Merri-bek City Council

Community Engagement Policy

Our commitment to involving our community in decisions that matter

August 2024

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Acknowledgement

Merri-bek Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung people as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waterways in the area known as Merri-bek, and pay respect to their Elders past, present and emerging, as well as to all the First Nations' communities who significantly contribute to the life of the area.

Introduction

At Merri-bek City Council, we are committed to putting our community at the heart of everything we do. From our day-to-day operations, community services, delivery of infrastructure, customer service, to the way we meet our regulatory requirements – our community and customers come first.

This Community Engagement Policy outlines our commitment to genuinely involving our community in decision making so we can deliver better quality outcomes.

This policy:

- States the principles and commitment that guide our community engagement practice.
- Outlines our approach to community engagement. This includes when, who and how we will engage our community for different matters.
- Gives a complete process for community engagement. This includes reporting back to those who have participated in our community engagement processes about final decisions and evaluating our practices.
- Explains how we will implement and evaluate this policy. This includes how we will ensure that we provide a consistent approach to community engagement across Council's organisation.

This policy was adopted by Council on 9 December 2020, superseding Council's Community Engagement and Public Participation Policy 2018. It supports Council's integrated planning and reporting framework required under the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) and meets Council's legislative requirements for community engagement which is a key focus for local government.

This policy has been informed by significant community engagement and research as outlined at Appendix 1.

Defining community engagement and deliberative engagement

Community engagement

We define community engagement as *involving our community in decisions that impact and interest them.*

Community engagement can take many forms including information sharing, to direct community involvement in decision making.

Deliberative engagement

For some complex projects, Council will take a deliberative engagement approach to involving community members in decision making.

Deliberative engagement means *providing our community with sufficient time and information to enable their critical reasoning, and consideration of options as part of a decision-making process.*

Deliberative engagement typically occurs in a group process and may take a variety of forms from facilitated focus groups to a citizen's assembly.

All other definitions relevant to this policy are provided at Appendix 3.

Policy commitment

We will provide our community with an experience of community engagement that is genuine, meaningful, convenient, friendly and modern. We strive to be an organisation where community engagement excellence is built into our organisational DNA.

Policy scope and our roles and responsibilities

This policy applies to our Councillors, all Council officers, contractors, volunteers or any other persons engaged by Council's business to deliver community engagement services. It also serves as a guide for external organisations that deliver infrastructure and services in Merri-bek.

This policy does not apply to projects where there is no decision to be made that may impact our community.

Community engagement is part of Council's core business and is the responsibility of all Council service areas, teams and employees. Our roles and responsibilities are shown in the table below.

Role	Responsibilities
Mayor	The Mayor has a unique role in community engagement as explained under the section of this policy titled: *The role of the Mayor in community engagement.*
Councillors	To participate in the decision making of Council and to represent the interests of the community in decision making. Councillors must also contribute to the strategic direction of Council through the development of key strategic documents of the Council, including the Council Plan.
Directors	Ensure that good quality and timely reporting is provided to Councillors on community engagement processes and outcomes. Ensure reputational and other risks of community engagement are managed.
Managers	Approve Community Engagement Plans developed by Council officers for high impact/risk projects. Ensure community engagement will be carried out at the appropriate level given the likely impact to the community; the level of risk, and the extent to which the community is able to influence the final outcome or decision.
Unit Managers/ Coordinators	Approve Community Engagement Plans for medium impact/risk projects. Oversee the implementation of Community Engagement Plans. Ensure reputational and other risks are managed. Ensure community engagement practices are carried out in accordance with Community Engagement Plans and this policy.
Council officers	Community engagement is the responsibility of all Council employees as part of core business. It is the responsibility of Council officers to ensure quality and timely community engagement and reporting is delivered in accordance with this policy. All Council officers are responsible for managing and monitoring their own project pages on Council's digital engagement platform: *Conversations Merri-bek.*

Policy principles

Merri-bek Council commits to the five principles noted in Section 56 of the Local Government Act 2020. The statements below explain how we will deliver on each principle.

Principle 1: A community engagement process must have a clearly defined objective and scope.

We will plan our engagement and have our plans approved by a manager. When we launch an engagement project, we will explain to community:

- The purpose of the engagement.
- What the community can and cannot influence. If the community influence over a decision is limited, the reasons for this will be explained.
- The level of engagement, based on the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Engagement, that is being pursued and why.
- What information we seek to gather from the community, and
- The methods we will use to gather feedback from the community.

Principle 2: Participants in community engagement must have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation

We will provide participants in our community engagement processes with access to objective, relevant and timely information to support their participation.

We will do this by:

- Providing relevant data or evidence relating to the matter, including related reports and other strategic documents.
- Supplying information in plain language and translated and accessible formats and summary documents as required.
- Using a range of communication channels and accessible formats.
- Making information about our projects available on our Conversations Merri-bek digital engagement platform or provided in other formats as required.

Principle 3: Participants in community engagement must be representative of the persons and groups affected by the matter that is the subject of the community engagement

When carrying out engagement, we will identify members of the community that have a connection to the project or matter, and undertake an assessment of:

- Impact: we will identify who in the community will be impacted because of the matter.
- Interest: we will identify the level of interest of those impacted.
- Risk: we will identify the project risks and how can these be mitigated.
- Influence: we will use the IAP2 Spectrum of Engagement to identify the level of influence the community can expect over the end outcome or decision. This information is used to understand the types of tools and techniques that will be most effective for engagement and communication (*refer to Table 1*).

Principle 4: Participants in community engagement are entitled to reasonable support to enable meaningful and informed engagement

We will design engagement including the methods, activities and schedule to meet the needs and requirements of identified community members. In doing so, we will consider:

- Multiple methods for engagement that enable our diverse community to participate in different ways including written, visual, online and verbal.
- Allowing adequate time for participants to provide an informed response to our engagement requests.
- The resourcing available for engagement relative to the scope and scale of the project. Methods and tools selected will relate to the type of project and level of influence relative to the IAP2 Spectrum of Engagement and the project budget.

For community members who may experience barriers to participation, additional resources may be considered.

Principle 5: Participants in community engagement are informed of the ways in which the community engagement process will influence Council decision-making

We will explain how and when the decision will be made, including:

- Providing updates to project followers/subscribers at key progress points, including when the item will be discussed at a meeting of Council
- Publishing a summary of the engagement process, participants and results within one month of the close of engagement, or when the outcome of engagement is referenced in a report to Council or will inform a Council decision before this deadline.
- Providing updates to subscribers on the outcome of the project or matter within two weeks of key decisions and milestones.

