

# Community Engagement Policy

Policy Number:	2007/10	Directorate:	Office of CEO
Approval by:	Council	Responsible Officer:	Strategy & Business Intelligence
Approval Date:	22/2/2021	Version Number:	3
Review Date:	23/9/2023		

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to define and direct a considered, fit for purpose Council approach to community engagement. Our Policy aims to establish principles to guide engagement practices that results in improved decisions and services for the community. This includes good governance and transparency in decision making.

Community engagement values and acknowledges the skills, views and expertise in the community. This leads to strengthened local democracy, better community outcomes and an increase in community trust.

The Policy is designed to support compliance with the Local Government Act 2020 requirements for community engagement.

## 2. Context

Knox City Council is committed to effective, fit for purpose and open community engagement. Having the opportunity to have a say and be listened to tells us we are valued. It gives us a sense of ownership of processes and outcomes and adds to our sense of feeling that we are part of our community.

Our community is shifting and evolving. The Knox community is represented by a diverse group of people with their own values and community connections. Figures from the 2016 Census show that in the Knox community:

- people are getting older
- cultural diversity is increasing
- there is more variety in the types of housing we are living in
- people are becoming more educated
- people are working closer to home.

The changing nature of the Knox community emphasises the importance of an ongoing dialogue between community and Council. Councillors play an important role in engaging with the community through all stages of the decision making process.

The *Local Government Act 2020* requires all Councils to adopt and maintain a community engagement policy developed in consultation with the municipal community. The policy must be capable of being applied to

Council’s local laws, budget and policy development. The policy is required to describe the type and form of community engagement, include a process for informing the community of the outcome of the engagement and include deliberative engagement practices capable of being applied to the development of the Community Vision, Council Plan, Financial Plan and Asset Plan.

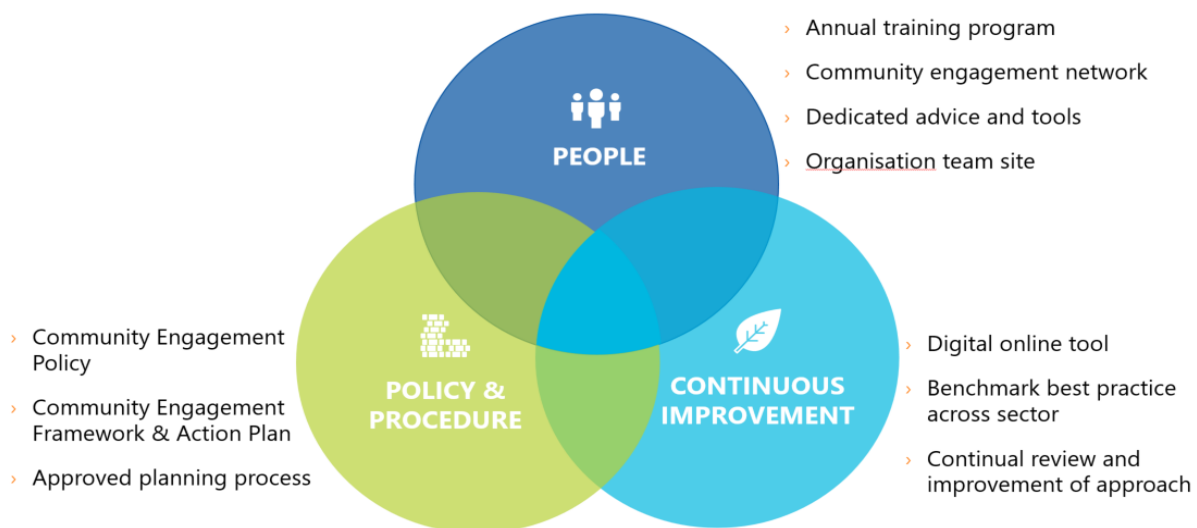
The Act also outlines the need for all Councils to have a community engagement process with the following principles:

- a community engagement process must have a clearly defined objectives and scope
- participants in community engagement must have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation
- participants in community engagement must be representative of the persons and groups affected by the matter that is the subject of the community engagement
- participants in community engagement are entitled to reasonable support to enable meaningful and informed engagement
- participants in community engagement are informed of the ways the community’s input will influence Council decision making.

The Community Engagement Policy aims to support the strategies included in the Community and Council Plans, with a strong focus on strategies relating to increased transparency and confidence in decision making across all levels of government and increased engagement participation from across all sectors of the community.

