local Government Act gives priority to achieving the best outcomes for the community including future generations. Community engagement and transparency are central to achieving best outcomes and to providing services centred on the needs of the community.

The document states that its purpose is to facilitate genuine and transparent opportunities for the community, to provide feedback and inform the decisions made by Council (p 5). It also says that where the problem is complex and challenging, Council will draw upon expertise and collective intelligence to find shared solutions and shared responsibility *with* the community.

CAPP agrees that these are the proper purposes of a Community Engagement (CE) Policy, but we cannot see how the Policy in its current form will adequately achieve these purposes.

CAPP is of the view that for CE to be effective it must be different to the engagement that has been practised to date. And that Community Engagement must both underpin all Council activities and involve both Councillors engaging with their constituents, and the relevant Council staff. We also believe that the citizens of Port Phillip should be able to initiate engagement about issues the community believe are important, not simply provide *feedback* on projects or issues determined by Council.

An important aspect of CE is deciding who will be engaged on potential decisions. Page 9 of the Draft CE Policy states: "We will identify stakeholders, people and communities that may be affected by a decision being considered."

CAPP requests that the Policy identify the decision makes on this matter. Is it the Councillors, the Council Officers or a combined effort that identifies the relevant stakeholders ? In addition, we suggest that the community should have the ability to contribute to the decision on who should be involved in particular engagements.

CAPP encourages Council to strive for the level of engagement to be *always* within the Collaboration stream.

Engagement requires expertise and CAPP encourages the Council to develop in-house expertise in all divisions of Council. In addition, a “champion” of community engagement working across Council divisions is needed. This person would act as an honest broker and would ensure engagement happens on issues the community wants to be involved with, and how they want to be involved. CAPP would also like to see Councillors themselves involved in regular dialogue with their constituents as part of Council’s community engagement processes in the future.

Current engagement processes – like *Have Your Say* – need to be revamped so that the role of the community is not merely providing responses to set questions, but might, for example involve participation in framing the questions themselves, to ensure they capture key issues of importance to community members. The reporting of the subsequent survey responses must be fulsome.

A commitment to transparency is a wonderful aspiration which we support – but it must be followed through in action, and the community must be able to see how they have been able to shape decision-making on issues.

Evaluation is also important but many of the suggestions on page 11 are simply quantitative and more qualitative assessments will be needed for deeper understanding of the success, or otherwise, of the suite of community engagement processes that are implemented.

Some unanswered questions:

We are unclear as to how decisions on engagement ‘topics’ and the type of engagement to be enacted will be made. Will the community have input into these decisions?

Page 15 – Stakeholder Groups – are these all equal – who are most important? Should visitors, for example, have the same say as residents and local businesses? How will it be decided which stakeholder group will be consulted. Other stakeholder groups may also be relevant, such as pedestrians, council staff, unions.

When will the new policy commence? What will be the process for undertaking the necessary community reviews and input to the Council Vision and Plan as required by the new Act?

Effective engagement requires funds – what is the budget for community engagement?

Initial research on what the community thinks about engagement with Council is needed. What role in decision-making and engagement and on what issues does the community want? How will this be determined? This needs to be a bottom-up, not a top-down decision process.

Why does the Officer Report (Item 14.7 to the Council meeting on 2 December 2020) not describe how community views have influenced the development of this Draft? The *Have Your Say* website states that in March 2020 there was initial consultation about development of this policy, and paragraph 5.3 of the Officer Report says that ‘community feedback from previous consultations informed the development of the draft policy’, but the report does not describe the consultations undertaken, nor how these actually informed the Draft.

PECAN and Community Engagement

The new Local Government Act 2020 requires a fundamental reframing of the relationship between Council and community. The community engagement principles set out in the Act require Councils to formulate and implement new practices to enable community views and aspirations to underpin Council decision making, and for stakeholders and community more generally, the Act provides a pathway to facilitate more systematic and effective community input.

Community engagement should not be limited to creating channels for an already motivated and engaged community to participate in deliberative democratic processes, important though that may be. 'Community engagement' strategies need to be directed at widening the net of citizens concerned and able to creatively address pressing issues.

Why is community engagement so important for PECAN?

For PECAN the central issue is the climate crisis and drawing upon existing (and new) channels for turning learning into action.

A key issue in creating a sustainable future (acknowledged as a goal of community engagement in the new Local Government Act) is addressing the lack of widespread citizen action on the issue beyond voting for councillors committed to addressing the climate crisis. This is both a challenge for voluntary citizen networks like PECAN and for Councils which recognise the need for widespread citizen action on issues of sustainability, and in turn for gaining democratic community support to address the climate crisis more intensively.