This Policy also supports the governance principles that are provided by the Act.

Policy context and guidelines

Council's approach to community engagement is guided by legislation as outlined in Appendix 4. Where Council officers carry out community engagement in accordance with different legislative requirements, they must still have regard to this policy.

While this Policy explains our community engagement approach and some specific processes we may use, our day-to-day operational practice is provided to Council officers in our Conversations Merri-bek Toolkit. This Toolkit is a regularly updated suite of community engagement resources including templates, tools and guidelines.

To ensure consistency of Council's approach to community engagement, all Council officers with responsibilities for delivering community engagement processes on behalf of Council will use the guidelines, tools and resources provided in the Conversations Merri-bek Toolkit where possible.

Council's approach to community engagement

The IAP2 Spectrum of Engagement

Council's approach to community engagement is guided by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Engagement, which is an internationally recognised tool for best practice community engagement.

The IAP2 Spectrum identifies five levels of engagement with corresponding goals and actions. It makes clear the role of the community in decision-making at each level.

	Increasing impact on the decision >				
	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Public participation goal	To provide the community with balanced and objective information to help them understand the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain community feedback on analysis, alternatives or decisions where opportunities for community input may be limited.	To work directly with the community throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the community in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the community.
What we will do and examples of key messages that we will use.	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge your concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how community input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how community input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into decision-making to the maximum possible extent.	We will implement what you decide.
The role of our community in decision making	Listen	Contribute	Participate	Partner	Partner or lead

When we engage

This section applies only to non-statutory projects. For the purposes of this policy, non-statutory projects refer to projects that historically have not been subject to any statutory requirements for community engagement.

For projects where community engagement is to be carried out in accordance with specific statutory requirements, such as town planning processes for example, the timing and type of engagement will be informed and limited by statutory requirements.

For non-statutory projects we will:

- Engage impacted parties when a decision is to be made by Council that may impact our community.
- Prepare a Community Engagement Plan and have this approved, for projects that may have a medium-high impact/risk rating.
- Engage impacted communities as early as practicable.
- Where possible, host two stages of community engagement. Typically, in the first stage of engagement we will gather community input to inform a project, and in the second stage of engagement we will exhibit any draft documents for a minimum of 15-business days. In the second stage of engagement, we will let the community know how their input during the first stage of engagement, influenced the process.
- Typically allow 4-6 weeks for community engagement delivery as part of our overall project management processes. However shorter timeframes may be applied for some low impact/risk projects.
- Allow 2 weeks minimum for our community to have notice of upcoming community engagement opportunities including time to read information prior.
- Carry out technical research and/or impact assessments and/or other studies prior to seeking community input if this is required. This will ensure our community can be appropriately informed about the evidence base for a proposal and have informed discussions with us about it.
- When a matter is complex, affecting multiple people with competing needs, interests and levels of rank, power and influence; we aim to have in-depth conversations with our community to balance competing voices and find an outcome that delivers equitable benefits. Delivering equitable benefits means that we may not always make decisions based on the viewpoints of prominent voices or majority groups of participants. Instead, we may make decisions based on our principles (e.g. principles of inclusion and community strengthening which include planning for the future Merri-bek community). The reasons and evidence behind our decision making will be explained to all parties.
- In circumstances where we seek to implement a long-term strategy that comprises multiple projects; even if extensive community engagement has previously been carried out to develop the long-term strategy, we will undertake community engagement as required to deliver any individual projects of that strategy that may impact our community. For example, if Council has involved the community to develop a Streetscape Masterplan, we will continue to engage the community to deliver specific projects identified in the Masterplan that may impact our community (e.g. urban design improvements).

- We will consider the timing of significant social and cultural dates. When planning community engagement, we will give regard to the scheduling of engagement activities to avoid, where possible, any conflict with significant community or cultural commitments if they will impact on the ability of community members to participate.
- We will avoid where possible, carrying out community engagement around key dates of the calendar year such as Christmas and the New Year, public holidays and school holidays, unless it is considered appropriate for enabling the participation of specific groups.
- We will have regard and sensitivity to current social issues, trends or significant matters when engaging the community. For example, by engaging communities with sensitivity during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- We will aim to remove any barriers to participation that our community members might face.
- When Council embarks upon any temporary trial projects that will impact our community (For example, tactical urbanism projects that are led by Council), we will aim to engage our community at the level of 'involve' on the IAP2 spectrum. We will also aim to provide a minimum of 2 weeks of notice about any upcoming trial projects, and we will communicate with impacted community members throughout the various stages of these types of projects.
- Where five years or more passes between a community engagement process and the implementation of a project; the community engagement may be regarded as no longer reliable and may be carried out afresh if a) this will ensure the effective implementation of the project, and b) there will be no detrimental impact on the community resulting from delays to the project caused by the need for further community engagement processes.
- For policy matters related to Council's internal organisational operations Council will not engage the community.
- We will strive to include a succession plan for our long-term plans that ensure community engagement can continue throughout the lifecycle of a project. For example, we will aim to keep our community apprised of different projects carried out during the implementation of a 20-year Master Plan.
- Where stakeholders or impacted people emerge later in an engagement process, we will strive to respond flexibly, and do our best to support their participation within the limitations of our projects.
- At the end of a community engagement process we will report back to those who have participated, to advise of the decision that has been made, and how community input influenced the process.

Who we engage

We deliver better quality outcomes and decisions when we fully understand the needs, priorities, concerns and ideas of individuals and groups within our community. When we are planning an initiative or decision, we first identify the people and groups likely to be affected, and we reach out to involve them in the process. We recognise that some groups face barriers to engaging with us and we commit to using methods that enable and support their participation.

Our process for identifying who is impacted or interested in a local issue, best methods of outreach and any barriers to participation are guided by our Conversations Merri-bek Toolkit. The Toolkit includes a rigorous stakeholder identification tool that is routinely updated for current best practice.

