Community Engagement Policy

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Lead Reviewer:	Manager, Communications, Strategy and Engagement
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Legislation:	*Local Government Act 1999*
Related Documents:	*Local Government Act 1999 (s50 and 50A)* *Minister for Local Government's Community Engagement Charter* *Local Government (Elections) Act 1999 (s13A)* *Freedom of Information Act 1991* *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* City of Prospect Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2026-2030 City of Prospect Code of Practice for Access to Meetings and Documents City of Prospect Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy City of Prospect Petition Policy City of Prospect Internal Review of Council Decisions Policy City of Prospect Protection of Information Policy City of Prospect Information Statement Community Engagement Guidelines

1. Introduction

Council is committed to open, accountable and responsive decision-making that is informed by effective communication and engagement with the community and relevant stakeholders.

Community engagement supports better decision-making by providing opportunities for people who may be affected by, or are interested in, Council decisions, activities or processes to access information, share local knowledge and provide feedback.

Council recognises that effective community engagement should be proportionate to the nature, scale, complexity and likely impact of the matter being considered, and should be planned and delivered in a way that is accessible, inclusive and transparent.

This policy fulfils Council's statutory obligations under sections 50 and 50A of the Local Government Act 1999 (the Act), aligns with the Minister for Local Government's Community Engagement Charter (the Charter), and reflects best practice engagement principles. It outlines when Council must consult with the community under the law and when Council may choose to undertake additional community engagement to inform decision-making.

2. Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to:

- ensure Council meets its legislative obligations for community engagement;
- provide clear, consistent and transparent engagement practices;
- support informed decision-making through community input; and
- ensure engagement is appropriate to the level of impact.

This policy represents Council's general position in relation to community engagement and does not create enforceable rights beyond those provided under the Act.

3. Scope:

This policy applies to:

- All decisions, activities, and processes requiring community engagement under the Act, the Charter, or this policy.
- Elected Members, Council staff, contractors, facilitators, agents, and consultants acting on behalf of Council or under delegated authority. (Note: A reference to Council includes any delegate or person exercising powers on behalf of Council under the Act).
- Council-initiated community engagement – where community engagement is desirable but not legislatively required, this policy provides the overarching engagement categories and principles, while Council's Community Engagement Guidelines provide operational guidance.

This policy does not apply to:

- Decisions or processes where community engagement is governed by other specific legislation (e.g., the Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016), where other legislative requirements take precedence.
- Works or activities undertaken on Council land by external statutory authorities (e.g., SA Water, Department for Infrastructure and Transport).

4. Definitions:

Act	The Local Government Act (1999) (SA).
Charter	Community Engagement Charter (2025) pursuant to Section 50 of the Act.
Community	The people who live, work, study, own property, conduct private or government business, visit or use the services, facilities and public spaces and places within the City of Prospect area. A community may also be a geographic location (community of place), a community of similar interest (community of interest), or a community of affiliation or identify (such as an industry or sporting club).
Community Engagement	Processes used to inform, seek feedback from, and engage, with the community to inform decision-making.
Council	The elected body of Council established under the Act, or the council administration acting under delegated authority.
Decision Maker	Council, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or staff acting under delegated authority in relation to a specific project, proposal, service or issue.
Council-initiated Community Engagement	Engagement that is not required under any act of legislation or under the mandatory parts of this policy. See Council-initiated Community Engagement (Section 5.4).
Submissions	Contributions, feedback or opinions received from the community and stakeholders within the appropriate community consultation period, submitted through designated, formal channels (including but not limited to written correspondence, digital surveys, and online feedback forms) to be considered in Council's decision-making.

5. Policy

5.1 Principles

Council adopts the principles of the Charter, including:

- Providing reasonable, timely, meaningful and ongoing opportunities for community members to gain access to information and participate in Council's decision-making processes;
- Ensuring information is provided in plain language, readily accessible and in a form that supports community participation;
- Engagement methods that are appropriate to the significance and impact of the decision, activity or process;
- Encouraging constructive dialogue and participation in community engagement processes; and
- Providing information about how community feedback has been considered and the reasons for Council decisions, where reasonable.

- Designing community engagement processes that include information in accessible formats and are inclusive, actively considering and mitigating barriers to participation related to language, culture, age or disability.

5.2 Policy Statement

- Council will comply with, and follow this policy, when undertaking community engagement required under the Act and the Charter.
- Legislative requirements take precedence over this policy where inconsistencies arise.
- Community feedback is an important input into Council's decision-making processes. It will be considered alongside other relevant factors, including legislative requirements, Council strategies and policies, financial and resource implications, technical/expert advice, risk considerations and the broader public interest.
- Community engagement outputs do not replace the decision-making responsibilities of Council, the Chief Executive Officer or a delegate.

