# Community Engagement Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adoption Date:</th>
<th>08 July 2019 by Approval of the General Manager</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review Date:</td>
<td>08 July 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Version:</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division/Department:</td>
<td>Communications Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible Officer:</td>
<td>Community Engagement Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPE CM Record Number:</td>
<td>19/104893</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1 Policy Statement

Woollahra Council proactively engages the community using appropriate, effective and inclusive methods to facilitate public participation in decision making that affects residents and the people who work in and visit Woollahra.

2 Application

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to detail Woollahra Council’s commitment and approach to community engagement.

Through community engagement Council will:

- **Ensure Council decisions reflect the whole community** by incorporating the community’s views, concerns and aspirations into the decision-making process.
- **Increase community confidence and trust** in Council by building or improving relationships with the community through on-going, open and meaningful two-way conversations.
- **Encourage the community** to actively participate in civic life and to take responsibility for identifying and providing solutions to their concerns.
- **Strengthen community capacity** to increase knowledge and awareness and/or change behaviours.

Scope

This policy outlines Council’s commitment to engaging the local community when developing policies, strategies and plans for the purpose of determining its activities, other than routine administrative and operational matters.

With specific regard to planning matters, Council will engage the community in accordance with its *Community Participation Plan*.

This policy is relevant to all departments of Council that undertake community engagement activities.

Council will actively encourage community participation in decision-making when:

- required to comply with a statutory obligation
- a proposed change to Council activities or strategic direction may significantly affect the community in terms of lifestyle, environment, wellbeing, amenity or the economy
- developing new or updating existing policies, strategies or plans, wherever legislated, resolved by Council or deemed appropriate by a Council director/manager
- introducing a new service, discontinuing an existing service, or substantially changing or reviewing a service that may significantly affect service provision
- proposing to change the way in which public space looks, is used or is enjoyed
- the community raises an issue with Council for a decision (or outcome) and there are likely to be competing community interests

---

1 Other than routine administrative and operational matters
• planning and developing major projects and capital works, including public buildings, centres or other infrastructure
• making urban development/redevelopment proposals that may significantly alter the existing amenity or characteristics of an area
• Council needs more information or evidence to make an informed decision.

This policy does not apply to:
• notification of development applications ²
• Council project partners, sponsors, or grant recipients
• general communications between Council and the community
• Council’s routine administrative and operational duties
• emergencies and situations that impact public safety.

Council may choose to not engage the community on matters that are not subject to statutory consultation requirements when it:
• is confident there is sufficient existing community data or feedback to proceed with a project or service
• already has an adopted plan, which is the result of community consultation
• is bound by existing legislation, commercial or legal restraints.

This policy derives from the amendment made to the NSW Local Government Act 1993 by the Local Government Amendment (Governance and Planning) Act 2016, and section 8A(3) of the Local Government Act 1993. This policy does not replace any obligation in the amending Act or in any other relevant Act for Council to communicate, consult or engage with the community. In the event of amendments to relevant Acts that result in this policy being inconsistent with said Acts, this policy will be altered to make it consistent with the Act.

This policy is aligned to Council’s Community Strategic Plan, Woollahra 2030.

This policy supersedes and replaces the Community engagement guidelines and checklist endorsed by Council in 2004 and the Community Consultation Policy endorsed by Council in 2006.

Overview

Background

Council’s 2018 Community Satisfaction Survey identified increased community demand for engagement in some areas. Notably:
• 80 per cent of the community is somewhat satisfied with the way in which Council consults with the community.
• Providing the community with opportunity for involvement in decision making was identified as a top indicator for overall satisfaction.
• Long-term planning and vision and responsiveness to the community are areas of higher importance and lower satisfaction.

² Development applications are covered by Council’s Development Control Plan and the Local Government Act 1993
• Letters and emails are the community’s preferred source of communication for engagement projects, followed by social media and newspapers.

In response to this feedback, Council reviewed and changed its strategy for community engagement, to deliver a whole-of-council approach to facilitating meaningful, inclusive and accessible participation.

What is community engagement?

Community engagement can be defined as a two-way process by which:

- the aspirations, concerns, needs and values of citizens and communities are incorporated at all levels and in all sectors in policy development, planning, decision-making, service delivery and assessment
- governments and other business and civil society organisations involve citizens, clients, communities and other stakeholders in these processes.3

Community engagement plays an important role in helping to make Woollahra a great place for residents and the people who work in and visit the area. Council actively seeks out and listens to the views, concerns and aspirations of the community, to help Council make decisions that are informed, representative and in the best interest of the whole community.

Our approach

Council decisions affect the lives of residents and the people who visit and work in the area. There is a growing expectation on the part of the community that consultation will occur regardless of statutory requirements.

Council values the community as a source of local expertise and actively seeks community feedback and input to help shape decisions that affect residents and people who work in and visit Woollahra.

Not all decisions require the same level of community engagement. Council uses IAP2’s Public Participation Spectrum as a best practice guideline for identifying appropriate levels of community engagement according to resources and the scale and impact of the decision.

Council’s scalable community engagement approach aims to ensure people:

- are well informed about issues, strategies or plans that may affect them directly or indirectly
- understand how and when Council will consult them, and when Council will make decisions on their behalf (without consultation)
- are engaged in an effective, appropriate and relevant manner by Councillors, Council employees or agents of Council
- are offered genuine opportunities to participate in Council’s decision-making process
- understand how their contributions affect the decision-making process and are informed of outcomes of the engagement process
- are connected, active, informed and engaged.

3 United Nations Brisbane Declaration on Community Engagement (International Conference on Engaging Communities, 2005)
Guiding principles and values

This policy is aligned with Council’s values, IAP2 Australian and international best practice principles for community engagement, and the principles of social justice.

Implementation

The implementation of this policy is supported by operational resources, including a methodology guide, which has been developed to help staff successfully deliver community engagement programs. Council staff, and agents acting on the behalf of Council, who are responsible for undertaking community engagement activities, will be provided with training on this policy and associated operational resources. They will act in accordance with Council’s Code of Conduct.

3 Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program and Operational Plan

This policy corresponds to the theme ‘Community leadership and participation’ in Council’s Community Strategic Plan Woollahra 2030. Projects with elements of community engagement are identified in the annual Delivery Program and Operational Plans for each Council directorate.

4 Related Policies and Procedures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>HPECM Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delivery Program 2018-2021 and Operational Plan 2019-2020</td>
<td>19/96831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Strategic Plan, Woollahra 2030</td>
<td>18/105206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woollahra Municipal Council Code of Conduct</td>
<td>18/209692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Engagement Toolkit</td>
<td>*currently in development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This policy will be reviewed every two years or as required in the event of legislative changes. This policy may also be changed as a result of other amendments that are to the advantage of Council and in the spirit of this policy.

Any amendment to this policy must be made by way of the approval of the General Manager.

Policy Amendments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Responsible Officer</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>