In terms of tiers of government, Councils can play a very significant role vis the climate emergency because they are well placed to assist people to link local events to general climate changes and so help them understand the significance of those changes as well as providing avenues to act on them. Action flows from learning and people learn through participation.

Two local examples:

- 1) It is well understood that the intensity of Queensland cyclones increases as a result of warming oceans. Cyclone Yasi was an intense Queensland cyclone, whose effects were felt the day after the cyclone hit the Queensland coast with flooding in Elwood.
- 2) Heat trapping emissions on a global scale will see an increase in days over 35 in Melbourne and the heat will be exacerbated by the legacy of bitumen roads and paths, lack of shady trees, the hot walls of buildings.

Learning that particular local events are systematically linked to global changes is a basis for citizen learning and for developing new forms of community action.

Underneath creating deliberative structures is the work of expanding citizen engagement in addressing the climate emergency which is a necessary steppingstone to participate in

deliberative structures. Community engagement is also the fostering of these activities by council.

Multiplying, expanding community involvement occurs when there is development of specific strategies for doing so:

- Tree planting and caring
- Composting together
- Expansion of community gardens in different locales
- Support for 'Walk and Talk'
- Providing Council spaces and opportunities for ongoing community discussion of these issues
- Marking – through engaging signage and multimodal explanation – the climate and environmental significance of council practices.

The Port Phillip EcoCentre, in particular, with its motto 'thinking global acting local' is a treasure house for these practices - citizen science, environmental surveys, waste analysis, tree planting and nurturing, wildlife identification, indigenous history of the land and so on.

Community engagement is a two-way street. Listening to communities, not in a moralising way i.e. "Listen", but developing strategies to take on board what communities are saying and give reasonable feedback on it – is again acknowledged in the new Local Government Act. Community-led activities involve council learning from them and assisting – being responsive to community initiatives that council can expand, amplify, or scale up.

Putting in place deliberative processes is an essential step to deepening democracy in municipalities. But especially on the crucial issue of our time, the climate crisis, community engagement, also involves on the one hand, fostering practices that engage communities on the issue and, on the other, implementing strategies which are responsive to community-led initiatives. Such practices, by inspiring learning and a sense of individual and community agency animate deliberative processes.

The Act specifies the interrelationship between Community Engagement and its other overarching principles, Public Transparency, Strategic Planning, Financial Management, and Service Outcomes. It emphasises that effective community engagement is essential in achieving desired outcomes in each of these areas. We mention that PECAN made one of only two community submissions on Council's Public Transparency policy which was adopted in August.

Specific Comments on the Draft Policy

- 1) Interactivity, co-design and engagement methods

The draft Policy incorporates the IAC2 public participation spectrum, but much of the Draft's language is still directed at the consultation level. In the section on Outcomes for example, the first five of the eight desired outcomes seem to place the onus on community members

to provide feedback and information to Council, or “to build knowledge of Council activities to enhance their ability to engage with Council from an informed position.” This formulation does not seem to emphasise Council interaction with community or stakeholders, or more broadly to move engagement further along the spectrum towards collaborative or co-design modes. A basic shift from reliance primarily on methods like Have Your Say or Pop Ups is inherent in the Act, but the draft policy does not provide much detail on how this shift will be brought about.

PECAN’s experience with Council in 2020 has shown that such a shift can be made, with a number of webinars run conjointly with Council and a number of conjoint working groups having been established to progress particular issues or programs. Such deliberative forms of engagement are described in Attachment 1 as requiring randomly selected participants, but in our view the participant net should be more widely (or narrowly) drawn, depending on the task or issue at hand to enable the inclusion for example, of particular stakeholder groups, or residents from a particular locality.

2) Determining the form of engagement

With more experience it should be possible to develop more detailed criteria about the most appropriate form of engagement for particular situations. Sometimes Council will be in a situation where it can readily find agreement with community and stakeholders about the best form for dealing with a particular issue; in other cases, there may need to be more community insistence, for example where residents or community groups may be seeking a review of a particular policy or program.

3) Officers or Councillors?

One of the most common frustrations felt in the community is the gap which can be created between Officers and Councillors by the way in which responsibility for action on particular issues can be duck-shoved between the two groups, or in some cases, between Councillors themselves. We think one of the solutions to these issues, and to many other problems besides, would be the return of regular ward meetings, attended by both Councillors and Officers. Obviously Councillors would need to support their resumption, but many of the problems and frustrations felt in the community could be dealt with much more effectively through scheduled ward meetings, in which ward issues and community concerns could be addressed more directly with all of the relevant parties being able to interact with each other. In our view this represents one of the most fundamental, and effective, community engagement forms.