Examples of community stakeholders that we engage include but are not limited to the following groups:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities and Traditional Owners.
- Advisory Committees.
- Business owners and operators.
- Children and young people.
- Community advocacy groups.
- Council service users.
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities (CALD).
- LGBTIQA+ community.
- Neighbourhood Houses and community centres.
- Non-resident ratepayers.
- Not-for-profit groups.
- Older people.
- Owner occupiers/ratepayers.
- People experiencing homelessness.
- People with disability.
- Renters.
- Schools, kindergartens and childcare groups.
- Informal users of parks.
- Special interest groups.
- Sports and recreational club members.
- International students.
- Visitors.

Council Advisory Committees

Merri-bek Council's Advisory Committees are an important network of stakeholders who we regularly engage to obtain detailed feedback on the ways our operations and decisions may affect specific communities. Some Committees help us understand the issues and concerns of specific community groups such as the Human Rights Advisory Committee; while others help us understand issues relevant to specific topics, such as the Transport Advisory Committee. The role and function of Advisory Committees is guided by the Local Government Act 2020.

During the lifetime of this policy Council's Advisory Committees will play a key role in providing early advice to Council about significant strategies and policies it is initiating.

Traditional Owners

Traditional Owners are an important stakeholder group that Council looks to for advice on a range of Council projects. When Council initiates a project that may impact Traditional Owners, we will engage Traditional Owners early, and at various stages in the development of the project.

During the lifetime of this policy, Council will investigate developing a formalised process to engage Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation as the Registered Aboriginal Party with responsibilities for managing and protecting Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in the City of Merri-bek in planning and management decisions around Aboriginal cultural heritage, and town planning.

Our Multicultural Communities

Merri-bek is home to a diverse range of cultural and linguistic groups. For many in this cohort, English is their second language (34.5% of the Merri-bek community speak a language other than English at home, and 5.1% of the total Merri-bek community do not speak English well, or at all).

We will proactively communicate and engage with our multicultural community to ensure that they are represented in the decisions that we make.

We will do this by working closely with our multicultural Community Connectors, our Accessible and Inclusive Communications Team, and via existing networks.

Older residents from multicultural communities

Council recognises that older (aged 65+) people from multicultural backgrounds, who make up 6.8% of the total population, are not always adequately represented in our community engagement activities. This is because they are often more isolated, and it takes them longer to acknowledge and access information.

We will find new and innovative ways to better communicate the opportunities. This includes creating different ways for older residents from multicultural communities to participate in ways that are inclusive, maximise their opinion, and don't rely on digital communication methods.

We will do this by working with our multicultural Community Connectors and by using our existing networks to help us connect into these communities.

We will specifically hold and promote in person engagement. We will distribute non-digital information to help with this engagement. We will also consider:

- Extending advertising of engagement in different languages to local multicultural papers.
- Extending timelines for engagement to maximise non-digital participation and allow for postage.
- Utilising existing Council relationships with older residents and groups through our Meals on Wheels service, home support, and support to senior groups and neighbourhood houses.
- Ensuring participation activities include translated content and easy ways to provide feedback, and in alignment with Council's Access and Inclusion Policy, where possible write to a grade 6 level in language translated content.
- Calendar of pop-up events regularly advertised in language and promoted to older residents.

Council will also biannually organise a program of engagement activities which align with existing events for this older cohort of people; for example, aligning with Seniors Week. This program will aim to raise visibility and access to the engagement activities scheduled for the next 6 months. This will include facilitating older residents from multicultural communities to contribute to current open engagement and register their interest in the program of engagement activities scheduled for the following 6 months.

This will guide upcoming proactive engagement by project managers. Council will enhance its distribution of Merri-bek Community News, ensuring in addition to delivering to households, customer service centres and libraries, also distributing copies to community multicultural clubs.

Additionally, we will organise a biannual visit of language trained council officers to all CALD seniors' groups registered with Council informing attendees of the seniors' group of council

information and consultation opportunities. At these biannual visits, Council Officers facilitate paper submission, feedback and/or voting, on matters currently open for feedback, submissions and voting on Conversations Merri-bek.

How we engage

This section applies only to non-statutory projects. For projects where community engagement is to be carried out in accordance with specific statutory requirements (e.g. town planning matters and other Statutory projects), how we engage will be informed and limited by those statutory requirements and timeframes.

- We will use different methods of engagement based on the IAP2 spectrum depending on the likely impact to the community; the level of risk, and the extent to which the community is able to influence the final outcome or decision.
- When a matter is controversial, we will aim to engage the community at a higher level on the IAP2 spectrum.
- Where projects are constrained by existing strategy or policy decisions or involve matters of a technical nature that limit the opportunity of the community to influence outcomes (e.g. technical engineering projects), we will engage the community at the level of 'consult' on the IAP2 spectrum.
- As a rule of thumb, for the vast majority of Council projects we will engage the community at the level of 'involve'. We will only engage at a lower level on the IAP2 spectrum (e.g. consult or inform) for projects where there are statutory requirements for the community engagement process, or for projects where there is limited opportunity for the community to influence outcomes.
- As a rule of thumb, where Council engages the community to prepare a document (e.g. policy or strategy) we will exhibit a draft of that document for a minimum of 15-business days.
- When engaging the community, we will aim to explain the level of engagement we are pursuing and the reasons why.
- Where Council officers engage the community at the level of 'consult' or 'inform', the reasons for this will be explained upon request.
- Community engagement pursued at the levels of 'empower' on the IAP2 spectrum will require prior Councillor approval.
- In some scenarios, we might engage different stakeholders in a project by applying different levels of engagement. For example, for some open space projects we might 'involve' our community but 'consult' State Government departments.
- If under any circumstances Council seeks to reduce the right of community members to participate in a decision-making process, it will explain the reasons for this, and provide evidence that includes regard to human rights.

We reserve the right to always be trialling better ways to engage our community and continuously improving what we do. During the lifetime of this policy we may pilot engaging the community at a higher level on the IAP2 spectrum than we have committed to in our policy. For example, while our policy says we commit to 'involving' our community to prepare policies that impact the community and that are to be adopted by Council, we might pilot deliberative engagement to prepare one of

our policy projects. This would mean that we would provide a higher level of engagement for the project than promised in our policy.

Community engagement on special projects

Community Vision and specific corporate plans

Council will engage the community at the level of 'collaborate' on the IAP2 spectrum to develop its Community Vision, 4-year Council Plan, long-term financial plan, and long-term asset plan. Development of these plans will include broad community engagement, complimented by a deliberative engagement process.

We will also exhibit these documents in draft form for public feedback for a minimum of 15-business days.

