Public Consultation Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference Number:</th>
<th>4.3 12/270272</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type:</td>
<td>Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category:</td>
<td>Safety and Community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Relevant Community Plan Outcome: | • A safe and healthy City that supports vibrant community life  
• A local organisation providing progressive leadership, accountable governance and quality services to the community |
| Responsible Officer(s): | Coordinator Place Management |
| First Issued/Approved: | March 2000 |
| Minutes Reference: | CoS 4/5/2015, Item 3.30 |
| Last Reviewed: | May 2015 |
| Next Review Due: | May 2017 |
| Applicable Legislation: | Local Government Act 1999  
Development Act 1993 |
| Related Policies: | Youth Policy  
Child Safe Environment Policy,  
Cultural Diversity Policy |
| Related Procedures: | Public Consultation Implementation Procedures (3) |

1. **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to outline a set of guiding principles that underpin Council’s approach to community engagement, with the aim of guiding effective community engagement between Council and community. This Policy will provide the foundation for a coordinated and consistent standard of engagement across the City, articulate and clarify community engagement definitions and ensure Council complies, and where possible exceeds, the requirements of the Local Government Act 1999.

2. **Scope**

This policy applies to Council Members, staff, contractors and consultants acting on behalf of Council delivering Council’s community engagement and consultation programs and activities.

3. **Policy Statement**

The City of Charles Sturt is committed to delivering effective community engagement to identify and understand community concerns and aspirations, support mutual communication and deliberation, build effective partnerships and encourage an actively engaged citizenry.

The City of Charles Sturt’s framework for community engagement is based on good governance and strong leadership and aides Council to make informed decisions to guide the city’s priorities into the future.
3.1 Principles

The following guiding principles underpin the City of Charles Sturt’s Public Consultation Policy and approach to community engagement:

- **Inclusiveness** — Inclusive and accessible engagement processes will provide clearly stated and relevant information that supports mutual deliberation and invites active participation in Council policy development, planning and decision-making.

- **Mutual respect** — Providing respectful and safe engagement spaces, where everyone values, listens and learns from each other’s perspectives which will lead to strengthened mutually beneficial relationships.

- **Representation** — Including diverse and representative perspectives into engagement processes will assist Council to achieve balanced decision-making and advocate on communities behalf.

- **Reaching out** — Providing more effective ways to reach out and involve citizens in planning and decision making processes will allow Council to move beyond established networks to tap into the significant knowledge and expertise residing within communities.

- **Shared responsibility** — Facilitation of genuine partnerships between Council and communities will inspire shared responsibility in resolving complex problems/situations and help achieve shared solutions.

- **Continuous improvement** — Integration of engagement evaluation practice will assist in achieving continuous cycle of improvement within Council policy development, planning and decision making.

3.2 Level of Engagement

The five ascending levels of engagement (referenced from the International Association of Public Participation Spectrum) represent the depth and complexity of the community engagement project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Council will...</th>
<th>Inform</th>
<th>Consult</th>
<th>Involve</th>
<th>Collaborate</th>
<th>Empower</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide balanced and objective information to assist in developing community understanding on a project or issue.</td>
<td>Provide options for consideration and seek feedback on communities concerns and preferences.</td>
<td>Work with communities through multiple stages of a project to ensure that concerns and aspirations are understood and considered.</td>
<td>Work in partnership with the communities, with project ‘ownership’ shared equally.</td>
<td>Delegate final decision making power to communities.</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community will...</th>
<th>Listen</th>
<th>Contribute</th>
<th>Participate</th>
<th>Partner</th>
<th>Decide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The level of engagement is determined during the project planning phase of a project and will vary dependant on individual project context with consideration given to: project complexity, levels of community interest, level of impact (economic, environmental, social and cultural), political sensitivity, timelines and resource availability.
3.3 Responsibilities

Council Members are responsible for:

- Providing information on project context and assisting in identifying local stakeholders and issues during planning of community engagement approaches.
- Providing feedback and sign off on key consultation project approaches.
- Authorising the establishment of Community Reference Groups on a project only basis with clear terms of reference that define community governance structures, purpose, resourcing, timelines, membership, and responsibilities.
- Working in an advocacy capacity to support consultation project during implementation.
- Advising staff of community sentiment during consultation project implementation.
- Considering the outcomes of community engagement projects and activities.
- Weighing up and deliberating the information, facts and recommendations presented.
- Making final decisions.