5.3 Engagement Categories

Council adopts the Charter categories and relevant legislative matters (related to the Act) as summarised in the table below and detailed in Appendix 1:

Category	Description	Act reference
Significant – Annual Business Plan and Rating Policy	Decisions related to Council's adoption of its annual business plan or proposed changes to the basis of Council rates.	• Council's Annual Business Plan (section 123) • Changing or amending council's rating policy (section 151)
Significant	Decisions that Council makes that have a significant impact on most or all ratepayers and residents, or the wider community or area.	• Representation reviews (section 12) • Considering a change of status of council or name change (section 13) • Strategic Management Plans (section 122) • Differential rating and special adjustments (section 156) • Revocation of classification of land as community land (sections 193 and 194) • Community Land Management Plans - adoption (section 197) • Community Land Management Plans – significant amendments (section 198) • Alienation of community land by lease or license (section 202) • Passing/Making by-laws (section 249)
Standard	Decisions that Council makes that benefit from community input across the council area.	• Substantial changes to the opening hours and place of council's principal office (section 45) • Community Engagement Policy (section 50A) • Council behaviour support policies (section 75F) • Access to meetings and documents (section 92) • Power to make orders (section 259)

Local	Decisions that impact an identifiable smaller group of residents / ratepayers or a local area.	• Council is proposing a permit or authorisation for alteration of a road or use of a road for business purposes – for more than 48 hours (with a detour in place) or where no detour will be available (section 223) • Consultation on proposed planting of vegetation on a road – significant impact (section 232)
Inform	Matters where Council provide information to a community impacted by a decision.	• Minor changes to opening hours and place of council's principal office (section 45) • Council is proposing a permit or authorisation for alteration of a road or use of roads for business purposes - for less than 48 hours and the council ensures that a detour is in place (section 223) • Election information (Section 13A of the Local Government (Elections) Act 1999)

5.4 Council-initiated Community Engagement

Council may undertake community engagement for decisions, strategies, activities, policies or processes where there is no statutory requirement to do so, and particularly in instances where the Council, the Chief Executive Officer or staff acting under delegated authority considers that community engagement would support informed decision-making, transparency or community understanding.

In determining whether Council-initiated community engagement is appropriate, consideration should be given to the nature, scale, complexity, cost, level of community interest and likely impact of the specific matter, and aligning the project/initiative to a specific engagement category based on the definitions above (i.e. Significant/Standard/Local/Inform).

Council-initiated community engagement will align consultation periods and methodologies based on the deemed engagement category described in this policy.

Nothing in this policy requires Council to undertake Council-initiated community engagement beyond the requirements of the Act, the Charter, this Policy or any other applicable legislation.

Decisions about the scope and method of Council-initiated community engagement will be made by the Chief Executive Officer or delegate, and informed by Council's governance frameworks and procedures.

Council's Community Engagement Guidelines provide operational guidance for implementation of Council-initiated community engagement.

5.5 Charter Engagement Requirements

Council adopts the minimum engagement requirements as per the Charter. Refer to Appendix 1.

5.6 Engagement Approach and Consultation Periods

- Council will adopt consultation periods as per the Act and more specifically as specified in Appendix 1.

- Council may, in its absolute discretion, undertake additional community engagement beyond the minimum requirements and timeframes.
- Council will generally seek to avoid scheduling consultation periods across the end-of-year holiday and summer school holiday period (mid-December to late January) where practicable.
- Council is not required to determine whether additional community engagement steps are necessary prior to making a decision.
- A community engagement process that does not generate the anticipated desired level of participation does not constitute a breach of this policy.
- Community engagement is designed to inform decision-making, rather than act as a direct voting mechanism. Community feedback will be considered alongside other critical inputs to support balanced, evidence-based decisions.
- Expressing dissatisfaction with a final decision or vote reached by Council does not indicate that a community engagement process was unsuccessful. However, complaints regarding the operational conduct or procedure of a community engagement activity will be managed in accordance with Council's Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy.
- Personal information collected as part of community engagement processes will be managed in accordance with Council's Protection of Information Policy. Summary reports presented to Council or published publicly will de-identify individual respondents, unless explicit consent or legislative requirements dictate otherwise.
- Petitions received during a community engagement process will be presented to Council in accordance with Council's Petitions Policy.
- When Council is impacted by force majeure or public health directives that prohibit face to face engagement methodologies, the CEO will have delegation to shift public meetings etc to online-only engagement platforms.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsible for
Council	• the preparation and adoption of a policy relating to community engagement for the purposes of the Act; • for matters where the Act requires community engagement as a precondition to a Council decision, Council retains responsibility for being satisfied that those requirements have been met; • supporting the promotion of engagement opportunities and encouraging community members to actively participate in council's decision-making processes; and • considering community feedback as one of several key inputs when making final decisions.
Chief Executive Officer	• implementing and ensuring compliance with this policy; • determining appropriate engagement processes; and • reporting engagement outcomes to Council (when required by this policy).