4-year Council Budget

Development of the 4-year Council Budget will primarily occur through community engagement carried out to develop the Council Plan. This is because the Council Budget is the vehicle to deliver the Council Plan.

Our engagement process will include methods for gathering information from the community to inform draft documents (e.g. by hosting community-based pop-ups). We will also exhibit any draft documents for public viewing and feedback for a minimum of 15-business days and give our community members the opportunity to have their views heard in relation to the budget process.

If it is necessary for the Council to carry out a revised budget process, we will engage the community at the level of 'consult' or 'involve' on the IAP2 spectrum. We will publish a notice advising our community of the objectives of the revised budgeting process, and how they can participate in the community engagement process. We will also exhibit any draft documents of the revised Budget for public viewing and feedback for a minimum of 15-business days.

Making of local laws

We will engage the community at the level of 'involve' on the IAP2 spectrum to prepare local laws.

Before making a local law, we will publish a notice setting out what the objectives of the proposed local law are, and what the intended effect of the new local law will be. We will also let the community know how they can view a copy of the proposed local law, and how they can participate in the community engagement process.

Our engagement process for these types of matters will include methods for gathering information from the community to inform draft documents (e.g. by hosting workshops or community engagement drop-in sessions). We will also exhibit any draft documents for public feedback for a minimum of 15-business days.

Policies to be presented to Council for adoption

We will engage the community at the level of 'involve' on the IAP2 spectrum to prepare policies that *impact the community*, and that are to be presented to Council for adoption.

Our engagement process for these types of projects will include methods for gathering information from the community to inform draft documents (e.g. by hosting workshops, or community engagement drop-in sessions). We will also exhibit any draft documents for public feedback for a minimum of 15-business days.

Where policies are prepared that apply to Merri-bek Council's internal operations, and/or that have no impact, or a negligible impact on the community; Council will not carry out any community engagement.

Selling, exchanging or leasing land

We will engage the community at the level of 'consult' or 'involve' on the IAP2 spectrum in relation to matters where Council seeks to sell, exchange or lease land. We will give notice to the community of any proposal to sell or exchange land, letting the community know how they can provide feedback to the proposal.

If we are intending to lease land for a year or more and the rent to be charged is $100,000 a year or more, or the market rental value is $100,000 a year or more, or if the proposed lease is for more than 10 years, we will include the proposed lease in the Council budget. If the proposal to lease comes up outside of the budget process, we will let the community know about the proposal, and advise how they can be involved in decision making.

If the proposed sale, or exchange or lease of land is with a public body, the crown or a minister, or with a public hospital or not for profit hospital, we may make the decision without seeking community views because these entities are committed to community benefit.

Statutory projects

For projects that are subject to statutory requirements for community engagement (e.g. projects where Section 223 of the Local Government Act 1989 applies), Council will engage the community in accordance with all statutory requirements.

Projects where more than one statutory process for community engagement applies

Where projects require more than one statutory process for community engagement, we will endeavour to make clear the scope of engagement at each stage; keep the community apprised when new information comes to light to support participation, and otherwise follow the statutory processes.

High to very high impact/risk projects

High to very high impact/risk projects are projects where the risk rating or community impact rating is determined to be high through an assessment. Council officers will apply risk rating and community impact rating tools to consider the rating of projects. Factors for consideration will include impacts on the local economy; area amenity, human rights and social equity, the size of the impacted area and population, long-term sustainability, strategic and sensitive land uses and more. Example projects could include major public space upgrades or major capital works projects.

For these types of projects, we will 'involve' or 'collaborate' with our community in decision making. Prior Branch Manager approval of engagement plans is required for all projects in this category.

Medium impact/risk projects

Medium impact/risk projects are projects where the risk rating or community impact rating is considered medium through an assessment. Council officers will apply risk rating and community impact rating tools to consider the rating of projects. Examples may include upgrades to a local park.

For these types of projects, we will 'involve' the community. Prior Unit Manager or Coordinator approval of engagement plans is required for all projects in this category.

Low impact/risk projects

Low impact/risk projects are projects where the risk rating or community impact rating is considered low through an assessment. Council officers will apply risk rating and community impact rating tools to consider the rating of projects. Example projects could include single tree installations or small-scale traffic treatments.

For these types of projects, we will 'consult or 'involve' our community.

Projects where there is no opportunity to influence decision making

Occasionally we may need to inform our community of a decision where there is no opportunity for community input. For example, projects where Council is not the decision maker. In these cases, we will keep our community informed with objective, relevant and timely information.

The table below provides examples of types of Council projects or decisions and the level of engagement that we will typically pursue for these.

Examples of Council projects or decisions and typical level of engagement

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
			• Long term Community Vision. • 4-year Council Plan • Long-term Financial plan. • Long-term Asset Management Plan.	
		High impact/ risk projects that may include: • Major public space upgrades. • Major capital works projects. • Precinct Structure Plans.		
		• Policies to be presented to Council for adoption. • 4-year Council budget. • Making of local laws Medium impact/ risk projects such as: • Upgrades to a local park. • Public art projects. • Larger scale transport projects e.g. new bike routes.		
	Statutory projects (e.g. Section 223 Hearing of Submissions process.) Low impact/risk projects such as: • Single tree installations. • Small-scale traffic treatments (e.g. speed humps).			
Projects where there is no opportunity for the community to influence Council decision making such as: • Projects where Council is not the decision-making authority.				

Engagement methods we use

Our methods of engagement make a big difference to who can participate and how we receive feedback from the community.

Occasionally our projects will apply different engagement methods at different stages. For example, we might collaborate with our community to gather ideas at an early stage of a design project, and then involve our community to finalise priorities and details.

Examples of the types of engagement methods we apply for different levels of engagement are shown in the table below.

Examples of types of engagement methods for different levels of engagement

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
• Information signage. • Inside Merri-bek publication. • Social media. • Conversations Merri-bek website updates. • Direct mail. • Information session with residents. • Signs in parks to reach informal park users.	• Surveys (E.g. Vox Pop, intercept survey, polling, online, phone, hard copy). • Ideas boards. • Online pin-dropping map tools. • Drop-in sessions (E.g. Listening post, festival stall, SpeakOut! Open House). • Walking tour or field trip. • Hearing of Submissions process.	• Stakeholder meetings. • Surveys. • Focus groups. • Workshops. • Online forums. • Drop-in community discussions. • Advisory Committees • Working groups • Community based pop-ups	• Partnership groups. • Steering groups. • Workshops. • Focus groups. • Deliberative budgeting • Citizens' assemblies	• Independently governed groups. • Citizens' assemblies/ juries. • Representative panels. • Mini publics.

