

Community Engagement Policy

Strategic Reference	Leadership <i>Priority Area 2 – Engagement & Communication</i> Action 5.2.1 – Provide specialised and inclusive communications and engagement resources to support and continue to improve Council's communications, engagement and connection with the community. Action 5.2.2 – Update and implement Council's Community Engagement Framework following the adoption of an updated Community Engagement Policy, which complies with the Community Engagement Charter established by the Minister for Local Government.
File reference	AR20/6358
Responsibility	Office of Chief Executive Officer
Revision Number	8
Effective date	15 November 2011
Last revised date	August 2026
Minutes reference	244/26, 127/22, 072/20, 114/16, 071/15, 247/13, 400/12, 357/11
Next review date	August 2029
Applicable Legislation	Local Government Act 1999
Related Policies	Rating Policy
Related Documents	Office of Local Government – Community Engagement Charter

1. Purpose

Council is committed to open, accountable and responsive decision making, which is informed by effective communication and engagement between Council and the community.

Including communities in decision-making processes is important to the successful development of appropriate and informed decisions and policies by Council.

Council's communities include people who live, work, study, own property, conduct private or government business, visit or use the services, facilities and public spaces and places of Council. Council recognises that a community may be a geographic location (community of place), a community of similar interest (community of interest) or a community of affiliation practice or identity (such as industry or sporting clubs).

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Section 50A of the *Local Government Act 1999* (the Act) requires Council to prepare and adopt a policy relating to community engagement for the purposes of the Act. The policy must be consistent with and comply with any requirements specified by the Community Engagement Charter (the Charter).

2. Policy Objective

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Council meets its legislative obligations regarding public consultation by:

- Meeting the requirements set out in the Act and the Charter
- Using appropriate and cost-effective engagement methods which are relevant to the specific circumstances of each decision, activity or process
- Providing for appropriate participation by the local community, key stakeholders and interested parties
- Using feedback to enhance decision making
- Providing information on the reasons for decision or actions of Council, where reasonable and appropriate

This policy is a statement of Council's general position in relation to community engagement (otherwise known as 'public consultation'), as required under the Act and the Charter.

3. Definitions

For the purposes of this Policy the following definitions apply:

“Community Engagement Charter” (Charter) is a statutory framework under Section 50 of the *Local Government Act 1999* that sets the principles and minimum requirements councils must follow when informing, consulting and involving their communities.

“Community Engagement” means a structured process whereby information is disseminated and community members and stakeholders are formally invited to provide input on matters under Council consideration. It outlines the various degrees of involvement in the organisation's decision making procedures.

“Community” means individuals or groups with a vested interest in Council's decision making processes and are subsequently impacted by Council outcomes. Such stakeholders may include residents, voters, ratepayers, business owners, customers, contractors and suppliers, community interest organisations, agencies and groups that are typically more difficult to engage.

“Stakeholders” include individuals and groups such as businesses, governments, community organisations and not-for-profits, who are interested in or affected by Council decisions. They may also contribute to policy development and service delivery.

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“Submissions” mean written contributions from community members, expressing opinions on issues and/or proposals that will be considered as part of Council’s decision making process.

4. Scope

This policy applies to decision, activities and processes:

- Undertaken by Council;
- A delegate of Council; or
- A person exercising power on Council’s behalf

where public consultation is required to be undertaken in accordance with the Act, the Charter or this policy. A reference in this policy to ‘Council’ includes a reference to a delegate or other person exercising power on Council’s behalf.

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for the implementation and application of this policy, and where necessary, reporting the outcomes of consultation(s) to Council. The specific delegations made under this policy are outlined in clause 9.

This policy does not apply where Council is exercising powers and functions under any other Act. Where there are consultation requirements under other legislation (ie. the *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016*), those specific processes take precedence over this policy.

5. Policy Statement

The preparation and adoption of this policy fulfil Council’s obligations to prepare and adopt a policy under section 50(A) of the Act. The following principles in the Charter have been considered in the preparation of this policy:

- Community members should have reasonable, timely, meaningful and ongoing opportunities to gain access to information about proposed decisions, activities, processes of councils and to participate in relevant processes;
- Information about issues should be in plain language, readily accessible and in a form that facilitates community participation;
- Participation methods should seek to foster and encourage constructive dialogue, discussion and debate in relation to proposed decisions, activities and processes of councils;
- Participation methods should be appropriate, having regard to the significance and likely impact of proposed decisions, activities and processes; and
- Insofar as is reasonable, communities should be provided with information about how community views have been taken into account and reasons for decisions or actions of councils.

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Council will undertake public consultation in accordance with the Act, the Charter and this policy.

Council may, in its absolute discretion, determine to undertake a step or steps in addition to those set out in this policy in relation to a matter for which it is required by the Act and/or the Charter to undertake public consultation.