### 3. Scope and responsibilities

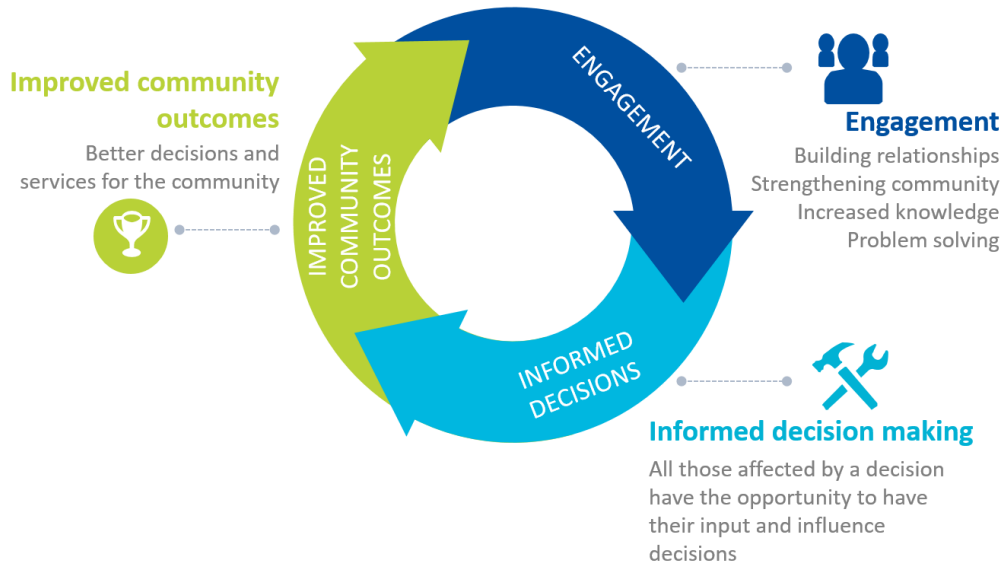
Knox City Council’s community engagement approach links our people, policy and continuous improvement together to achieve the best outcomes for our community. This is shown as follows:



Community engagement takes place for many different reasons. Some community engagement involves opportunities for the community to contribute to the decision making process. Other opportunities arise when

Council facilitates relationship building between and with stakeholders such as community groups. Community engagement also aims to strengthen the capacity of Council and the community to increase our knowledge, problem solve, support each other or change behaviours.

Community engagement in Knox will lead to:



This Policy applies to all Council Staff & Councillors who undertake community engagement on behalf of Council. This includes:

<b>Councillors</b>	Responsible for endorsing a community engagement policy every four years. Involved throughout all stages of the decision making process. Ensure that matters under consideration are informed by the planned level of community engagement. Balance the range of stakeholder views and concerns on an issue when making a decision.
<b>Council Management</b>	Champion better practice community engagement through policy, process and leadership. Monitor implementation and compliance with this policy
<b>Community Engagement Team</b>	Responsible for preparing and engaging with staff and the community on the Policy and related Framework and Action Plan. This includes the implementation of the Action Plan.
<b>Officers</b>	Responsible for adhering to this Policy to ensure good engagement practices and continual improvement of decisions for our community.
<b>Consultants and Volunteers</b>	Responsible for adhering to this Policy to ensure good engagement practices and continual improvement of decisions for our community

## 4. Definitions

<b>Council</b>	Means Knox City Council, whether constituted before or after the commencement of this Policy.
<b>Councillor/s</b>	An elected representative of the municipality.
<b>Council Staff</b>	<b>Employee</b> - Any permanent, part-time, temporary or casual employee of Council. <b>Contractor/Agency/Labour Hire Worker</b> - Any contractor/agency/labour hire worker who provides services or undertakes work on behalf of Council. <b>Volunteer/s</b> A member of the public when contributing directly to a Council program/service/event and who: is registered as a Council volunteer; or is part of any count with regard to volunteer hours contributed to Council programs/services/events. For the purposes of this Policy a volunteer also includes students on work/student placement.
<b>Community</b>	Broadly defined as those who have an interest in or are affected by the business of Council and the way it operates and includes: residents and landowners, businesses, workers, organisations and visitors.
<b>Community Engagement</b>	Any process that values and facilitates community input to help Council make better-informed decisions. It recognises that if the community is going to be affected by a decision, it needs to be engaged in the decision-making process in some way.
<b>Community Engagement Advocates</b>	A cross organisation peer support group comprising Council staff trained and certified in IAP2, fostering best practice and facilitating a whole of Council approach to community engagement.
<b>Community Engagement Framework</b>	The Community Engagement Framework outlines the community engagement activities Council will undertake within its community engagement program.
<b>Community Engagement Plan</b>	A Plan that is developed in conjunction with a project plan, which outlines the community engagement stages, level of community participation in decision making, objectives, techniques, stakeholders and deliverables.
<b>Community Engagement Spectrum</b>	A tool designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation from less active to more active involvement. The spectrum includes the levels: inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower. It defines the community's role and the formulation of the community engagement goal and promise which drives the engagement process. It is based on the IAP2 Spectrum.
<b>Deliberative Engagement</b>	Engagement where citizens are provided with a high level of inclusion and influence on a decision that affects them. Participants are representative of their community and are given the time to consider options and discuss an issue/s in depth before coming to a considered view. They are fit for purpose, suit individual budgets and can range in the number of participants. Examples of deliberative practices can include citizens juries or panels, polling, mapping and deliberative workshops
<b>IAP2</b>	The International Association for Public Participation is a world-wide association of members who seek to promote and improve the practice of public participation.