4) Building In-house engagement capacity

Concern is often expressed about the cost of deliberative engagement processes, where citizen jury forms may be required due to contested or complex issues such as the Council Plan or Annual Budget formulation. Much of the cost is due to the need to outsource the

planning and implementation of these processes to external consultants. It appears likely that demand for this expertise is going to be increasing on an ongoing basis, and that development of in-house capacity will become more essential. And apart from these major foundational instruments like the Plan or Budget, Council staff more generally will find that they are facing stronger community expectations about the way in which they deal with residents and community groups. We consider that building engagement capacity across Council more broadly is necessary, and best undertaken in the short term.

5) Engagement outcomes

At its core the purpose of the increased emphasis on community engagement is to ensure that Council decision making is comprehensively improved. One of the areas that seems to be rarely addressed is that of equitable decision making across the municipality, an issue that is highlighted in the Act. From a PECAN perspective it is clear for example, that there are major inequities in public space, WSUD measures and tree planting and canopy cover (all Green-Blue infrastructure issues) – in the Council area east of Brighton Rd. This is despite the preparation of multiple Council plans and strategies over many years. We believe that in the preparation of all future plans and strategies an equity test should be a fundamental inclusion.

6) Evaluating Community Engagement

We think that a commitment should be included in the policy to conduct a review of the 2021 experience in respect of community engagement in early 2022, and that this review should include community representatives.

7) Community engagement and asset management

Victorian Councils spend billions every year to maintain, renew or replace assets including buildings, parks and gardens, roads, footpaths, land and drains. Local Government Victoria has recommended that Councils adopt the NAMS system (National Asset Management System) now evolved into the IPWEA NAMS system. Apart from producing more efficient and cost-effective funding of infrastructure, a comprehensive community engagement process is embodied in NAMS, and where the system has been adopted it has led to greater community satisfaction as well as significant cost savings.



21.12.20

DRAFT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

As a policy directed at advancing participatory democracy at the local level, we would like to see it amended to include:-

- quarterly ward meetings
- continued community engagement in the shaping and implementation of the policy
- provision for face-to-face community meetings
- a stronger focus on empowerment (final decision making in the hands of the public)
- development of in-house capacity to deliver all forms of engagement

As a citizen advocacy group Progressive Port Phillip welcomes the new *Local Government Act* as an opportunity for Port Phillip to enhance participatory democracy in the City. The draft Community Engagement Policy opens the discussion of how the requirements of the Act can most effectively be met locally. As largely a statement of good intentions leaving the mechanisms to be decided it is only a beginning.

Given that the Act lays down that the community is to have more than a feedback role in shaping the processes of decision-making it would have been preferable to have a longer period to consider the draft policy but we accept this is difficult given the mandatory February deadline.

What this truncated timeframe does mean is that consultation with the community on the implementation of the policy must necessarily continue beyond the point at which Council endorses it. Indeed, it must be continuous as the Act does not define community engagement but mandates councils in collaboration with their communities to determine how it will be carried forward. This will be an ongoing process of reform.

The Act is deliberately written to allow wide interpretation and different councils will interpret it differently. We would expect Port Phillip to aim for the highest level of democratic deliberative engagement allowed by the legislation.

The Act makes clear that community engagement must now be considered core business for councils. Although Port Phillip has a good record of consulting the community, it will not be enough to rely on current practice and to simply tick the boxes. Council must gear up to deliver a level of engagement that goes well beyond invitations to comment and provide

feedback. The ultimate goal of the legislation is to achieve a level of deliberative decision-making that allows the community to have a key role in shaping the Vision and the Plan as well as more specific concerns.

This is no small thing and will require an evolving policy, a well-resourced in-house capacity to enable, and confident implementation.

The draft policy is light on implementation. Consistently prioritising feedback over deliberation preserves the role of Council as the prime initiator with the community relegated to commentator and advisor. The Act goes well beyond this, with its ultimate goal being an enhanced participatory democracy that sees citizens also as initiators and deliberators.

It will require more than online feedback and pop-up consultations to achieve this. We expect to see a visible change in the democratic functioning of council. This may even impact on the way the regular Council meetings are run, allowing citizens to go beyond being allowed limited-time statements and to be engaged with actual debate.

The draft policy offers a lengthy table of stakeholders who might be consulted on different matters but no indication of how such groups might be prioritised. Dividing stakeholders up into special interests could have the (probably unintended) effect of diminishing the broader democratic participation required to shape strategic goals. There is no indication of how the community as a whole might inform the broader elements of the Vision and Plan that lay out the strategic directions for Port Phillip. While Port Phillip has a current Plan, the Act makes it clear that this will need to be reviewed by the community in accordance with the new rules.