Providing accessible information

We will provide participants in our community engagement processes with access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation.

We will do this by:

- Providing all important data or evidence relating to the matter, consultant reports and other strategic documents where this is appropriate.
- Supplying information in plain language and translated and accessible formats and summary documents where this is appropriate.
- Using a range of communication channels and accessible formats.
- Making information about our projects available on our Conversations Merri-bek digital engagement platform or provided in other formats as required.

Reporting to the community and Council on the outcomes of community engagement

Keeping in touch with our community

We will keep in touch with our community during our engagement processes and report back.

We will do this by:

- Reaching out to participants of the engagement process at the end to advise them of the outcome.
- Outlining how their participation influenced decision making.
- Where appropriate, providing participants with a short evaluation of our process so that we can improve our process for next time.
- Using different communication channels depending on who we are engaging, including the Conversations Merri-bek website and our print publications.
- Taking into consideration people with a disability and people with no access to social media or the internet.

Reporting to Council

When reporting to Council on the outcomes of a community engagement process, we will:

- Provide any key data, evidence, or reports about community engagement, including reports provided by consultants.
- Explain the purpose and scope of the community engagement that has been implemented.
- Outline the engagement methods used, the details of who participated, an overview of findings, and any recommendations.
- Provide reasons and evidence if the Council officer recommendation is contrary to the views of our community and stakeholders. The reasons for this should be explained in the Council report drawing on evidence as appropriate.
- Provide reasons for our decision making in reports to Council if a Council officer has made a decision that impacts the community under delegation.

The role of the Mayor in community engagement

The Mayor is the principal spokesperson for Council and may play an active and significant role in community engagement. The Mayor will lead engagement with the municipal community on the development of the Council Plan.

Each Mayor will determine what roles they will play in community engagement, including:

- Opening specific community engagement events and speaking to the importance of community engagement.
- Chairing groups or Committees established to oversee and/or progress Council activities relating to community engagement.
- Use of communications channels to host conversations, showcase community engagement activities or report back to the community on the outcomes of important community engagement processes of Council.
- Showing leadership by upholding the Community Engagement Principles and encouraging a high standard of community engagement practice and reporting.

Council's Community Engagement branch will assist the Mayor in determining the roles and actions they will take.

Protection of privacy in community engagement

When we consult, we may need to collect personal information to stay in touch with community members or to seek further information. We may also ask for consent to contact members of the community in relation to other matters.

If we do collect personal information we will act in accordance with our Information Privacy and Health Records Policy and the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*, by letting people know what we will use personal information for and protecting any information we collect. The Information Privacy and Health Records Policy is available on Council's website.

The Planning and Environment Act 1987 requires Council to make objections to planning permit applications and submissions to planning scheme amendments available for public viewing during the process. Council will do this in accordance with the requirements of this legislation and will inform objectors and submitters about this both on our website and when they lodge an objection or submission with us.

Community engagement and town planning

During the development of this policy our community made a specific request to include commitment in our policy to improve how we engage with our municipal community about town planning as well as projects about open space, transport, car parking and other city infrastructure. In particular, our community asked us to provide them with more plain language information, access to evidence to support any changes, and meaningful opportunities to provide input.

Community engagement on town planning is guided by the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. To engage with the community on planning scheme amendments or planning permits, the extent of Council engagement is limited by specific statutory process requirements with short legislative prescribed timeframes.

Due to these statutory requirements, Council will typically engage the community at the level of 'consult' on the IAP2 spectrum. However, wherever possible we will endeavour to provide a community engagement experience that goes beyond statutory requirements, while being conscious of responsibilities for timely decision-making and avoiding the need for any unnecessary VCAT reviews.

Our opportunity to engage with the community higher up the IAP2 spectrum is at the point in time when we are preparing strategies and gathering evidence which is intended to support a future planning scheme amendment or other policies. At this early stage, we can engage at the level of 'involve' on the IAP2 spectrum. During the lifetime of this policy, we will work to improve the standard of community engagement practice at the beginning and during the preparation of new strategies.

We will also focus on improving our approach to community engagement in town planning, open space, transport, car parking and city infrastructure, in particular, by improving our communications templates to provide plain language information.

Hearing of submissions processes

The Local Government Act 1989 requires Council to undertake community engagement in a particular way for some matters such as the drainage of land or road closures.

This community engagement process is provided for in Section 223 of that Local Government Act 1989 and requires that:

- Public notice is given about a proposal or intended decision; and
- Community members are invited to submit their views in writing; and

- Council must give anyone who seeks it, an opportunity to be 'heard' in support of their submission; and
- Council must consider all the submissions, and anything said in support of a written submission, before making a decision; and
- Council must let people who submit know, what was decided and why.

To hear from people in these situations, Council will establish a committee made up of Councillors.

A full list of matters where Council is required to carry out a Hearing of Submission process and the level of engagement we will provide is shown at Appendix 5. Appendix 5 also shows a list of Council matters that historically required a Hearing of Submissions process, but this requirement has been replaced by this policy, and the level of engagement we will provide for these matters.

Council may at times also be required by other legislation to carry out community engagement processes that are like the Section 223 Hearing of Submission process. For these processes we will carry out community engagement in accordance with all legislative requirements.

Notwithstanding any changes introduced by this policy, Council's Governance Rules preserve the ability of Council to establish a Hearing Committee for important matters to enable community members to address Councillors directly in a public forum. This will mean that for some processes, Council will decide that part of the engagement process will include a Hearing Committee where community members will be able to speak to a committee made up of only Councillors about that issue.

A summary of what the committee hears will be presented as part of the Council report that informs the final decision.

Resolution of complaints about community engagement

In circumstances where community members or stakeholders wish to raise concerns or make a complaint to Council about a specific community engagement process, or a deficiency of community engagement in decision making, they can contact Council by calling 03 9240 1111. Complaints about Community Engagement will be considered in line with Council's Complaint Handling Policy.

Community engagement and Council elections

Community engagement is an integral part of Council's policy development process and operations, however, community engagement undertaken close to a Council election may become an issue in itself or influence voting.