However, Council is not required to give prior consideration and/or to determine whether or not to undertake any additional step or steps in relation to such a matter. A well-intentioned engagement that does not generate the anticipated level of engagement is not a breach of this policy.

Council may, from time to time, alter or substitute a new policy, following public consultation.

6. Public Consultation Categories

The Charter addresses minimum mandatory community engagement activities for matters where the Act requires public consultation to be undertaken.

The charter establishes different categories for matters as follows:

Significant – Annual Business Plan and Rating Policy
• Adopting an Annual Business Plan – section 123(3)(b) • Changes to basis of rating, declaring differential rates, imposing a separate rate, service rate or service charge, or changing the basis on which land is valued for the purpose of rating – section 151(5)(e)
Significant
• Representation reviews – section 12(7) • Development and review of Strategic Management Plans – section 122(6) • Changes to use of differential rating – section 156(4a)(b) • Revocation of classification of land as community land – section 194(2)(b) • Community Land Management Plans – adoption – section 197(1) • Community Land Management Plans – significant amendments – section 198(3) • Alienation of community land by lease or licence – section 202(2)
Standard
• Opening hours and place of principal office – substantial changes – section 45(3) • Community Engagement Policy – section 50A(6)(b) • Council behavioural support policies – section 75F(6) • Access to meetings and documents – section 92(5) • Power to make orders – section 259(2)(b)
Local
• Proposed permit or authorisation for alteration or use of a road for business purposes when there are works and traffic impeded for more than 48 hours (with a detour in place) or where no detour will be available – section 223(1) • Proposed planting of vegetation of a road – significant impact – section 232(b)
Inform
• Opening hours and place of principal office – minor changes – section 45(3) • Proposed permit or authorisation for alteration or use of a road for business purposes when there are works and traffic impeded for less than 48 hours and the Council ensures that a detour is in place – section 223(1) • Election information – section 13A(2) of the <i>Local Government (Elections) Act 1999</i>

The table in clause 7 sets out the engagement activities that Council will undertake to meet the requirements of each matter for which public consultation must be undertaken in accordance with the Act and the Charter.

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7. Charter Engagement Requirements

Council will comply with the minimum mandatory consultation requirements for each category of matters set out in the Charter.

The following table sets out the engagement activities that Council will undertake to meet the public consultation requirements in the Act and the Charter.

In circumstances where more than one engagement activity is specified, there is no obligation on Council to utilise all engagement activities in respect of each Charter requirement.

Charter requirement	Mandatory minimum actions to achieve Charter requirement	Charter Category					Engagement activities to be undertaken by Council
		Significant ABP and Rating Policy	Significant	Standard	Local	Inform	
Website	Publish information about the matter that can be easily found on a Council website.	X	X	X	X	X	Information published on Council's website www.coorong.sa.gov.au
News publication	Publish information about the matter in a local news publication (print where available, but otherwise digital) that circulates in the Council area and is not produced by the Council.	X	X				Information published in a print or digital newspaper, community newsletter or other (non-council) publication circulating in the area of Council Information published in local publications: • Tailem Topics • Meningie Lakelander • Coonalpyn Community Hub Newsletter

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Charter requirement	Mandatory minimum actions to achieve Charter requirement	Charter Category					Engagement activities to be undertaken by Council
		Significant ABP and Rating Policy	Significant	Standard	Local	Inform	
							If deemed appropriate and subject to audience reach, publish in regional newspapers
Consult with the whole Council area	Consider appropriate forms of notifications to the Council area. Consider whether additional information or notification should be made available to the community to bring their attention to the matter and to support participation.	X	X	X			Information published on Council's social media pages Information made available at Council offices: - Printed copies of supporting documents, plans and reports - Posters displaying details on how to participate and engagement timeframes - Or, other locations as deemed appropriate Media Release Information published in Council's electronic newsletters Australia Post campaign (noting alignment of campaign)

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Charter requirement	Mandatory minimum actions to achieve Charter requirement	Charter Category					Engagement activities to be undertaken by Council
		Significant ABP and Rating Policy	Significant	Standard	Local	Inform	
							preparation and engagement timeframes) via: • Direct mail • Flyers Community and stakeholder engagement meetings, forums or other activities
Invite submissions	Provide information about how the community can make a submission, including timeframe.	X	X				Engagement material provides information about how the community can make a submission, including the minimum 21-day timeframe for submissions Submissions may be invited via: • Participating in a community workshop/information session/public meeting • Online survey or feedback form • Printed feedback form – available to download from Council's website or