## 5. Council Policy

### 5.1 Objectives

- To support informed decision making, governance and active civic participation and democracy by ensuring that all community engagement activities conducted by Council are in line with the principles outlined in section 5.2.
- To acknowledge the diversity of skills, views and expertise in the community and involve the community, where appropriate, in Council decision-making processes.

### 5.2 Approach

Council will use the following approach to ensure effective community engagement in line with the principles detailed in the Local Government Act 2020:

Approach	How this will be achieved
We <b>respect</b> people’s time, <b>listen</b> in order to understand viewpoints and value community input to inform our decision making.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council will actively engage and ensure community input is included in decision making.</li> </ul>
We are <b>adaptable</b> and <b>flexible</b> to evolving circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council will respond to newly identified stakeholders and changing community needs throughout the engagement process.</li> </ul>
We <b>work with others</b> , integrate across teams and sectors to strengthen outcomes for the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council will support and train staff on systems and processes to support community engagement. Council to work with consultants to ensure they are aware of the Policy and related procedures.</li> <li>• Where possible, Council will work across teams to ensure effective and comprehensive community engagement.</li> <li>• Council will foster best practice and facilitate a whole of Council approach by facilitating a cross organisational community of practice.</li> </ul>
We are open, honest and <b>transparent</b> at all times and are clear to what extent the community can influence outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council will design and implement its community engagement processes using the Knox Community engagement approach based on the IAP2 best practice framework.</li> <li>• Council will undertake planned community engagement processes and activities to maximise participation of those impacted by a decision.</li> </ul>
We include all stakeholders affected and interested in the decision and seek to engage with those <b>representative</b> of our community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council will communicate its commitment to the Community Engagement Policy and processes to the community.</li> <li>• Council will engage with those representative of the community to enhance community engagement processes and outcomes.</li> </ul>

Approach	How this will be achieved
We are <b>resourceful</b> , engage early and often, have a clear <b>purpose</b> and are sensitive to what has happened in the past.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council will consider a diverse range of community engagement methods, adopting a prevention and early intervention approach.</li> </ul>
We <b>reflect</b> and inform our community of the outcome. We report back indicating how community input has been used.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council will review engagement activities to continually improve its practices.</li> <li>• Council will report back to our community in a timely manner about how their input was considered within the final outcome.</li> <li>• Council will, as far as practicable, collate community engagement output data in the document management system to support integrated planning and service delivery.</li> </ul>

### 5.3 IAP2 Model

Council will use the IAP2 model of engagement to guide planning and implementation of community engagement activities.

#### Council’s engagement level (IAP2 model)

	Goal	Style	Examples
Inform	To provide stakeholders with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives and solutions	One way communication ‘Here’s what’s happening’	Ads, factsheets, websites
Consult	To obtain stakeholder feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions	Obtaining feedback ‘Here are some options, what you think?’	Surveys, focus groups
Involve	To work directly with stakeholders throughout the process to ensure that their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood	Participatory process to identify issues and views ‘Here’s a problem, what ideas do you have?’	Advisory committees, workshops
Collaborate	To partner with stakeholders in each aspect of the decision from development to solution	Working together ‘Let’s work together to solve this problem’	Partnerships, participatory decision making
Empower	Shared leadership of community-led projects with final decision-making at the community level	Building community capacity to be change leaders ‘You care about this issue and are leading an initiative, how can we support you?’	Facilitation of networks, campaigns

Source: Adapted from Tamarack Institute and IAP2

## 5.4 When to engage

Council will determine the need for community engagement considering the following:

Impact level	Description	Criteria (one or more may apply)	Examples
Level 1	High impact LGA wide  <b>Community engagement plan essential</b>  <b>Include deliberative engagement practices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Legislative requirements (as listed above)</li> <li>Expected high level of interest from the community</li> <li>High level of political interest</li> <li>Potential to impact on regional or state strategies or direction</li> <li>Any changes that impact on the health, safety and wellbeing of the broader community (not including immediate risk)</li> <li>Significant environmental changes or impacts</li> <li>Need to understand community values and priorities to inform policies, planning or service delivery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategic plans</li> <li>Significant Council policies, plans or by-laws</li> <li>Major changes to city-wide services e.g. waste services or childcare</li> <li>Masterplans</li> <li>Customer facing IT solutions</li> </ul>
Level 2	High impact in a local area  <b>Community engagement plan essential</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Removal or significant changes to a facility or service to a local community/user group</li> <li>High level of community or sectional interest</li> <li>Potential for impact on property values</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upgrades to Reserves and Open Space</li> <li>Playground upgrades</li> <li>Major local road work</li> <li>Significant changes to car parking</li> <li>Change of use and major upgrades to buildings and infrastructure</li> <li>Involves heritage</li> <li>Naming/re-naming of parks or buildings</li> </ul>
Level 3	Lower impact LGA wide  <b>Community engagement plan desirable</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential for some community or sectional interest.</li> <li>Potential for some, although not significant impact on regional/state strategies or direction</li> <li>Minor changes to recurring large scale programs</li> <li>Need to build community action around an issue</li> <li>Potential opportunity to establish partnerships to address an issue</li> <li>More information is needed to reach a decision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minor changes to processes</li> <li>Minor changes to services e.g. events such as Knox Festival or Sorry Day</li> <li>Minor impacts vulnerable groups</li> <li>Non-contentious changes to fees and charges</li> </ul>
Level 4	Lower impact in a local area  <b>Community engagement plan optional</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minor changes to facility or services at a local level</li> <li>Minor works</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Normal road works</li> <li>Development of local programs</li> <li>Landscaping</li> </ul>

## 5.6 When community engagement activities may not occur

There may be times when community engagement activities do not occur. An example of this is when the health, safety and wellbeing of the community is affected and Council needs to respond quickly, such as in an emergency. Other examples include legislative requirements, situations where Council has no jurisdiction over the decision or when confidentiality and privacy issues limits meaningful discussion.

## 5.7 Community Engagement Plan endorsement

Council staff completing Community Engagement Plans will seek endorsement from their Director for Level 1 plans. All Councillors will be advised of Level 1 plans. All plans will be developed in consultation with the Community Engagement Team and Senior Managers. Ward Councillors will be engaged, for Ward specific projects.

## 5.8 How we will engage

The community engagement process at Knox City Council involves five steps:

1. *Define* – the impact, objectives and engagement level for the project.
2. *Select* – which parts of the community Council will engage with.
3. *Plan* – the engagement tools to be used.
4. *Manage* – the risk and approvals required for community engagement activities (see 6.6 of Policy).
5. *Report* – review the engagement activity.

Knox City Council's Community Engagement Planning Toolkit provides more detail on each step.

## 5.9 Evaluation and review of the community engagement process

Reporting back to the community on decisions and evaluating and reviewing the community engagement approach will be key responsibilities of those managing the community engagement process. Evaluation of the community engagement process will include assessment of robustness, inclusiveness and level of information and transparency.

# 6. References

## 6.1 Knox City Council Community & Council Plan 2017-2021

- Goal 8: We have confidence in decision making

## 6.2 Relevant Legislation

- *Local Government Act 2020* Part 3 – Council decision making
- *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*
- *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*
- *Planning and Environment Act 1987*

## 6.3 Charter of Human Rights

This policy has been assessed against the rights contained within the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* and is deemed compatible with the Charter.



#### 6.4 **UN Rights of the Child**

- Standard 7 –Child Safe Standards. Article 12 – Right to engage as active citizens.

#### 6.5 **Related Council Policies**

- Councillor Code of Conduct
- Staff Media Policy
- Councillor Media Policy
- Staff Social Media Policy

#### 6.6 **Related Council Documents and Procedures**

- Community Engagement Framework & Action Plan
- Community Engagement Planning Process
- Communications Planning Procedure

## 7. Administrative Updates

From time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this policy. Where an update does not materially alter this policy, such a change may be made administratively. Examples of minor administrative changes include changes to names of Council departments or positions, change to names of Federal or State Government departments or a minor amendment to legislation that does not have material impact. Where any change or update may materially change the intent of this policy, it must be considered by Council.