Community engagement on matters that are potentially controversial must conclude at least four weeks prior to the commencement of an election period.

During an election period:

- If community engagement must be undertaken or an event held, the Council must explain to the community the special circumstances making it necessary and how the risks of influencing the election will be mitigated or prevented.
- No community engagement under section 223 of the *Local Government Act 1989* will be conducted during this period.
- Only community engagement for the purposes of planning permit applications and operational issues such as canvassing residents' views on small-scale traffic treatments, installation of single trees and the like will be allowed as they are operational in nature and are unlikely to impact the conduct of an election.

- Any programs with a specific focus on building citizen enablement, or involvement in Council initiatives or decision making will cease during this time.
- No new Advisory Committees, steering groups, working groups/action groups, partnership groups or other groups involving community members will be established, or planned to be established during this time.
- No existing Advisory Committees will meet during this time.
- No meeting invitations, communication updates, or any correspondence in relation to past or future community engagement processes may be distributed at this time.
- No updates or changes to our digital engagement platform Conversations Merri-bek may be made at this time.
- Where controversial matters arise during this time, no correspondence or communications may be carried out with affected parties without the prior approval of the Chief Executive Officer.

Council's Election Period Policy, incorporated into the Governance Rules, provides more information about what we will and will not do during an election period in relation to community engagement.

Policy implementation, monitoring and reporting

A Community Engagement Implementation Plan will ensure the effective delivery of this policy. The Implementation Plan identifies Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), activities and timeframes required for the implementation of this policy.

Council commits to collaborating with our community including members of Advisory Committees to evaluate and review the overall effectiveness of this policy and Implementation Plan on an annual basis.

A progress report including the details of the evaluation of this policy and the Implementation Plan will be provided to Council each year.

Appendix 1: How this Policy was developed

Community engagement on this Policy occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown period of August 2020, which presented a mixture of constraints and opportunities for community engagement. The IAP2 level of engagement pursued to develop the policy was 'involve'. In this regard, Council sought to understand the concerns and aspirations of community members so that they could be incorporated into the policy to the maximum possible extent.

All conversations occurred either online or over the phone to accommodate physical distancing requirements. Community engagement included:

- Conversations online and over the phone with community members and groups, generating over 200 contributions.
- Online meetings with members of Merri-bek's Neighbourhood Houses.
- 3 X Online *Participation Matters Community Conversations* with community members
- Engagement with members of Merri-bek's Advisory Committees.
- Targeted conversations over the telephone and/or online with Aboriginal Elders, and representatives from the following groups in Merri-bek: CALD communities, older adults, young people, children, people with disability, the LGBTIQA+ community, affordable housing groups, environmental sustainability groups, students, and local businesses.
- Digital engagement, including a short community questionnaire and ideas board generating over 150 contributions.
- Detailed input from Council officers including our internal network of IAP2 trained community engagement champions.

This policy has also been informed by studies of Merri-bek's community profile, community attitudes, and levels of customer satisfaction, as well as strategic research into best practice approaches to community engagement in local government. Key documents influencing this policy include:

- Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) *Public Participation in Government Decision-making: Better Practice Guide* (January 2015).
- Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) *Public Participation and Community Engagement: Local Government Sector* (May 2017).
- Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) *Public Participation in Government Decision-Making* (May 2017)

What our community said about community engagement in Merri-bek

Community engagement sought to understand what local issues are important to our community; how people want to be involved in decision making, and what might encourage or prevent them from having a say. We also asked our community to provide advice about the guiding principles that should underpin this policy, and how, in general terms, Council should improve how it involves the community in its decisions.

An in-depth explanation about our community engagement process and feedback received is provided in the *Community Engagement Policy 2020 Outcomes of Community Engagement Report*.

A summary of community feedback received in the development of this policy is provided below.

The following were identified as hot topics by the community, and areas where Council should provide a higher standard of community engagement:

- Urban planning and development.

- Transport and car parking projects.
- City infrastructure capital projects.
- Racism and discrimination.
- Open space projects.

Community members suggested that Council should use a variety of channels to communicate about community engagement opportunities, including information in plain English and other languages. They identified the following channels as the most effective ways to communicate about upcoming engagement opportunities:

- Email.
- Social media.
- Direct mail.
- Council publications.
- Telephone.

Our community also suggested that Council should investigate establishing a local radio stream or newspaper that focusses specifically on local issues and how people can be involved.

Our community said that the Conversations Merri-bek website and our publication *Inside Merri-bek* are popular forums where they receive information and updates about community engagement.

Summary of what our community said about community engagement in Merri-bek:

- The Covid-19 pandemic has made us want to get active in reshaping our community. We want to work with Council to help Merri-bek rebuild and recover.
- Where engagement is to be undertaken, Council should use the IAP2 Spectrum of Engagement to make clear to the community what level of engagement is being pursued. Ideally, Council should establish systems of engagement that involve talking with a representative sample of the community.
- Council should partner with existing community networks and not-for-profit groups to engage Merri-bek's diverse community in more sophisticated ways and to reduce 'over-consultation'.
- Community engagement should be resourced. Projects that are higher impact should have greater resources allocated than other projects. It is encouraging to see that Council is investing in improving community engagement.
- Council's investment into community engagement and establishment of a new Public Participation team is applauded.
- Pilot participatory budgeting on Council's budget. Other Councils have done this.
- Maximise the use of Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality Technology, other innovative technologies and applications like Facebook and Tic Toc to make community engagement more interactive and fun, and to engage a wide community audience.
- Rather than overburdening the same members of the community with requests for engagement, Council should find more structured, coordinated ways to engage a more diverse range of people. For municipal wide projects with low to moderate levels of community impact, Council could apply market research approaches to engagement. Establish a pool of community members where you can draw samples of random participants to be involved in community engagement and pay people for their contribution.