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Charter requirement	Mandatory minimum actions to achieve Charter requirement	Charter Category					Engagement activities to be undertaken by Council
		Significant ABP and Rating Policy	Significant	Standard	Local	Inform	
							at any Customer Service Centre • In person at any Customer Service Centre • Email • Post ‘Significant ABP and Rating Policy’ engagement timeframe is a minimum of 21 days ‘Significant’ engagement timeframe is up to six (6) weeks (ideal)
Explain decision making process	In material prepared explain what the Council proposes to do, why it proposes to do it, and what it seeks to achieve. Explain how community feedback will inform the Council’s decision.	X	X				Engagement material explains: • What Council proposes to do • Why it proposes to do it, and • What it seeks to achieve Information published explains that feedback received will be taken into account by the

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Charter requirement	Mandatory minimum actions to achieve Charter requirement	Charter Category					Engagement activities to be undertaken by Council
		Significant ABP and Rating Policy	Significant	Standard	Local	Inform	
							Council before making a decision
Seek and consider feedback from the community—significant matters	Consider how best to invite feedback from the community. Provide a minimum community engagement period of 21 days to enable the community to provide feedback. Include a summary of community engagement feedback to the Council ahead of the decision.	X	X				Feedback will be invited by: • Written submissions • Completion of survey or feedback form (online or printed) • Attendance in person, by representative or electronic means at a community workshop/information session • Attendance in person, by representative or electronic means at a Council meeting or public meeting Community Engagement period open for a minimum of 21 days (up to six (6) weeks is recommended for significant matters) (ideal)

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Charter requirement	Mandatory minimum actions to achieve Charter requirement	Charter Category					Engagement activities to be undertaken by Council
		Significant ABP and Rating Policy	Significant	Standard	Local	Inform	
							Summary of community engagement feedback considered by Council ahead of decision - Engagement findings report included as part of Council report - Engagement findings report published on Council's website
Public Meeting	Hold a public meeting where the community is invited to provide submissions (written or verbal) on the matter. The public meeting may be part of a Council meeting or a separate event.	X					A public meeting will be held either as part of a Council meeting, or as a separate event, for the making of written or verbal submissions
Council meeting invitation	Invite people who have made a written submission to attend a Council meeting to speak to their		X				People who made written submissions will be invited to attend a Council meeting and speak to their submissions before a decision is made

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Charter requirement	Mandatory minimum actions to achieve Charter requirement	Charter Category					Engagement activities to be undertaken by Council
		Significant ABP and Rating Policy	Significant	Standard	Local	Inform	
	submission before the decision is made.						- People who made written submissions will be invited to make a deputation to Council - Council may consider holding a Special Council meeting to consider multiple submissions (deputations)
Seek and consider feedback from the community	Consider how best to invite feedback from the community Provide information about how community feedback will inform the Council's decision. Ensure an appropriate period of time is provided to enable communities to provide feedback.			X	X		Feedback will be invited by: - Written submissions - Completion of survey or feedback form (online or printed) - Attendance in person, by representative or electronic means at a community workshop/information session Information published indicates that feedback received will be taken into account by the

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Charter requirement	Mandatory minimum actions to achieve Charter requirement	Charter Category					Engagement activities to be undertaken by Council
		Significant ABP and Rating Policy	Significant	Standard	Local	Inform	
							Council before making a decision Community Engagement period open for a period of 21 days or such other period as determined by Council
Consult with local community	Consider appropriate forms of notifications to the area within the Council affected by the Council decision or action. Consider whether additional information or notification should be made available to the local community to bring their attention to the matter and to support participation.				X		Information published on Council's social media pages Information published in local publications: • Taillem Topics • Meningie Lakelander • Coonalpyn Community Hub Newsletter
Information to the whole Council area	Provide information to the whole of the Council's community if it					X	Information published on Council's social media pages

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Charter requirement	Mandatory minimum actions to achieve Charter requirement	Charter Category					Engagement activities to be undertaken by Council
		Significant ABP and Rating Policy	Significant	Standard	Local	Inform	
	may be directly affected by the Council decision or action.						Information published in local publications: • Tailem Topics • Meningie Lakelander • Coonalpyn Community Hub Newsletter
Information to local community	Provide information to the local community that may be directly affected by the Council decision or action.					X	Information published on Council's social media pages

8. Other Decisions, Activities and Processes

Council recognises there may be decisions, activities and processes where the Act and Charter are silent in relation to community engagement, but for which community engagement may nevertheless be appropriate.

Council may undertake community engagement activities for community participation in relation to other decisions, activities or processes of Council not specified in the Charter at its absolute discretion. However, Council is not required to give prior consideration and/or to determine whether or not to undertake any such steps in relation to these matters.

