

Community Engagement Policy

Policy Author	General Manager – Corporate Services
Date of next review	June 2027

1. Statement of Intent

Our community has clearly told us they want more opportunities to connect with the Council and each other, and have their ideas and experiences understood and listened to.

The Council recognises the role of community engagement in helping to shape and test ideas and support decision making, leading to stronger outcomes (services, infrastructure, planning and programs) for the community. Its aim is to build effective relationships with the community and foster a sense of shared decision ownership in decision making.

Council values and encourages the involvement and contribution of the community in engagement and consultation processes, acknowledging that the quality of community engagement outcomes relies on mutual effort and meaningful participation of community and stakeholders.

Community engagement for the Council means we:

- **Communicate a clear engagement objective.** This means people are clear on why they're involved and what we're seeking to understand, what can and cannot be influenced, and how feedback and information will be used to assist in decision making.
- **Understand who our stakeholders are.** This means we consider who is impacted or has a stake in the matter we are engaging on, and further consider their gender, age, diversity, ability, location, and interest.
- **Determine the level of engagement.** Community engagement has several levels, which the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) defines as Inform, Consult, Involve, or Collaborate. The determination of this level is dependent upon the scope, complexity, impact and competing values or interests in the Council project or decision being made and timeframes may apply.
- Council may:
 - Inform the community of a decision that has been made as this is also a part of a community engagement process.
 - Consult the community to seek feedback on specific options or ideas (this level is often referred to as public consultation and may relate to matters that are triggered by legislation).
 - Involve the community so they can help balance views and help shape ideas; and/or
 - Collaborate with the community to develop joint solutions to a problem, even though Council may still be the final decision maker.
- **Are flexible in our approach and use a range of engagement techniques** to reach people and encourage feedback and discussion. This means we consider the various stakeholders

we need to engage and the techniques that may be most effective for the identified level of engagement, including but not limited to digital/online, face to face, on project site, direct mail, printed collateral, and existing community groups.

- **Strive to be accessible and inclusive.** This means we use easy to understand language, try our best to make it easy for people to get involved, use accessible venues and formats, and consider other barriers to ensure people can meaningfully participate.
- **Close the loop.** This means we inform the community of the outcome as soon as we can and, for longer projects, keep them informed of the progress. We explain how their feedback was used to inform decisions.
- **Consider the resources, capacity, and expertise we have** available to support any engagement activity. This means that before we commit, we understand and confirm we have the resources we need to be able to deliver a meaningful community engagement process.

While the *Local Government Act 1999* clearly identifies matters that Council must consult on, there will be other projects and decisions where engaging with the community may be appropriate. Council understands the need to seek input into projects and decisions that are likely to be of significant community interest, have economic, social, environmental, or cultural importance, involve significant expenditure on large scale projects, where there is influence available for the community, and decision making is likely to be enhanced through the involvement of the community.

Council strives to ensure that the community engagement undertaken is meaningful. This will mean at times that Council will not undertake community engagement or be restricted in the level of engagement it can take. This may be due to things like the limited ability to influence Council's direction, resourcing constraints, timing or that we have existing community insights to draw on already.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all workers who undertake any community engagement and public consultation activity for, or on behalf of, the Council.

The adoption of this Policy meets Council's obligations under Section 50 of the *Local Government Act 1999* (the Act), which states that councils must prepare and adopt a public consultation policy that sets out the steps Council will follow in undertaking public consultation as required by the Act.

3. Legislation and References

This Policy is to be read in conjunction with the Community Engagement Procedure.