Council Staff and Other Delegates	• applying this policy in undertaking community engagement; and • ensuring engagement complies with legislative requirements.
Community members	• contributing and participating in the engagement process when relevant; • participating in engagement opportunities in ways that suit their needs, noting that community views are one of several influences considered in Council's decision making; • providing local knowledge and lived experience relevant to Council's decision-making process; • sharing local insights, experiences, stories and perspectives to support shared understanding; and • providing feedback, ideas, support or sentiment to inform Council's consideration of options, impacts and potential outcomes.

7. Review

The Policy will be reviewed **once** per Council term or as required by legislation.

8. Further Information

For further information about this policy please contact:

Director City Strategy, Community and Culture
City of Prospect
128 Prospect Road
Prospect SA 5082

Ph 8269 5355
Email admin@prospect.sa.gov.au

Appendix 1: Community Engagement Requirements

The table below outlines how Council will meet the requirements of the Charter.

Charter requirement	Mandatory minimum actions to achieve Charter requirements	Charter category					City of Prospect engagement activities
		Significant – Annual Business Plan and Rating Policy	Significant	Standard	Local	Inform	
Website	Public information about the matter that can be easily found on a Council website	X	X	X	X	X	• Information published on a Council website.
News publication	Publish information about the matter in a local news publication (print where available, but otherwise digital) that circulates in the Council area and is not produced by the Council.	X	X				• Information published in a print or digital newspaper, community newsletter or other (non-council) publication circulating within the council area.
Consult with the whole Council area	Consider appropriate forms of notifications to the Council area. Consider whether additional information or notification should be made available to the community to bring their attention to the matter and to support participation.	X	X	X			• Information published on a social media platform maintained by Council. • Information available at Council's main office.
Invite submissions	Provide information about how the community can make a submission, including timeframe.	X	X				• Engagement material provides information about how the community can make a submission.
Explain decision making process	In material prepared explain what the Council proposes to do, why it proposes to do it, and what it seeks to achieve. Explain how community feedback will inform the Council's decision.	X	X				• Engagement material will explain what Council proposes to do, why it proposes to do it and what it seeks to achieve. • Information published on a Council website will explain that feedback received will be considered by the Council before making a decision.

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Charter requirement	Mandatory minimum actions to achieve Charter requirements	Charter category					City of Prospect engagement activities
		Significant – Annual Business Plan and Rating Policy	Significant	Standard	Local	Inform	

Seek and consider feedback from the community - significant matters	Consider how best to invite feedback from the community.
	Provide a minimum community engagement period of 21 days to enable the community to provide feedback.
	Include a summary of community engagement feedback to the Council ahead of the decision.
		X	X				• Feedback will be invited by:
							  • Written submissions.
							  • Completion of a survey or feedback form.
							  • Attendance at a standard, scheduled Council meeting, public meeting, workshop, community forum or other appropriate in-person opportunity.
							• Minimum community engagement period of 28 calendar days.
							• A summary of community engagement feedback will be considered by Council ahead of decision.

Public Meeting	Hold a public meeting where the community is invited to provide submissions (written or verbal) on the matter. The public meeting may be part of a Council meeting or a separate event.	X					• Hold a public meeting (which includes a standard, scheduled Council meeting) to receive submissions on the matter.
Council meeting invitation	Invite people who have made a written submission to attend a Council meeting to speak to their submission before the decision is made.		X				• Invite community members who made written submissions to attend a Council meeting and speak to their submissions before a decision is made.

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Charter requirement	Mandatory minimum actions to achieve Charter requirements	Charter category					City of Prospect engagement activities
		Significant – Annual Business Plan and Rating Policy	Significant	Standard	Local	Inform	

Seek and consider feedback from the community	Consider how best to invite feedback from the community.
	Provide information about how community feedback will inform the Council's decision.
	Ensure an appropriate period of time is provided to enable communities to provide feedback.
				X	X		• Feedback will be invited by:
							  • Written submissions.
							  • Completion of a survey or feedback form.
							• Minimum community engagement period 21 calendar days.
							• Submissions will be considered by a person with delegated authority to make the proposed decisions or undertake the proposed activity or process.
							• Report presented to Council for consideration.

Consult with local community	Consider appropriate forms of notifications to the area within the Council affected by the Council decision or action. Consider whether additional information or notification should be made available to the local community to bring their attention to the matter and to support participation.				X		Consider information to be: • Published on a social media platform maintained by Council. • Published in targeted letters or leaflet drops for affected residents. • Made available at Council's main office, libraries and/or relevant community centres within the Council area.
Information to the whole Council area	Provide information to the whole of the Council's community if it may be directly affected by the Council decision or action.					X	• Information published on a social media platform maintained by Council. • Information made available at Council's main office.

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Charter requirement	Mandatory minimum actions to achieve Charter requirements	Charter category					City of Prospect engagement activities
		Significant – Annual Business Plan and Rating Policy	Significant	Standard	Local	Inform	
Information to local community	Provide information to the local community that may be directly affected by the Council decision or action.					X	• Information published on a social media platform maintained by Council. • Information made available at Council's main office, libraries and/or relevant community centres within the Council area.