

1. SCOPE

This policy applies to Elected Members, employees, contractors, volunteers, consultants and any other person who undertakes activities for the Council. This policy applies to consultation with:

- Elected Members
- External Stakeholders
- Internal Stakeholders

2. POWER TO MAKE THE POLICY- LEGISLATION

The Public Consultation Policy has been developed and adopted in accordance with Section 50 of the Local Government Act 1999 (SA) ('The Act') and the Development Plan (1993). The Act specifies the minimum standards Council must undertake where the Act requires consultation.

3. DEFINITIONS

Public

Includes all people who live, work, study, own property, conduct private or government business, visit or use the services, facilities and public spaces and places of the City of Playford.

Council

Refers to the Corporation of the City of Playford. This is constituted of the Elected Member body representing the City of Playford or Council staff operating under delegated authority. It also includes contractors and consultants with the authority to act on behalf of Council.

Consultation

The process of informed dialogue between the Council and the public.

Occupant

Includes both a resident occupying a property and the owner of the property.

Public Engagement

Any process that actively involves the community in understanding issues in that community.

Decisions

Good democratic administrative decision making involving weighing and balancing all relevant factors and taking into account a range of views.

Communication

The exchange of information, opinions and ideas between the Council and the public.

Policy

Refers to this Public Consultation Policy.

The Act

Refers to the Local Government Act 1999.

Notifications

The Notification section describes how the public will be informed that public consultation is taking place (the communication/advertised methods).

Newspapers circulating locally

This refers to newspapers that reach all residents within the Council boundary, specifically *The Northern Messenger* and *The Bunyip*. Where one publication does not have full reach, another newspaper can be considered to assist in obtaining full reach (i.e. state-wide newspaper, e.g. *The Advertiser*). Newsletters do not suffice for this category, but can be used in conjunction with newspaper advertising.

4. PROCEDURE

Practice Managers will be responsible for determining the need for undertaking any public consultation, the level of consultation to be considered and ensuring legislative requirements are met.

The relevant Practice Manager will be informed of:

- All major projects involving potential community consultation activities at the beginning of the proposed project;
- All consultations undertaken by Council staff that will be publically advertised.

The Practice Manager will determine the level of risk associated with the proposed consultation. The Risk Matrix contained within the policy will act as a guide to determining the Risk Level. The Practice Manager will also be responsible for ensuring the steps outlined below are undertaken, according to the outcome of the risk analysis.

Low Risk Consultation

Where the public consultation is deemed low risk, the following steps will be taken to fulfill the requirements of this policy:

- As a minimum, Council will publish a notice in newspapers circulating the local area, describing the matter for which public consultation is required, and inviting interested persons to make submissions to the Council within a period being at least (21) days from the date of the notice;
Place details of all consultations on the Playford website (www.playford.sa.gov.au);
- Have information available for view at customer service points; and
- Council will consider any submissions received as part of its decision-making process and will also have regard to any relevant legislation.

Low risk public consultation does not require prior Council approval.

High Risk Consultation - Council Decision

The decision to consult with stakeholders and the public beyond legislative requirements must be based on conducting a risk analysis of the issue/project.

Any steps taken by Council in addition to the minimum requirements set out in the Act are at the absolute discretion of Council and will depend upon the particular topic under consideration, the resources available to Council and the level of interest the topic is likely to generate.

A Council decision report will be provided if public consultation is being considered that is over and above the requirements of the Legislation.

The following criteria must be assessed¹ to categorise an engagement as necessitating a higher level of consultation:

Higher Level of Consultation Criteria – Risk Matrix

Criteria	What's being considered	Rating scale				
		Low	Medium	High		
		1 Low	2	3 Med	4	5 High
Sensitivity and nature of the issue	What is the degree of potential community impact and/or outrage?					
Number of stakeholders likely to be impacted by the decision	Consider primary stakeholders: those who have a direct interest and secondary stakeholders: those who have a general interest					
Scale of the public interest	What is the general community perception of the issue/s?					
Degree of complexity – single issue/option or multiple issues/options	How clear are the options and opportunity for influence via the public consultation process?					
Degree of political sensitivity	Are community expectations different to those of decision makers?					
Availability of human, material and financial Resources	Is it possible to undertake engagement above the low cost/legislation category within current resources? Is it necessary to seek additional resources?					
Media interest	Is there likely to be an impact on Council's reputation either by engaging or choosing not to engage? Other interests impacting current media?					
	ADD TOTAL NUMBER (SCORE):					

Total score	Risk level	Action
7-10	Low risk	Initial action not required, check occasionally.
11-15	Medium risk	Monitor closely, take action if possible, notify/advise Council of possible risk (i.e. Memo).
16-25	High risk	Mitigation strategies needed. Higher level of engagement recommended. Report to Council. Council makes decision.
26-35	Very high	Action is mandatory to reduce or manage the risk. If you are not likely to be able to manage this risk or the consequences, consider changing project goals and outcomes or review whether the project should proceed. Higher level of engagement recommended. Report to Council. Council makes decision.

¹ Adapted from 'LGA SA' and 'State Government' "Community Engagement Handbook: A Model Framework for Leading Practice in Local Government in South Australia"

1. If the issue/project potentially requires consultation above the legislation (or it is not detailed within the legislation such as localised strategies, advisory groups etc), the risk analysis must be conducted.
2. If the risk rates from medium to very high on the Risk Matrix, the proposed public consultation must be discussed between a Practice Manager and relevant staff/stakeholders. The risk analysis will form the basis of making a recommendation regarding the proposed consultation strategy to Council.
3. When high risk and/or very high risk, Council will be informed of the options for public consultation via a decision report and will make the final decision regarding the level of engagement (including the option to not engage).
4. The Council's decision report will outline (as a minimum), the background, the decision criteria, risk analysis (as conducted in step two), strategic context, stakeholders, proposed consultation techniques, key messages and resource allocation.

The Council will be informed via memo of ALL public consultation activities, that is, all processes that actively involve the public in problem-solving and building solutions, and which use public input to assist in decision-making.

If Councillors raise considerable concerns in relation to the level of public consultation for a particular issue, the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer will be consulted. The Mayor and CEO will then determine if a higher level of engagement needs to be considered by Council.

5. AVAILABILITY OF THE POLICY

This policy will be available for inspection at Council's principal office during ordinary business hours and at Council's website, www.playford.sa.gov.au. Copies will also be provided to interested members of the public upon request.

6. REVIEW OF POLICY

The Public Consultation Policy will be reviewed by Council six months after a Local Government election and at least every two years thereafter.

7. FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information about the Policy, please contact:

Marketing and Communications Advisor
12 Bishopstone Road, Davoren Park, SA 5113
Telephone: 8256 0333, Fax: 8256 0578,
Email: playford@playford.sa.gov.au