Related documents include:

- City of Playford Global Glossary
- International Association Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Participation
- City of Playford Community Engagement Framework
- *Local Government Act 1999* – Section 50
 - Legislative matters requiring public consultation:
 - Section 12(7): Representation Report
 - Section 13(2): Status of a Council/Change of Name
 - Section 50(6): Public Consultation Policy
 - Section 75F(6): Behavioural Support Policies

- Section 92(5): Code of Practice for Public Access to Meetings and Meeting Documents
- Section 122(6): Strategic Management Plans
- Section 249(1): Passing By-Laws
- Section 259(2): Policies on Orders
- Legislative matters requiring public consultation in accordance with Council's public consultation policy:
 - Section 45(3): Principal Office – Opening hours
 - Section 123(3) and (4): Annual Business Plan
 - Section 151(5), (7) and (8): Changes to Basis of Rating
 - Section 156(14a): Rating Differential Rates
 - Section 194(2)(b): Community Land – Revocation of Classification
 - Section 197(1): Community Land – Adoption of a Management Plans
 - Section 198(2): Community Land Amendment or Revocation of a Management Plan
 - Section 202(2): Alienation of Community Land by Lease or License
 - Section 223: Roads | Permits that would result in any part of a road being fenced, enclosed or partitioned so as to impede the passage of traffic to a material degree or in relation to a use or activity requiring public consultation under the regulations.
 - Section 232: Planting of vegetation if the vegetation may have a significant impact on residents, the proprietors of nearby businesses or advertisers in the area
- *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016*

This Policy should not be considered as the only document that may relate to community engagement. Other tiers of government, agencies or organisations may have legislation or policies that also apply.

4. Application

Chief Executive Officer	Champion and embed a foundation of best practice in community engagement within the organisation.
Council Members	Endorse community engagement approaches where public consultation is required by legislation and may endorse community engagement for matters considered as high risk or high impact. Consider views, ideas and feedback received from the community and other relevant information to inform their decision-making process.
General Managers	Provide strategic direction and enable the relevant areas of the administration to carry out community engagement. Provide context and guidance on the internal and external factors that may impact community engagement.
Senior Managers	Determine the program, project or service need for community engagement in consultation with the Community Insights team

	and relevant General Manager. Ensure that all outcomes align and meet legislative and policy requirements.
Workers	Workers with community engagement responsibilities are to adhere to the principles of 'what meaningful community engagement looks like' and ensure any procedures, guidelines and processes are followed.
Community Insights team	Ensure this Policy is made available for public consultation following correct community engagement procedures. Provide advice and support in relation to the application of this Policy and ensure guidelines and templates for community engagement are prepared.
Customer Contact team	Ensure this Policy is made available on request for viewing at Council's principal office.

5. Relevance to Risk Appetite Statement

Reputation

The City of Playford has a **LOW** appetite for negative perceptions that compromise its credibility and reputation. This Policy will be supported by procedures, guidelines, and a tool kit to support employees to deliver good community engagement that is well planned and accessible with clear objectives, flexible approaches, and appropriate resources.

Regulatory Compliance

Council has **ZERO TOLERANCE** for non-compliance with statutory requirements. This Policy sets out minimum standards for public consultation as required under the Act.

6. Feedback

Your feedback on this Policy is invited and can be directed to the Manager Governance via email to governance@playford.sa.gov.au or by calling the Customer Contact Team on 8256 0333.

Administration use only

ECM document set no.	3960954
Version no.	4
Procedure link	Community Engagement Procedure
Policy author	General Manager – Corporate Services
Endorsed by	Council
Resolution no.	6309
Legal requirement	<i>Local Government Act 1999</i> – Section 50
Review schedule	2 Years

Date of current version June 2025

Date of next review June 2027

Version history

Version no.	Approval date	Approval by	Change
1	October 2011	Ordinary Council Resolution No. 493	New Policy
2	December 2013	City Strategy and Enterprises Committee (no record of Ordinary Council resolution)	
3	25 May 2021	Ordinary Council Resolution No. 4628	Policy title change from Public Consultation Policy in line with Statutes Amendment (Local Government Review) Bill 2020 language. Clear identification of what good community engagement looks like for City of Playford. Removal of procedural matters and incorporated into the Community Engagement Procedure.
4	24 June 2025	Ordinary Council Resolution No. 6309	Clarity provided on difference between community engagement and public consultation. Additional information included to clarify IAP2 and the different outcomes of each level. Legislation and References updated. Application updated to reflect the role of Council General Managers and Senior Managers.