

Draft Community Engagement Policy

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1. Preamble

The City of Mitcham is committed to open, transparent and accountable decision-making.

This policy outlines Council's approach to community engagement in accordance with:

- Sections 50 and 50A of the *Local Government Act 1999 (SA)*
- The *Community Engagement Charter (2025)*

This policy reflects Council's commitment to providing meaningful opportunities for community participation in decisions that affect them.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure Council meets its legislative obligations for community engagement
- Provide clear, consistent and transparent engagement practices
- Support informed decision-making through community input
- Ensure engagement is appropriate to the level of impact

This policy represents Council's general position in relation to community engagement and does not create enforceable rights beyond those provided under the Act.

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All decisions, activities and processes requiring community engagement under the Act, the Charter or this policy
- Council Members, staff, contractors and delegates

A reference to Council includes a delegate or other person exercising powers on behalf of Council, where those powers are delegated in accordance with the Act.

This policy does not apply where engagement is governed by other legislation. Where community engagement is required under other legislation, those legislative requirements take precedence over this policy.

4. Definitions

Act

Local Government Act 1999 (SA)

Charter

The Community Engagement Charter under Section 50 of the Act.

Community

Individuals, groups or stakeholders who live, work, study, own property, conduct business in or are affected by Council decisions.

Community Engagement

Processes used to inform, consult, involve or collaborate with the community in decision-making. Public consultation is a form of community engagement and for the purposes of this policy, refers to engagement undertaken in accordance with the Act and the Community Engagement Charter.

5. Principles

Council adopts the principles of the Community Engagement Charter, including:

- Providing reasonable, timely, meaningful and ongoing opportunities for community members to gain access to information and participate in decision-making processes
- Ensuring information is provided in plain language and is accessible to support community participation
- Using engagement methods that are appropriate to the significance and impact of the decision, activity or process
- Encouraging constructive dialogue and participation in engagement processes
- Providing information about how community feedback has been considered and the reasons for Council decisions, where reasonable

Council will also:

- Seek broad, diverse and representative input from the community
- Provide a range of accessible and inclusive engagement methods
- Communicate engagement outcomes and decisions to the community

6. Policy Statement

6.1 Legislative compliance

Council will undertake community engagement in accordance with:

- The *Local Government Act 1999*
- The Community Engagement Charter
- This policy

Council will comply with and follow this policy when undertaking community engagement required under the Act and the Community Engagement Charter.

Legislative requirements take precedence over this policy where inconsistencies arise.

6.2 Engagement categories

Council adopts the Charter categories, legislative matters and minimum engagement requirements:

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(14a)(b)
- Revocation of classification of land as community land - sections 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 license - 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 on 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 *Local Government (Elections) Act 1999*

6.3 Charter engagement requirements

Council will comply with the mandatory minimum engagement requirements for each category of matter as set out in the Charter.

The table below outlines how Council will meet these requirements.

Charter requirement	Mandatory minimum actions to achieve Charter requirements	Charter Category					Engagement activities
		Significant ABP and Rating Policy	Significant	Standard	Local	Inform	
Website	Public information about the matter that can be easily found on a Council website	X	X	X	X	X	Information published on a Council website.
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.
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 a social media platform maintained by Council. - Information available at Council Customer Service Centre and Libraries at Mitcham and Blackwood.
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.

Charter requirement	Mandatory minimum actions to achieve Charter requirements	Charter Category					Engagement activities
		Significant ABP and Rating Policy	Significant	Standard	Local	Inform	
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 the Council proposes to do, why it proposes to do it and what it seeks to achieve. - Information published on a website explains that feedback received will be considered by the 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 a survey or feedback form. - Attendance at Council or public meeting, workshop or community forum. - Summary of community engagement feedback considered by Council ahead of decision.
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					Hold a public meeting to receive submissions on the matter.