In the interests of achieving impartial decision making Council Members will not facilitate Council sanctioned consultation activities.

The Chief Executive Officer, supported by staff and/or external contractors, is responsible for:

- Planning community engagement approaches for all consultation projects in accordance with this policy.
- Recommending to Council the most appropriate community engagement strategy/methodology for each public consultation project.
- Delivering community engagement projects and facilitating activities in accordance with this policy and the Public Consultation Implementation Procedure.
- Managing community engagement consultants and contractors delivering consultation projects and activities on behalf of Council.
- Reporting to Council on the outcomes of community engagement projects as a means of informing decision making.
- Providing feedback to consultation participants on the outcomes of community engagement projects and how their contribution was considered.
- Instigating the regular review and evaluation of this policy.

Council Members and Chief Executive Officer roles in the planning and implementation of community engagement activities are outlined in the Public Consultation Implementation Procedure.

3.4 Local Government Act 1999 Requirements

The followings sections of Local Government Act 1999 prescribe a public consultation requirement or make reference to Council’s Public Consultation Policy:

- Access to documents (S.132(3))
- Access to meetings and documents - Code of Practice (S.92(5)(b))
- Alienation of community land by lease or licence (S.202(2))
- Amendment or revocation of management plan (S. 198 (2)(3))
- Annual business plans and budgets (S.123(3))
• Basis of differential rates (S.156(14a))
• Basis of rating (S.151(5))
• Composition and wards (S.12(7))
• Councils to develop policies (S.259(2))
• Passing by-laws (S.249(2))
• Preparation of stormwater management plans by councils (Schedule 1 (S. 13 (2b))
• Principal office (S.45(3))
• Prudential requirements for certain activities (S.48)
• Public consultation (S.223(1))
• Public consultation policies (S.50)
• Public consultation on proposed management plan (S.197(1))
• Status of a council or change of various names (S.13(2))
• Strategic management plans (S.122(6))
• Trees (S.232(b))

In these instances Council must comply with the act and/or follow the steps outlined in the Public Consultation Implementation Procedure.

Where there are legislative requirements for consultations under other legislation, for example the Development Act, then these take precedence over the Public Consultation Policy should there be any inconsistency.

4. Definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Includes all the people who live, work, study, own property, conduct private or government business, visit or use the services, facilities and public spaces and places of the City of Charles Sturt. The community can be referred to as a stakeholders, or comprise stakeholders.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Consultation</td>
<td>A term used synonymously with ‘community engagement’ (see definition below).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Governance</td>
<td>A form of engagement community management and empowerment where community members and stakeholders participate and assist Council in making a decision via an ongoing process, e.g. an advisory group, community boards or committee.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consult</td>
<td>One of the five ascending levels of engagement as per the International Association of Public Participation Spectrum which include: Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate and Empower.</td>
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<td>Communication</td>
<td>Generally refers to the exchange of information from Council to the community, and can also include the exchange of information or views from the community to Council.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Engagement</td>
<td>Community engagement is about involving the community in decision making processes, which is critical in the successful development of acceptable policies and decisions in government, the private sector and the community (Local Government Association SA endorsed definition).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Council</strong></td>
<td>Means the elected member body representing the City of Charles Sturt community or Staff operating under delegated authority. It also includes contractors and consultants with the authority to act on behalf of Council.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Council Members</strong></td>
<td>Means the elected member body, including the Mayor, representing the City of Charles Sturt community</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Policy</strong></td>
<td>Refers to this Public Consultation Policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Participation</strong></td>
<td>A term used synonymously with ‘community engagement’ (see definition above).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Act</strong></td>
<td>Refers to the Local Government Act 1999 unless otherwise specified.</td>
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