- Council should focus on improving its engagement practice for matters of key interest to the Merri-bek community including car parking, city infrastructure and urban planning projects.
- Engage the community earlier and allow more time for community engagement. Planning for community engagement should happen 5-6 weeks in advance, and the community should have a minimum of 4 weeks of notice to participate.
- All Council Advisory Committees should include representation from Merri-bek's diverse community; and membership needs to be regularly refreshed so that new community members have an opportunity to contribute.
- Make greater use of Advisory Committees. Members on these groups should play a role in evaluating Council's community engagement practices.
- Amplify the voices of children and young people in public participation. Work with schools to engage young people in democracy and local decision making.
- Some residents suggested that Council should establish a youth advisory committee to inform Council decision making, however, young people asked for a more contemporary forum to be established for them to be involved in. Can Council investigate modernising Advisory Committees or making them more flexible to support participation of diverse communities?
- Improve how you engage with people who speak languages other than English.
- Council should modernise its approach to community engagement, providing more opportunities for community members to be engaged on issues in different locations around Merri-bek. Host expo style events where the community can come and see what's happening and talk with Council officers.
- Don't just go to the community with ideas, go to the community and ask them for their ideas. Or provide avenues for the community to submit suggestions and new initiatives. More community-led community engagement is needed.
- Improve engagement with older people and LGBTIQA+ communities.
- Do more to involve Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in community engagement.
- Involve local artists in community engagement processes to do things more creatively.
- Apply co-design methods to engage the local community in-depth on different matters that impact them.
- More place-based engagement – make it fun!
- Ensure that projects are implemented based on agreed outcomes and engage with the community during implementation, so they stay connected with changes happening in their area.

The findings of community engagement revealed that our community has thoughtful ideas and is willing to cooperate with Council to deliver quality outcomes on matters that impact and interest them. Our community wants us to establish creative, modernised systems of engagement that are time and cost effective and enable us to have in-depth, meaningful conversations with them. In particular they were keen for us to collaborate with key networks to maximise community engagement opportunities, and to improve how we engage with Traditional Owners, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, CALD groups, older people, LGBTIQA+ communities, young people and children.

Appendix 2: Principles for community engagement

The following policy principles were developed during community consultation in 2020 and give effect to the Local Government Act community engagement principles in Policy Principles section on page 7 of this document:

Meaningful: We aim to make the scope and objective of our community engagement processes clear, purposeful and meaningful. We aim to use plain language to explain why we are engaging, what we are engaging about, and how our community can influence decision-making.

Informative: Participants in our community engagement processes have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation.

Representative: We aim to ensure our community engagement processes involve all persons and groups affected by the matter that is the subject of the community engagement.

Inclusive: We welcome our diverse community into our public participation processes with respect. We provide reasonable support and adjustments to reduce participation barriers affecting different segments of our community.

Organised: Our community engagement processes are planned in advance, and we allow sufficient time for our community to be notified, and to participate in our processes. We work together as a team and partner with the municipal community to provide streamlined, efficient and convenient community engagement.

Listening and responsive: We listen and create space for conversations with our community at every stage of our work from early project inception to the final stages of project delivery. We report back to participants in community engagement when decisions are made.

Community strengthening: We enable and encourage our community to be informed, inspired and active in helping us shape the City of Merri-bek. We also work in partnership to advocate on behalf of the Merri-bek community.

Striving: We strive to systematically build the skill base and capability of Council officers to deliver meaningful community engagement practices that ensure quality outcomes. We use creative, advanced and original methods of engagement and we evaluate our practices to improve our approach. We strive to be a local government where community engagement excellence is built into our organisational DNA.

Appendix 3: Definitions

Term	Definition

Advisory Committee	The defining features of Advisory Committees are identified in Council's Governance Rules. In summary, Advisory Committees must:
	• be chaired by a nominated Councillor but can be attended by more than one Councillor.
	• have a Terms of Reference document that is adopted by Council.
	• operate for the term of Council (3-4 years).
	• have group agreements about:
	  ○ transparent recruitment of members.
	  ○ roles of members clearly stated in Terms of Reference.
	  ○ how to deal with conflicts of interest.
	  ○ how to deal with confidential matters.
	• report to Council about the outcomes of Committee discussions on an annual basis with reports including the details of any conflicts of interest.
	• advise Council in relation to local issues (e.g. transport) or community group issues (e.g. youth issues).
	• Make the following information available on Council's website:
	  ○ names of members
	  ○ key documents (Terms of Reference, Agendas and Meeting Minutes).

Advocacy	Public support for, or recommendation of a particular cause or policy.
Citizen Assembly/Citizen Jury	Usually convened for more complex, long term and high impact issues, where perspectives are likely to differ and/or where the issue is high impact on sections of the community. Can take different forms but best practice always involves: • a representative sample of the population or group who are impacted (see Representative panel). • a clear scope and remit that often asks for an agreed compromise of interests and outcomes, agreed priorities or consensus on a vision and direction. • provision of timely, objective and independently sourced/verified information. • sufficient time (often half day sessions spread across several weeks or months). • support to participate (including independent facilitation, reimbursement for time, hardships and expenses incurred and sometimes co-design of the process). • a commitment to participants on the level of influence their recommendation or decision holds (usually high).
Co-Design	A partnership with community to come to an agreed model or design of service delivery or public infrastructure.

	Can also refer to the co-design of the engagement process itself to ensure it is fully transparent and works for all parties.
Community	The word 'community' includes individuals and groups of people; stakeholders, interest groups, organisations and citizen groups. A community may be a geographic location (e.g. Fawkner), a community of similar interest (e.g. community of practice), or a community of affiliation or identity (e.g. industry or sporting groups).
Community engagement	Refers to involving communities in decisions that impact or interest them.
Community engagement approach	The design/plan that ensures appropriate timing, resources, tools and methods according to a considered analysis of those affected, impacted or interested and the scope and remit of any engagement project.
Community engagement methods	Refers to the many types of engagement that can be employed such as online or in person, public meetings and community panels, surveys, ideas boards, public competitions or deliberative budgeting for example.
Consultation	The process of obtaining public feedback on analysis, alternatives or decisions. Also refers to the second level of the IAP2 Spectrum 'consult' where opportunities to influence decision making are somewhat limited.
Controversial engagement matter	A dispute, debate, or state of contention, especially one that unfolds in public and involves differences of opinion.
Deliverable	Refers to an output of a project (such as a document).
Deliberative engagement	Means providing our community with sufficient time and information to enable their critical reasoning, and consideration of options as part of a decision-making process.
Document	Means a piece of written, printed, or electronic material that provides information or evidence or that serves as an official record. Can take the form of schematic drawings, maps, photos, or illustrative diagrams.
Equitable benefits	The fair and impartial distribution of social opportunities, resources, privileges or other advantages.
Exhibit (also refers to public exhibition)	Means making a document available for public viewing and feedback by any means possible, including on the internet.
Governance	The activities and processes of making and implementing decisions.
High to very high impact/risk projects	High to very high impact/risk projects refer to projects where the risk rating or community impact rating is considered high or very high. Examples may include major public space upgrades.
IAP2	The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) is an international organisation advancing the practice of public participation.
Long-term plan	A plan that requires ten years or more for implementation.
Low impact/low risk projects	Low impact/risk projects refer to projects where the risk rating or community impact rating is considered low. Examples include single tree installations or small-scale traffic treatments.