Charter requirement	Mandatory minimum actions to achieve Charter requirements	Charter Category					Engagement activities
		Significant ABP and Rating Policy	Significant	Standard	Local	Inform	
Council meeting invitation	Invite people who have made a written submission to attend a Council meeting to speak to their submission before the decision is made.		X				Invite community members who made written submissions to attend a Council meeting and speak to their submissions before a decision is made.
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 a survey or feedback form. - Attendance at a Council meeting, public meeting, workshop, pop-up/drop in or community event. - Submissions considered by a person with delegated authority to make the proposed decisions or undertake the proposed activity or process. - Report presented to Council for consideration.
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			X			Consider information: - Published on a social media platform maintained by Council. - Published in targeted letters or leaflet drops for effected residents.

Charter requirement	Mandatory minimum actions to achieve Charter requirements	Charter Category					Engagement activities
		Significant ABP and Rating Policy	Significant	Standard	Local	Inform	
	should be made available to the local community to bring their attention to the matter and to support participation.						Made available at Council offices, libraries and/or community centres in the area within the Council affected by the council decision or action.
Information to the whole Council area	Provide information to the whole of the Council's community if it may be directly affected by the Council decision or action.					X	- Information published on a social media platform maintained by Council. - Information made available at Council offices, libraries and/or community centres.
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 a social media platform maintained by Council. - Information made available at Council offices, libraries and/or community centres.

6.4 Consultation period

Unless otherwise prescribed by legislation:

Council will provide a minimum consultation period of 28 days.

This exceeds the Charter minimum requirement and reflects Council's commitment to meaningful engagement

6.5 Engagement approach

Council will determine the appropriate level and method of engagement based on the nature, significance and impact of the decision, activity or process.

6.6 Decision making

Community engagement:

- Informs decision-making
- Does not replace Council's decision-making authority

Council will:

- Consider all feedback received
- Balance community input with legislative requirements, financial considerations, strategic priorities and broader community interests
- Communicate decisions and, where reasonable, the reasons for those decisions

6.7 Additional engagement

Council may, in its absolute discretion, undertake additional engagement beyond the minimum requirements.

Council is not required to determine whether additional engagement steps are necessary prior to making a decision.

A community engagement process that does not generate the anticipated level of participation does not constitute a breach of this policy.

Information provided through community engagement processes may be subject to access under the *Freedom of Information Act 1991*.

6.8 Roles and responsibilities

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for:

- Implementing and ensuring compliance with this policy
- Determining appropriate engagement processes
- Reporting engagement outcomes to Council

Council staff and delegates are responsible for:

- Applying this policy in undertaking community engagement

- Ensuring engagement complies with legislative requirements

Community engagement activities may be determined by Council, the Chief Executive Officer or a delegate, depending on the nature of the matter and any delegations under the Act.

For matters where the Act requires community engagement as a precondition to a Council decision, Council retains responsibility for being satisfied that those requirements have been met.

7. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every four (4) years or earlier as required.

8. Version History

Version	Author(s) Position	Changes	Date
1	Project Officer		Mar 2000
2	Project Officer		Aug 2001
3	Governance Officer		Aug 2006
4	Governance Officer	Comprehensive Review	Mar 2013
5	Governance Officer	Comprehensive Review	May 2016
6	Governance Officer	Refer to Full Council Resolution 12 November 2019 Item 9.4	12 November 2019
7	Governance Officer	Minor amendments as per 24 March 2020 Full Council Item 9.4	24 March 2020
8	Manager Engagement and Governance	Comprehensive Review to align with the Community Engagement Charter	

9. Document Control

Responsible Department	Engagement and Governance
Delegations Contained within Policy	YES
Classification	Community Relations
Applicable legislation	<i>Local Government Act 1999</i> Community Engagement Charter (2025) <i>Local Government (Elections) Act 1999</i>

<i>Freedom of Information Act 1991</i>			
Related Policies & Corporate Documents	Code of Practice – Access to Meetings and Documents		
Additional references	LGA Community Engagement Handbook		
Endorsed by Council	Click here to enter a date.	Item No:	[Insert item number]
Effective Date	Click here to enter a date.	Next Review Date:	Click here to enter a date.
ECM No.			

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