

CR16.90 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK GUIDE

SUMMARY:

The Town's current community consultation policy could be enhanced by providing greater guidance in public participation/community engagement. Associated with an updated policy, a Community Engagement Framework has been proposed which will guide and support Elected Members and staff by encouraging a more consistent processes and greater coordination in Community Engagement activities.

This report recommends the adoption of a framework and suggests provision for a community engagement resource in the draft 2016/2017 budget.

BACKGROUND:

At its 15 December 2015 meeting, Council considered item 12.9 - Community Consultation and Engagement, and decided:

"That the Chief Executive Officer prepare a report regarding the current methods of undertaking community consultation and engagement which should include the alternate methods used by other local governments. In particular, regard be given to the use of online feedback on current projects, and issues in the Town."

A report was submitted to the February 2016 meeting (CR16.23), which suggested many local governments are guided by a consultation and engagement framework, and a number of local governments have also taken advantage of online engagement tools to broaden their methods of engagement.

Council decided that:

"A Community Consultation and Engagement Framework be developed and presented."

DETAILS:

Community Engagement Framework Guide (Section A)

The elements of a community engagement framework can vary between Local Governments, but essentially incorporate:

- the levels of community engagement;
- how and when to engage (level of impact, risk, degree of complexity, situations and examples);
- who should engage (the roles and responsibilities of elected members and staff);
- what tools and methodologies may be employed/considered; and
- resourcing and coordination.

The Community Engagement Framework attached to this report was formulated after reviewing a number of engagement frameworks of other local governments, which were considered high standard and adaptable to the Town of Cambridge.

Essentially, the framework is centred around the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) 2000 Public Participation Spectrum and is expanded to include a section on level of impact/risk. This section is intended to guide Council and staff in determining the engagement strategy and tools/methodologies to employ in undertaking the engagement.

Recognising that no two projects are the same, the framework is not a prescriptive tool that forces engagement on every issue that the Town is dealing with. Rather, it is descriptive in the sense that judgement must be applied to the level of impact of a particular decision.

Council Policy and IAP2

The current Community Consultation policy was reworked and adopted by Council in April 2010 (GC10.19). The Community Consultation matrix within the policy was adapted from the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) 2000 Public Participation Spectrum standard.

Since the Town's Community Consultation policy was adopted by Council in 2010 the IAP2 standard has been refined to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any community engagement program. The Spectrum shows that differing levels of participation are legitimate depending on the goals, time frames, resources and levels of concern in the decision to be made. Most importantly, the Spectrum sets out the promise being made to the public at each participation level.

IAP2'S PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM



The IAP2 Federation has developed the Spectrum to help groups define the public's role in any public participation process. The IAP2 Spectrum is quickly becoming an international standard.

		INCREASED IMPACT ON THE DECISION				
		INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL		To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
	PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. We will seek your feedback on drafts and proposals.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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The *IAP2 Spectrum for Public Participation* has been adopted for the development of the Town's Community Engagement Framework. However, within the context of Local Government, the highest level of 'Empower' will rarely be achievable or appropriate. The spectrum notes that the level of 'Empower' places the "final decision-making in the hands of the public". As elected representatives for the community, final decisions will ultimately rest with the Elected Members.

Empowerment would likely come from a poll. This can occur by statute (eg Local Government amalgamations) or where the community is divided on an issue. This occurred in early 2000 with respect to road traffic treatments in Wembley. The Town has also conducted polling (plebiscite) with respect to underground power, which occurred in 1997 under the pilot program.

When commencing a project, consideration needs to be given to a number of aspects, including statutory consultation requirements and timeframes, and the level of impact/risk any decision may have on the community and stakeholders. Generally speaking, the higher the level of impact, the greater the level of community consultation and engagement.



Guidance is provided within the framework to assist establish the level of impact in a descriptive approach. The level of impact then determining the level of engagement.

The Town's current Community Consultation Policy (Policy 1.2.11) will be rewritten to incorporate the IAP2 2014 standard including the shift in emphasis from Community Consultation to Community Engagement. This is due to be submitted to the June meeting of Council.

Tools and Techniques (Section B)

Section B of the framework is targeted at the 'engagement decision makers' - the sub committees of Council and the staff who have the responsibility to determine the engagement strategy for a particular project or subject matter and specifically what actions are to be undertaken/activities carried out.

The Community Engagement Tools and techniques facilitate:

- Information sharing and seeking feedback from the Community both as individuals and groups e.g. workshops, focus groups, advisory committees;
- The use of on line Community Engagement tools e.g. surveys, forums, voting and rating systems, social media;
- Identifying and managing the potential risks associated with engagement especially those that may have a negative impact.

