POLICY NO CB03
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

DEPARTMENT:	Community Services
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Community Services Manager
LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN:	Improve Council's communication, consultative processes, representation and advocacy
STATUTORY AUTHORITY:	Local Government Act 1993
OBJECTIVE:	The Break O'Day Council is committed to open and accountable decision making.
	Council seeks to:
	• Keep the community well informed about Council's activities and initiatives and
	• Actively encourage the community to be involved in the decision making process providing the community with adequate time for genuine and constructive consultation and engagement.
	Community consultation may take a variety of forms such as public notices, direct mail, media advertising eg radio and print, newsletters, forming reference groups and community meetings. Any combination of these may be used to best reach the community affected by the issue.
	The Break O'Day Council is strongly committed to achieving a leading practice standard on all community consultation.
POLICY INFORMATION:	Adopted 19 March 2012 – Minute No 03/12.15.4.069
	Amended 23 April 20104 – Minute No 04/14.13.11.104

POLICY

1.   ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

a.   This policy applies to Elected Members, staff, contractors and agents or consultants acting on behalf of Council.

b.   The General Manager is responsible for:
- Implementing communication and consultation initiatives in accordance with this policy;
- Reporting on the outcomes of these initiatives to Council, to inform the decision making process; and
- Reporting on the review and evaluation of this policy.

c.   Council is charged with making decisions on the community's behalf. Appropriate levels of consultation will ensure that decisions are based on community views.
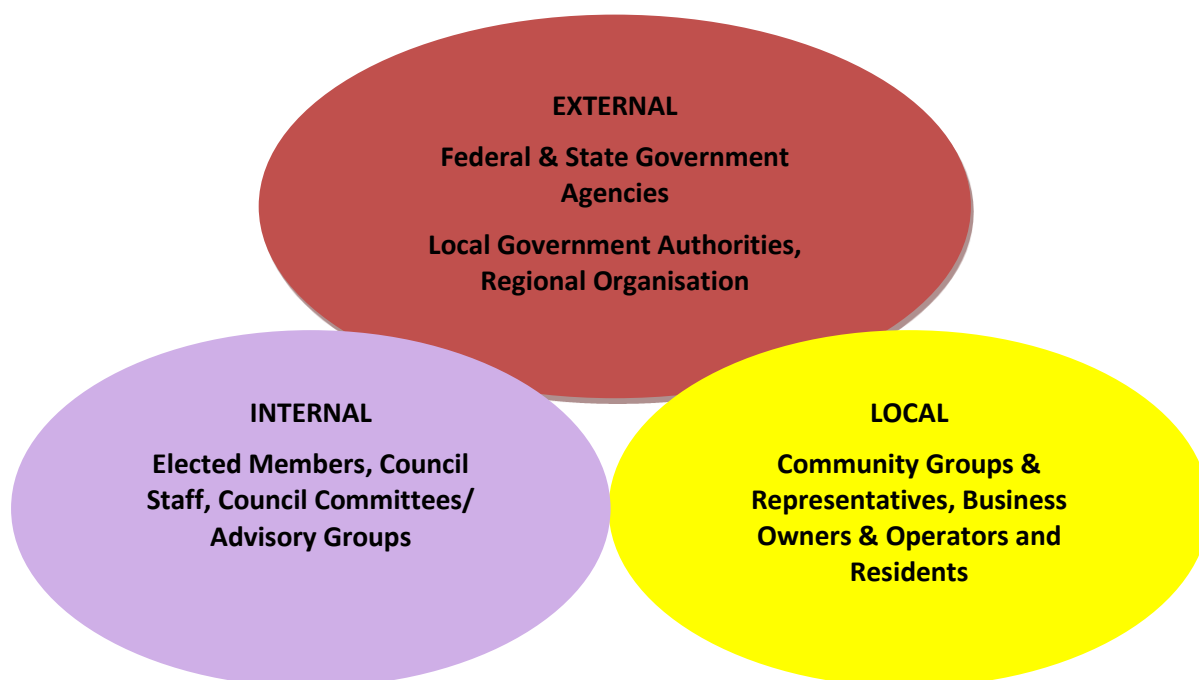
2.   PRINCIPLES

This policy is underpinned by the following principles, which are central to effective communications and consultation:

- Identify affected community members in each specific circumstance;
- Ensure information is easily understood and accessible to identified affected community members, and includes contact details for obtaining further information in all communications;
- Provide a range of appropriate and timely opportunities for people to access information and to be involved, taking account of barriers to access due to language, disability, access to technology or cultural issues;
- Define the parameters of the consultation process for each specific topic, and identify what aspects of the decision can be influenced by community involvement;
- Listen and respond to community views in a balanced way, taking into account all submissions made by affected community members;
- Keep records and provide feedback concerning decisions made as a result of consultation;
- Review and evaluate the policy to ensure ongoing improvement in the way it involves the community in its decision-making processes;

3.   THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS

- Community engagement is one aspect of Council's decision making process. Council seeks to take account of the views and aspirations expressed by the community and stakeholders, and balance those with other influences such as budgetary constraints; legislative obligations and also in seeking alignment with State and Federal Government strategic objectives to make decisions within the context of Council endorsed strategic directions.

- The following diagram identifies the various stakeholders that Council will consult with based on an assessment of to whom the issues are considered to be relevant. In some cases the relevant consultation group will include stakeholders from more than one sector, depending upon the issue being considered.

VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS – INFLUENCING THE OUTCOME

EXTERNAL

Federal & State Government Agencies

Local Government Authorities, Regional Organisation

INTERNAL

Elected Members, Council Staff, Council Committees/ Advisory Groups

LOCAL

Community Groups & Representatives, Business Owners & Operators and Residents

4. CONSULTATION METHODS

- Generally, the strategic objective of any community consultation plan is to ensure that all residents receive regular information about Council's achievements, objectives and performance, are advised of major issues affecting the community and are given adequate notice and opportunity to comment.

- Elements of this process include:
    - A regular community newsletter
    - Other direct mail publications or letterbox drops, as appropriate.
    - Advertising in the local newsletters, the Examiner and other newspapers and publications.
    - Regular media releases and briefings.
    - Community forums and stakeholder meetings.
    - Market research or surveys.
    - The Council website.
    - General fixed displays (noticeboards in the Council foyer, outside and the library).
    - Specific displays.
    - Questionnaires and circulars at Council offices.
    - Focus groups (randomly chosen, targeted stakeholders or voluntary).

5. PROCESS FOR COMMUNITY CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The following process will be implemented when Council determines that public or community consultation is to be undertaken:

- Identify affected community members relevant to the consultation topic;
- Decide the key messages to be delivered to affected community members;
- Identify the parameters of the consultation initiative, that is, what aspects of the decision can be influenced;
- Identify a range of appropriate options for communicating information to stakeholders and inviting involvement – "the communication strategy";
- Identify contact person(s) and contact mechanisms for interested parties to obtain further information;
- Identify timeframes relevant to the consultation initiative. Council will aim to provide at least two (2) weeks' notice of any consultation forums or opportunities, and will ensure a period of twenty one (21) days is allocated from the date of inviting involvement to the final closing date for submissions (unless a lesser or greater timeframe is dictated via legislative requirement);
- Determine who is responsible for:
    - Implementing the communication and consultation strategy;
    - Reporting to Council on the outcomes;
    - Providing feedback about the decision to participants;
    - Ensuring appropriate records are kept.

6. STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

- In a number of areas the Council is required to comply with specific legislative requirements – such as minimum periods, publication in the Gazette and newspapers.

- Consultation processes identified in this Policy should be seen as complementing any prescribed statutory requirements.

- Consultation processes beyond statutory requirements will only take place within any legislative limits that may apply.

7. CONSULTATION CATEGORIES

- The Community Engagement Policy specifies three (3) levels of activity designed to suit all consultation requirements, ranging from the most basic public notification to a major project or issue of community wide significance.

- Each level specifies the minimum statutory requirements relating to community consultation and exceeds them with a mixture of activities that may or may not be required.

- It is Council's prerogative to establish the level of consultation required when considering a subject requiring community consultation. The level will need to reflect the minimum statutory requirements relating to that subject.

- It will be applied to any matter where consultation is required by legislation, Council policy or when Council considers this to be appropriate.

- The General Manager will be responsible for implementation of the Policy, which will include establishing the consultation level and determining which of the elements within that level will be undertaken where Council has not done so.