As there are many geographic communities in Port Phillip with distinctive interests it will be necessary to devise a means to engage with them all. We suggest that the initial form of consultation should be ward meetings chaired by councillors and enabled by officers. We draw your attention to the fact that in response to our questionnaire five of the recently elected councillors agreed to hold quarterly meetings with their constituents. On that basis this idea would already seem to have strong support within council.

Ward meetings would be an opportunity to introduce the community to the new Act. Such an educational process is essential as without the community understanding its new role the laudable ambitions of the legislation can never be realised.

Learning from the pandemic, we accept that virtual meetings will play an increasing role in consultation, but face-to-face 'town halls' will remain very important. We should use our actual collection of town halls for this purpose.

Whatever else it may outsource, a local government should not outsource democratic responsibilities. Enhancing participatory democracy is central to the Act but does not get much of a mention in the draft policy. There may be a mistaken sense that what is being asked of Council is really just an add-on to its existing practice of consultation. The intention of the legislation is much more ambitious.

Cost may be used as an argument to constrain the amount and type of community engagement, especially if Council relies on outside consultants, as it did for the Marina community consultation. For this reason it is essential that we build sufficient in-house capacity to handle regular consultations. On the face of it there is nothing about the process of selection for representative juries and assemblies and the provision of the necessary information to support them that could not be handled by council officers. Where there is a compelling case for outsourcing, the arrangement must be completely transparent.

Progressive Port Phillip intends to remain focussed on the way the roll-out of community engagement meets the intentions and mandates of the Act. An assurance *that* Port Phillip will do so with integrity is ultimately less important than the details of *how* it will do it.

Submission on COPP engagement policy

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] *

I welcome Council's commitment to satisfy its legislative obligations under the Local Government Act 2020 with regard to community engagement. However, it is ironic that the permitted time for us to 'have our say' is so limited, particularly given the time of year. Apart from the obvious practical difficulty the timetable sends a poor signal to stakeholders. Indeed, it reinforces a scepticism in the community that Council is merely going through the motions and that the process itself lacks integrity.

I appreciate the timetable reflects the requirements imposed by section 55 of the LGA 2020. I would be interested to know what representations Council made to the State Government to extend the timetable to facilitate a meaningful consultation process particularly as that appears the crux of the legislative intent.

My submission is split into two parts: in the first my comments are generic and a repetition of points made in response to earlier consultations and, in the second my comments are specific to the engagement policy document.

General comments

COPP may have "an engaged and passionate community" who are literate, but we also have stakeholders who I believe would find many documents produced by the City alienating. I suggest staff consider:

- the use of plain English and the avoidance of jargon and/or 'industry' terminology in all Council communication
- if terms like 'activations' and 'gamification' are unavoidable could the author place an asterisk after such words and a definition at the conclusion of that part of the document
- brevity is clarity – so much Council documentation is verbose and repetitive
- if you accept the above point perhaps you could adopt a two-tiered system, one that exhaustively establishes that Council has discharged either its legislative obligations or commitments under the Council Plan and another, for public consumption, which goes to the heart of the matter.

Specific comments

The emphasis in the policy is on stakeholders responding to Council initiated proposals. I suggest more emphasis is required on stakeholder ability to initiate engagement. I find myself expending a lot of time responding to (the three tiers) government initiatives. As a proponent of openness, transparency and accountability I

* edited to remove identity references of businesses, individuals and staff.

welcome these opportunities, but my support is qualified. It concerns me that modern communication methods can be used, consciously or otherwise, to swamp citizens with information and policy proposals which we feel compelled to respond to because we are aware that decision makers (mis)use the volume of responses as indicative of the level of support/rejection of a prospective policy. As important as these processes invariably are to groups and individual's we have other commitments.

This reactive mindset detracts from our capacity to initiate subject matter for engagement, renders us responding to policy initiatives of bureaucrats or contractors to Council. Unsurprisingly stakeholders are sceptical that these engagements are merely raising support for decisions already made.

One way of creating opportunities is for Councillors to hold regular open meetings with stakeholders in their Ward, or specific parts of their Ward. At least some of these meetings should only involve Councillors and constituents. Council employees and/or contractors often will not be impartial or neutral on the subject matter of the engagement.

The table setting out stakeholders does not include **pedestrians**. As this is my primary mode of transport, I am conscious of how often pedestrians are overlooked in the hierarchy of interested parties. Also, **unions** should be included specifically even if a legal obligation falls to Council under other legislation or instruments to consult. I know the table states it is not exhaustive but it encompasses many likely interested persons.

In the sections *Council's promise to the Community* and *Who we engage* it is noted that a decision may "affect some people more than others". When one groups' views are given greater weight then the rationale for that needs to be explicit in the information leading to a consultation, in the consultation and finally, in the decision.