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Community Engagement - Council Policy

Effective Date	<i>2 March 2011</i>
Policy Owner	<i>Executive Services - Communication and Marketing Manager</i>
Link to Corporate Plan	<i>Strategic Theme 1: Effective and Inclusive Governance</i>
Review Date	<i>July 2018</i>
Related Legislation	<i>Local Government Act 2009 Sustainable Planning Act 2009 Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008 Local Government Regulations 2012 The Right to Information Act and Information Privacy Act 2009</i>
Related Documents	<i>WDRC Community Engagement Standard Work Practice WDRC Council Advisory Committees - Council Policy</i>

Policy Version	Approval Date	Adopted/Approved
1	02/03/2011	Ordinary Meeting of Council
2	24/05/2012	Ordinary Meeting of Council
3	04/06/2014	Ordinary Meeting of Council
4	20/07/2016	Ordinary Meeting of Council

*This policy may not be current as Council regularly reviews and updates its policies. The latest controlled version can be found in the policies section of Council's intranet or Website. **A hard copy of this electronic document is uncontrolled.***



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1. PURPOSE

The *Local Government Act 2009* (The Act) indicates that Council decisions should be based on meaningful community engagement. The principle based legislation applies to all business of local government; however community engagement is not specifically defined by the legislation.

This policy interprets community engagement as informing, consulting, involving and collaborating with the Western Downs communities per the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum benchmark.

The policy recognises that engaging with the community is the responsibility of both Councillors and staff, and that the majority of engagement occurs on a daily basis as part of our normal operations. This informal community engagement as part of our standard service delivery falls outside of this policy.

The purpose of this policy is to provide a guideline for engaging with the community that forms part of Council's planning cycles and ensures a consistent approach to formally engaging the community at the appropriate level.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all Councillors, Council Officers, Contractors and Consultants of the Western Downs Regional Council. This policy applies across all facets of Council's business activities.

3. POLICY

3.1 Policy Commitment

Western Downs Regional Council is committed to:

- Meeting its statutory obligations under relevant legislation to undertake purposeful community engagement;
- Informing, consulting, involving and collaborating with our communities at an appropriate level;
- Western Downs' residents being informed about issues, strategies, policies, plans and decisions of Council that may directly or indirectly affect them;
- Western Downs' residents knowing when and how Council will consult with them, and conversely when Council has made a decision on their behalf; and
- Ensuring that Council's community engagement activities are coordinated in a consistent manner across Council.

While Council will endeavour to ensure that the appropriate level of engagement is undertaken in each situation, it is acknowledged that the final decision will ultimately rest with Council, and outcomes may be impacted by budget, time or resource related constraints.

3.2 Engagement Context

Council will inform, consult, involve and/or collaborate with the Western Downs communities, depending on the particular context e.g. Strategic Regional Issues, Statutory Compliance, Local Issues or Operational Issues.

Councillors and staff play complementary roles in engaging with the community.

Council will decide the high level strategic issues or projects on which it will engage the community.



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The need for, and type of community engagement to be undertaken will be determined at the project planning stage by the responsible Division and/or Department.

Council will use different community engagement techniques and communication mechanisms depending upon the context of the issue or project, the unique circumstances and the target audience.

3.3 Reference Groups and Advisory Committees

In addition to the existing frameworks in our communities, Council may from time to time establish reference groups and in accordance with Council's adopted Advisory Committee Policy. Accordingly, these reference groups and/or advisory committees will:

- Be established by Council resolution; and
- Have specific Terms of Reference.