- Any good consultation strategy requires a certain degree of flexibility to suit the specific situation. While setting out minimum standards, each activity level reflects this need by not being too prescriptive. The following list indicates which level may apply for certain activities. (These are examples only and should not be regarded as a comprehensive list.):

Level 1
- Opening hours – Council office, Georges Bay Esplanade, St Helens
- Codes of Practice – Access to meetings and documents
- Change of street name
- Notice of works (minor)
- Community events
- Change of parking restrictions
- Determining the manner, places and times of its principal office
- Variation to community engagement policy (minor)
- Altering the Code of Practice relating to the principles, policies and procedures that Council will apply to Public Access to Council and Committee Meetings and their minutes and release of documents
- Excluding land from classification as community land (one parcel)
- Planting vegetation where it will have a significant impact on residents,\ or the proprietors of nearby residents, of advertisers
- Representation reviews
- Lease or licence of community land

Level 2
- Lease of community land
- Community Land Management Plans – minor
- New By-Laws
- Traffic Management Plans
- Policies in relation to order making power
- Making By-Laws
- Power to make orders

- Permits
- Street trees

Level 3

- Change to Community Engagement Policy (significant)
- Waste Management
    - Education
    - Process for collection and disposal
- Plan Amendment report of more than local significance
    - Traffic Management Plan – Municipality Wide
    - Strategic Plans
    - Plan Amendment Report (PAR) affecting the whole municipality
    - Major projects
    - Council amalgamations
    - Community land – classification
    - Excluding land from classification as community land
    - Notice of Works (major)

The consultation process for each level is set out in Appendix 1.

8. PUBLIC ACCESS

This policy document is accessible to the community at the Council O\office at Georges Bay Esplanade, St Helens and on Council's website.

9. MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Break O'Day Council reserves the right to review the elements of the consultation process to suit the requirements of any particular issue.

This Policy will be reviewed every three (3) years in line with the Council's Policy Framework or earlier in the event of major changes to legislation or related policies, procedures or if deemed necessary by the General Manager.

APPENDIX 1

Break O'Day Council's Community Engagement Policy
The following list provides options for each level of community engagement at all levels. It is not exhaustive. In determining the level and methodology of engagement are appropriate, attention is drawn to points 7, 8 & 9 of the policy.

Level 1 Information Gathering Information Provision	Level 2 Community Consultation Testing Information	Level 3 Community Engagement/Participation
Municipality Wide Issues		

• Compliance with statutory requirements (if any)
 	
Further options
 	
• Advertisement in the Examiner. Options are a public notice advertisement, display advertisement.
• Council's website
• Fact sheets
• Displays
• Letterbox drops
• Surveys
• Affected community members feedback
	• Compliance with statutory requirements (if any)
	• Allow a minimum 4-6 week days for response
	• Report to Council and community on findings
	
	Further options
	
	• Advertisement in the Examiner
	• Council's website
	• Media release, if appropriate
	• Copies of major reports/plans available in the library and for purchase
	• Consider submissions made in response
	• Focus Groups
	• Surveys
	• Fact sheets
	• Displays
	• Letterbox drops
	• Report to Council summarising submissions/surveys for formal Council decision
	• Affected community members feedback
		• Compliance with statutory requirements (if any)
		• Minimum 6-8 week consultation
		• Report to Council and community on findings
		
		Further options
		
		• Council sets a consultation budget
		• Advertisement in local newspapers and/or the Advertiser
		• Council's website
		• Media release and/or briefings
		• Articles and/or specific publication to all residents
		• Other options:
		   o Surveys
		   o Workshops
		   o Focus Groups
		   o Open days
		   o Displays/Notice boards
		   o Community forums
		• Public submission
		• Copies of major reports/plans available in the library and for purchase
		• Affected community members feedback

Level 1 *Information Gathering Information Provision*	Level 2 *Community Consultation Testing Information*	Level 3 *Community Engagement/Participation*
Localised Issues		
• Compliance with statutory requirements (if any) Further options • Letter of advice to affected properties or properties within 250m of site, as appropriate • Fact sheets • Affected community members feedback	• Compliance with statutory requirements (if any) • Report to Council on findings Further options • Letter of advice to affected properties or properties within 250m of site, as appropriate • Neighbourhood forums • Surveys • Public submissions • Fact sheets • Affected community members feedback	• Compliance with statutory requirements (if any) • Report to Council on findings Further options • Letter of advice to affected properties or properties within 500m of site, as appropriate • Neighbourhood forums • Focus groups • Surveys • Public submissions • Fact sheets • Displays • Affected community members feedback

Localised Issues include:
   - Footpath construction/maintenance
   - Street tree planting/removal/pruning
   - Parks and reserves upgrades
   - Road reconstruction
   - Road sealing/major maintenance
   - Storm water drainage
   - Traffic management (specific areas)
   - Projects in specific areas		