Significant	Engagement activities to be undertaken by Council
Code Amendment (planning) Major Projects Strategic Plans (not under section 122(6) of the Act), including • Coorong District Local Action Plan Strategic Vision • Disability Access and Inclusion Plan • Footpath Network Expansion Strategy • Regional Public Health Plan • Roadside Vegetation Management Plan Policy development and review which may directly impact the community Community Land - lease, redevelopment or sale Change of a service standard which is deemed to have high community impact New By Laws Council Amalgamations	Information published on Council's website (www.coorong.sa.gov.au) Information published in local publications • Tailem Topics • Meningie Lakelander • Coonalpyn Community Hub Newsletter Media Release Information published on Council's social media pages Information made available at Council Offices • Printed copies of supporting documents, plans and reports • Posters displaying details on how to participate and engagement time frames (preferably in A3) • Or, other locations as deemed appropriate Information published in Council's monthly electronic newsletters Specific e-newsletter Australia Post campaign may be undertaken (noting alignment of campaign preparation and engagement timeframes) via • Direct mail • Flyers

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	Community and stakeholder meetings, forums, activities • Council may choose to undertake community and stakeholder engagement meetings, forums or activities Feedback will be invited by: • Participating in a community workshop/information session • Completion of survey or feedback form (online or printed - available to download from the website) Written submissions will be received • In person at any Customer Service Centre • By email • By post In Person Submissions • Attendance in person, by representative or via electronic means at a Council meeting or public meeting • Attendance in person, by representative or electronic means at a workshop, focus group or interview Community Engagement period • open for a minimum of 21 days • six (6) weeks (ideal) Impact Summary of community engagement feedback considered by Council ahead of decision • Engagement findings report included as part of Council report • Engagement findings report published on Council's website
Standard	
Code Amendment (planning) of a technical or nonstrategic nature	Information published on Council's website (www.coorong.sa.gov.au)
Traffic management plans	

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Change of a service standard which is deemed to have low community impact	Information published in local publications: • Tailem Topics • Meningie Lakelander • Coonalpyn Community Hub Newsletter Information published on Council's social media pages Information published in Council's electronic newsletters Australia Post campaign may be undertaken (noting alignment of campaign preparation and engagement timeframes) via: • Direct mail • Flyers Letters/flyers may be hand delivered Feedback will be invited by: • Completion of survey or feedback form (online or printed - available to download from the website) Written submissions will be received • In person at any Customer Service Centre • By email • By post Community Engagement period • open for a minimum of 21 days • up to 6 weeks (ideal) Summary of community engagement feedback considered by Council ahead of decision • Engagement findings report included as part of Council report • Engagement findings report published on Council's website
Local	
Change of street and road names Notice of minor works	Information published on Council's website (www.coorong.sa.gov.au)

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Community events Change of parking restrictions	Information published on Council's social media pages Community Engagement period - As deemed necessary Direct engagement with relevant community members, groups and businesses as deemed appropriate: - Letters/flyers distributed - Attend local meetings Feedback will be invited by: - Completion of survey or feedback form (online or printed - available to download from the website) Written submissions will be received: - In person at any Customer Service Centre - By email - By post Summary of community engagement feedback considered by Council ahead of decision - Engagement findings report included as part of Council report - Engagement findings report published on Council's website
Inform	
Opening hours - Waste Transfer Stations - Coonalpyn Swimming Pool - Tailem Info Station - School Community Libraries Policy development and review deemed not to have direct impact on the community Third party notifications (ie. notification of works by SA Water)	Information published on Council's website (www.coorong.sa.gov.au) Information published on Council's social media pages Information published in Council's electronic newsletters

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9. Delegation

Specific engagement activities to be undertaken in relation to any particular decision, activity or processes shall be determined on a case by case basis in accordance with Council's Delegations Register (or, by resolution of Council).

Council, the Chief Executive Officer or a delegate is not required by this policy to undertake, or to consider or determine whether to undertake, additional engagement activities or engagement methods. Such a decision is at the absolute discretion of the decision maker.

10. Availability/Accessibility

This Policy is available for inspection at Council's offices during normal business hours and Council's website and will be emailed to interested parties on request (please lodge request in writing via email to council@coorong.sa.gov.au).

11. Document History

This Policy will be reviewed at least every three (3) years or more frequently if legislation or Council requires.

Version	Adopted	Minute No	Description of change(s)
1	15 November 2011	357/11	New policy
2	20 November 2012	400/12	Cyclical review
3	25 June 2013	247/13	Cyclical review
4	21 April 2015	071/15	Cyclical review
5	28 June 2016	114/16	Cyclical review
6	21 April 2020	072/20	Special review to incorporate <i>Public Health Emergency: Public Access and Public Consultation Notice (No 2)</i> issued 8 April 2020
7	21 June 2022	127/22	Removal of all references to <i>Notice No. 2 – Public Access and Public Consultation</i> as a result of the revocation of the state Emergency Declaration issued 24 May 2022
8	18 August 2026	244/26	Re-write of policy (in full) following amendments made by the <i>Statutes Amendment (Local Government Review) Act 2021</i> and commencement

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			of the <i>Section 50 Community Engagement Charter</i>
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