




COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

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Signed by Chief Executive Officer

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This document is available in alternative formats (e.g. larger font) if requested.

1 PURPOSE

This policy:

- identifies the types and extent of internal and external communication that Loddon Shire is committed to providing
- provides a framework for Council to undertake community engagement where appropriate.

2 SCOPE

This policy applies to all councilors and council staff.

3 POLICY

3.1 Key communication messages

The key messages that all Council communications should carry, including internet and social media sites are:

- promoting benefits to citizens and businesses through improvement
- efficient, customer-focused, market competitive services
- efficient and effective use of ratepayers funds
- encouraging consultation, inviting the community to participate in some way.

3.2 External communication

Loddon Shire Council shall use a mix of electronic, mail, print, radio and television media to ensure that the Loddon community and other relevant parties are offered:

- timely and clear information about matters of broad community significance that are being considered by Council
- an appropriate opportunity for input.

Specifically, Loddon Shire shall provide an opportunity for input by external parties whenever:

- a permanent change (greater than three months) to an existing service is proposed
- a new plan or strategy is proposed
- an amendment to an existing plan or strategy that results in a change to a service is proposed
- legislation specifically requires that this opportunity be provided.

Loddon Shire shall make the following information available to external parties at all times:

- policy positions of Council
- progress on actions and programs developed and undertaken in accordance with an approved plan or strategy of Council.

Loddon Shire shall provide timely information to relevant external parties on:

- temporary changes (less than three months) to services
- the introduction of new services
- new or amended policy positions of Council
- events that Loddon Shire wishes to promote.

3.3 Internal communication

The Chief Executive Officer shall ensure that employees receive timely and accurate information about matters that may broadly affect the Loddon Shire community and/or their employment.

3.4 Community engagement

Loddon Shire will conduct different levels of engagement with its community, based on the type of decision being considered.¹

3.4.1 Information

Loddon Shire will provide balanced and objective information to assist the community in understanding the problems, alternatives and/or solutions. Methods include fact sheets, website, forums or displays.

This level of engagement will apply to matters such as changes to local, state or Commonwealth laws and regulations, changes to rates.

3.4.2 Obtain feedback

Loddon Shire will inform, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how community input influences the analysis, alternatives and/or decision. Methods include public comment, focus groups, surveys, public meetings.

This level of engagement will apply to matters such as planning scheme amendments, annual budget.

3.4.3 Involvement

Loddon Shire will work directly with the community to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered. Concerns and issues will be directly reflected in the alternatives developed and feedback will be provided on how community input influences the decision. Methods include workshops and surveys.

This level of engagement will apply to matters such as developing the Council Plan, Road Management Plan, Early Years Plan.

3.4.4 Collaboration

Loddon Shire will partner with the community in each aspect of a decision including the development of alternatives and identification of a preferred solution. This will involve seeking the community's advice and initiative in formulating solutions and incorporating advice and recommendations into decisions to the maximum extent possible, in accordance with any relevant strategies, policies, frameworks, terms of reference or other governance requirements. Methods include citizen advisory committees, consensus-building, participatory decision-making, professional advice and facilitation.

This level of engagement will apply to matters such as steering committees for management of particular projects.

3.4.5 Empowerment

This level of engagement will place final decision-making in the hands of the community, and Loddon Shire will implement what the community decides, subject to any relevant strategies, policies, frameworks, terms of reference or other governance requirements. Methods include ballots, delegated decisions.

This level of engagement will apply to matters such as section 86 Committee of Management decisions, development of community plans, project or facility management groups.

¹ Adapted from the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum developed by the International Association for Public Participation

4 HUMAN RIGHTS STATEMENT

It is considered that this policy does not impact negatively on any rights identified in the Charter of Human Rights Act (2007). Loddon Shire Council is committed to consultation and cooperation between management and employees. The Council will formally involve elected employee Health and Safety Representatives in any workplace change that may affect the health and safety of any of its employees.

5 REVIEW

The Chief Executive Officer will review this policy for any necessary amendments no later than 4 years after adoption of this current version.