The Community Engagement Framework positions Social Media within the Tools and techniques for successful engagement or e-Engagement. Specific web based applications are proposed to be implemented, which include a greater array of options than traditional Social Media tools not designed for a managed engagement approach e.g. Facebook.

As part of the Town Communication Strategy, it is proposed to establish a Facebook page which will be aimed at 'friends' to:

- Promote and market council events, projects and programs;
- Provide news updates on significant ongoing projects;

Roles, Responsibilities and Resourcing

Currently Community Consultation at the Town is decentralised with individual Projects responsible for managing and performing the appropriate level of Community Consultation. Although this approach has worked well on many occasions the lack of coordination across the Town and the spread of knowledge have led to overlaps in some consultations.

The introduction of a Community Engagement Framework with emphasis on consistency of approach gives the Town the opportunity to centralise some aspects of Community Engagement. This may include for example the development of an online Community Engagement Calendar and Register, containing details of all Community Engagement activities both for internal and public view. The Community Engagement register will contain details of both current and past engagement activities together with the outcomes.

Previously, a Community Engagement Coordinator was recruited for a period of 18 months to work on the development of the 2013- 2023 Strategic Community plan and other associated tasks. Looking ahead, the Town has a number of significant engagement activities it needs to undertake. Some of the activities include:

- Strategic Community Plan (4 year review)
- Underground Power
- Local Planning Strategy

Current Resourcing

The Town's Corporate Communications team of two staff provides communication, public relations and media advice and guidance. Key activities of this team include:

- Content development, design and maintenance of the Towns web site;
- Production of the fortnightly *Cambridge News* page in the Cambridge Post;
- Writing of Media Releases and liaison with the media;
- Content Management of the Town's Social Media;
- Development and/or Quality Assurance of all advertising, Customer Service or general information material originating from the Town containing the Towns logo and branding.

A new Community Engagement Officer resource with specific Community Engagement skills will be recruited to and assist in the implementation of the framework and to provide advice to staff when preparing community engagement plans including any planned engagement programs. This Community Engagement Officer will work closely with the Town's corporate communications team to ensure consistency of engagement methods and the use of appropriate tools and techniques.

Funding for the officer and the acquisition of Community on line tools will be included in the 2016/17 draft budget submission for consideration by Council. It is estimated that the costs will be in the vicinity of \$120,000 pa.

Elected Members and Community Engagement

An effective Community engagement framework supports Elected Members in their role and assists them to understand the nature of the decision to be made, to identify who may have an interest in the topic under consideration, and to capture and report on the diverse views and aspirations of the whole community.

The community expects to have some influence over matters that affect their living environment, and to see local governments actively telling them about what plans they have, and listening and responding to concerns about matters which impact on the social, economic or environmental wellbeing of their local community.

Elected Members need to consider the outcome of any community engagement process within the context of strategic planning directions for the whole Council area, resource and budgetary constraints, and broader regional or State policies where relevant.

It is appropriate then that two sub committees be used for facilitating elected member involvement in determining the community engagement strategies for particular projects/subject matters - the Town Planning Scheme Review Steering Committee and the Strategic Projects and Underground Power Committee. Accordingly, Engagement strategies will be submitted to these committees for endorsement of the approach, where appropriate (i.e. level 3 and in some cases, level 2 projects).

POLICY/STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS:

There are no Policy or Statutory Implications related to this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Funding for the full time Community Engagement Officer contract position and other costs associated with the expansion of Community Engagement online tools is proposed to be included in the draft (2016/17) financial year operating budget.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION:

The report reflects the following Goals and Strategies of the Town's Strategic Community Plan 2013 - 2023:

Our Council

Goal: Transparent, accountable governance.
Strategy: Keep the community informed and consult on local matters that affect them.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION:

This matter has been assessed under the Community Consultation Policy 1.2.11. In accordance with the assessment criteria, an "Inform" assessment has been made.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Community Engagement Framework Guide

**COUNCIL DECISION:
(COMMITTEE AND ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION)**

Moved by Cr Carr, seconded by Cr Grincerì

That:-

- (i) the Community Engagement Framework, as attached, be adopted as a guide for the Council's Community Engagement activities;**
- (ii) provision for a community engagement officer for a period of twelve months and an on line engagement tool totaling \$120,000 be included in the draft 2016/2017 budget.**

Carried 9/0