

1.0 SCOPE

- 1.1 The Policy will apply to Councillors, staff, contractors, and agents or consultants acting on behalf of the Council.
- 1.2 The Policy will apply in those circumstances where the Council determines by a simple majority that it is appropriate to follow the Policy.
- 1.3 The Policy is not intended to impede Council's decision-making processes in any way but to provide a structured process for publicly canvassing issues that Council identifies as important to the community and/or having potential to significantly impact the community.

2.0 PURPOSE

- 2.1 The purpose of this Policy is to outline the principles and procedures that the Council will follow to involve the community in planning and decision-making in the local area, and to ensure accountability of the Council to the community through effective communication and consultation strategies.
- 2.2 The implementation of this Policy is not to replace existing avenues for community involvement or input but is designed to complement them.
- 2.3 The objectives of this Policy are:
 - (a) To promote positive relations between the Council and the community;
 - (b) To promote effective communication and consultation between the Council and the community;
 - (c) To enable the community to participate in Council planning and decision making;
 - (d) To provide the framework for community involvement in Council planning and decision making;
 - (e) To promote Council decision-making that is open, transparent, responsive and accountable to the community.

3.0 POLICY STATEMENT

- 3.1 Waratah-Wynyard Council ("the Council") is committed to open, accountable and responsive decision making, which is informed by effective communication and consultation between the Council and the community.
- 3.2 This Public Consultation Policy ("Policy") sets out the steps the Council will take for the purpose of establishing partnerships and encouraging community involvement in planning and decision making about the services the Council provides and the management of community resources.

- 3.3 Waratah-Wynyard Council's Public Consultation Policy addresses the key elements of both communication and consultation. Communication involves providing meaningful information in a timely and accessible manner. Consultation is a two-way process, providing opportunities to clarify information, raise issues and discuss ideas, options and views.

4.0 Principles

- 4.1 The Waratah-Wynyard Council Public Consultation Policy is underpinned by the following principles, which the Council believes are central to achieve effective communication and consultation:
- (a) Council decision-making should be open, transparent and accountable;
 - (b) The Council will identify potential stakeholders in each specific circumstance;
 - (c) The Council will ensure information is easily understood and accessible to identified stakeholders, and include contact details for obtaining further information in all communications,
 - (d) The community has a right to be involved in and informed about key decisions affecting their area;
 - (e) A range of appropriate opportunities will be provided for people to access information and to be involved, taking account of barriers to access due to language, disability or cultural issues,
 - (f) The Council will define the parameters of the consultation process for each specific topic, and identify what aspects of the decision can be influenced by community involvement;
 - (g) The Council will listen and respond to community views in a balanced way, taking account of all submissions made by various stakeholders;
 - (h) The Council will review and evaluate its Policy to ensure ongoing improvement in the way it involves the community in its decision-making processes; and
 - (i) The Council's desire to balance community views and interests with other influences such as budgetary constraints.

5.0 Procedure

- 5.1 Council will implement this Policy and will take account of the views and aspirations expressed by the community and stakeholders, balancing those views and aspirations with other influences such as budgetary constraints, and within the context of Council endorsed strategic directions.
- 5.2 The following steps will be taken by the Council to fulfil the requirements of this Policy:
- (a) At the time of determining that this Policy is to apply to a matter, the Council will identify a range of options it proposes to utilise to communicate information to interested persons and invite submissions;

- (b) The Council will publish a notice in a newspaper (circulating in the area) describing the matter for which public consultation is required, and inviting interested persons to make submissions to the Council within a period being at least twenty-one (21) days from the date of the notice; and
- (c) The Council will consider any submissions received as part of its decision-making process and will also have regard to any relevant legislation.
- (d) Where an urgent matter requires a Council determination within a period of less than twenty-one (21) days, if reasonably practicable to do so, Council is to publish a notice of the matter and the reason for its urgency and invite people to make submissions up to the day on which it proposes to make the determination in question.

6.0 Communication Options

- 6.1 In addition to the above, options that the Council may choose to utilise to communicate information and invite submissions, include:
- (a) Regular newsletters;
 - (b) Advertisements in local paper and/or newsletters;
 - (c) Advertisements in the Examiner and Mercury if matter has relevance to broader community;
 - (d) Media releases/editorial;
 - (e) Fact Sheets or brochures;
 - (f) Letters addressed to stakeholders;
 - (g) Letterbox drops in the relevant area;
 - (h) Websites and online media;
 - (i) Telephone Access Line;
 - (j) Displays in public places; and
 - (k) Notice in public places.

7.0 Consultation Options

- 7.1 Council may choose to consult with the community using appropriate consultation methods such as:
- (a) Meetings with Councillors and staff;
 - (b) Council Advisory Committees;
 - (c) Focus Groups;
 - (d) Workshops for stakeholders;
 - (e) Surveys through interviews/self-completion;
 - (f) Door knock, street and/or online surveys;
 - (g) Open Days;
 - (h) Staffed Displays;
 - (i) Community Forums and Meetings;
 - (j) Heard by Council;
 - (k) Comment Sheets; and
 - (l) Online social media.

- 7.2 Any steps taken by the Council in addition to the minimum requirements set out in this Policy are at the absolute discretion of the Council and will depend upon the particular matter under consideration, the resources available to the Council and the level of interest the matter is likely to generate.
- 7.3 The Council will record and provide feedback about the decisions where relevant.

Legislative Requirements:

Section 20 of the *Local Government Act 1993* provides as follows:

Functions and powers of councils

- 20. (1)** *In addition to any functions of a council in this or any other Act, a council has the following functions:*
- (a) to provide for the health, safety and welfare of the community;*
 - (b) to represent and promote the interests of the community;*
 - (c) to provide for the peace, order and good government of the municipal area.*
- (2)** *In performing its functions, a council is to consult, involve and be accountable to the community.*
- (3)** *A council may do anything necessary or convenient to perform its functions either within or outside its municipal area.*

Related Procedures/Guidelines:

Nil.