Medium impact/risk projects	Medium impact/risk projects refer to projects where the risk rating or community impact rating is considered medium. Examples include upgrades to a local park.
Mini public	A small representative panel (15-30 participants) that provides advice on niche decisions impacting particular groups of the Merri-bek community. The groups require appropriate support, time and information.
Monitoring and evaluation	The process of monitoring, evaluation and reporting against indicators of success. Review of community engagement approaches includes monitoring and measurement of indicators of both overall success of engagement as well as breadth of outreach.
Non-statutory projects	For the purposes of this policy, Non-statutory projects refer to projects that, prior to the adoption of a Community Engagement Policy under the Local Government Act, are not subject to any statutory requirements for community engagement. An example includes preparing a Community Safety Policy as there are no statutory requirements for community engagement on Community Safety Policies.
Partnership group	A group comprising Council officers and external stakeholders aimed at delivering a complex project that requires collaboration to achieve outcomes. This group may be facilitated by a Council Executive or Manager or facilitated or co-facilitated by a senior external stakeholder group. This group will typically disband once the complex project has been delivered or progressed to agreed outcomes.
Plain language	Plain language is writing designed to ensure the reader to understand a matter as quickly, easily, and completely as possible. Plain language strives to be easy to read, understand, and use. It avoids verbose, convoluted language and jargon.
Plan	A plan outlines a detailed future course of action for Council aimed at achieving specific goals or objectives within a specific timeframe. A plan should identify roles and responsibilities along with resources that are required.
Policy	A policy sets out Council's views with respect to a particular matter. It includes a set of principles or rules that provide a definite direction for the organisation.
Public participation	Means community engagement.
Publish	Publish by any means necessary including publication on the internet.
Reasonable support/adjustments	Refers to taking reasonable steps or the reasonable allocation of resources to remove barriers to participation for specific community members.
Representative panel	A community representative panel can be used to deliver a range of engagement types from world cafés, in person and/or online advisory groups through to complex deliberative processes. Larger panels (50-60 participants) can provide a representative sample of the population (to acceptable industry standards) of Merri-bek and can be appropriate for whole of Merri-bek decisions with wide reaching impact.

	Smaller panels (15-30 participants) sometimes known as Mini Publics, can provide representative samples for niche decisions impacting particular groups of the Merri-bek community but still require appropriate support, time and information.
Significant	Means important, as determined by Merri-bek Council's organisation.
Special projects	For the purposes of this policy, Special projects are projects where the Local Government Act 2020 requires that a new community engagement process should be specified in the Community Engagement Policy to replace previous legislative processes that have been repealed for these projects. An example of a Special project is the 4-year Council Budget. In the Local Government Act 1989, community engagement on the 4-year Council Budget comprised a Hearing of Submissions process under Section 223 of the Act. This Section 223 process has been repealed and is replaced by this Community Engagement Policy.
Statutory projects	For the purposes of this policy, Statutory projects refer to projects that are subject to statutory requirements for community engagement specified in legislation other than the Local Government Act. An example of a statutory project is a Planning Scheme Amendments, because the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* provides the statutory process for community engagement for Planning Scheme Amendments.
Stakeholder	An individual, group or organisation with a strong interest in the decisions of Council and are directly impacted by their outcomes.
Steering / Reference Group	A group that oversees the planning and development of a project and makes decisions aimed at progressing the project to agreed objectives and timeframes. These groups typically do not include representation by Councillors but may comprise representation by Council officers and community stakeholders. These groups are typically facilitated by a senior staff member such as a Council Director or Manager. Steering Groups can meet in flexible formats such as workshops, site visits and community conferences, and reporting back to Council occurs as part of annual portfolio reporting.
Strategy	A strategy provides high level holistic directions for Council designed to bring about a desired future, such as achievement of one or more goals or outcomes.
Tactical urbanism	Tactical urbanism includes low-cost, temporary changes to the built environment, intended to improve local neighbourhoods and gathering places. Tactical urbanism is also commonly referred to as guerrilla urbanism, pop-up urbanism, city repair, or D.I.Y. urbanism.
Working group	A group that works collaboratively to deliver a specific project or initiative (e.g. a plan or strategy) to agree timeframes and budgets, and disbands once the project, initiative or agreed to actions have been delivered. The group typically comprises Council officers but may include external stakeholder representatives. These groups typically do not include representation by Councillors. Working Groups can meet in flexible formats such as workshops, site visits and community conferences, and reporting back to Council occurs as part of annual portfolio reporting.

Appendix 4: Legislative context

Legislative documents that relate to this Community Engagement Policy include but are not limited to the following:

- Local Government Act 2020
- Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations Schedule 1 Governance and Management Checklist
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- Planning and Environment Act 1987.
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992.
- Public Administration Act 2004.
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010.
- Child Safety Act 2015.
- Victorian Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014.
- Geographic Place Names Act 1998.

Appendix 5: Levels of engagement for specific matters

Matters of Council that continue to require a Hearing of Submissions process under Section 223 of the Local Government Act 1989

Matter of Council	Level of Engagement that we will typically provide for these matters
Change of systems of valuation.	Consult or Involve
Declaration of a special rate or special charge.	Consult or Involve
Variation of a special rate or special charge.	Consult or Involve
Rates rebate.	Consult or Involve
Concentration or diversion of drainage	Consult or Involve
Drainage of land.	Consult or Involve
Powers over roads and traffic.	Consult or Involve

Matters of Council where a Hearing of Submissions process was historically required but this has now been replaced by this policy (also known as Special Projects)

Matter of Council	Level of Engagement that we will typically provide for these matters
Procedure for making a local law.	Involve
Council Plan.	Collaborate
4-year Council Budget.	Consult or Involve
Sale or exchange of land.	Consult or Involve
Lease of land.	Consult or Involve
Use of land for another purpose.	Consult or Involve