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1. Introduction - What is community engagement?

Melton City Council recognises that community engagement and participation processes are a vital part of local democracy. Effective engagement is good business practice and is critical to good governance. For this reason, Council is committed to engaging with our community using best practice principles.

Community Engagement in this document refers to all primary data collection occurring within, or in relation to, the community. It does not refer to social research of a secondary nature (from existing external data sources such as the census). Community engagement must be a purposeful process where the community are given the opportunity to provide input that supports decision making processes.

As an outer urban City that is experiencing rapid and unprecedented population growth, engagement is particularly important in ensuring an informed and connected community. With this rapid growth, there are unique opportunities for early engagement with new communities to assist in developing community capacity and cohesion, in addition to considering the different needs of existing communities.

Our community seeks greater awareness and input into decisions affecting their lives. Melton City Council's development and implementation of inclusive communication and engagement approaches through clear Guidelines will support the building of trust in Council's proactive response to our community's issues.

Engagement initiatives provide an opportunity to better understand the preferences, concerns and expectations of our communities, and their perspectives on emerging and existing issues. Community engagement is a process to assist Council in making decisions. It is not an outcome or a solution. It is a way to learn and provide an evidence base to enable better decision making.

The process of community engagement strengthens local democracy by providing opportunity for the community to have their voices heard. It builds positive relationships, creates connections, and also the capacity of our community to help form their own opinions and solutions in their own lives.

Melton City Council has created a Community Engagement Framework, consisting of:

- Community Engagement Policy
- Community Engagement Guidelines (this document)
- Community Engagement Toolkit

This Framework assists Council and its officers to implement:

- **Successful Community Engagement/s**, which provide Council with an opportunity to strengthen its connection with the community, and ensures decisions are informed by community needs and aspirations.

- **Meaningful Community Engagement**, through quality processes that seek to achieve a planned intent to gain representative community view, which is not limited to the views of a vocal minority.

Implementing this Framework will support development of positive community leadership and local confidence by having our community’s views considered and acknowledged, and involved in issues which may impact upon their lives, through fostering a solutions-focused proactive approach.
2. Purpose of the Framework

This Framework outlines Council's approach to community engagement. It provides structure and guidance for Council's whole-of-organisational commitment to high quality, consistent and well evaluated community engagement processes that contribute to Council decision making.

Specifically, the Framework:

- Establishes consistent, coordinated and transparent processes for Council's community engagement activity;
- Assists with the effective and efficient use of Council resources to ensure a balanced and targeted approach to community contact, avoiding over consulting and effort duplication;
- Considers the various needs and forms of engagement required for different categories of our community, including diverse demographic groupings and the distinct needs of new and existing communities;
- Ensures processes are implemented by Councillors, staff and employed contractors and consultants;
- Ensures relevant decision making takes into account the outcomes gained from engagement processes; and
- Ensures our community (where appropriate) is kept informed of decisions stemming from Community Engagement.
3. Community Engagement Context Considerations

This Framework applies to all facets of Council operations, including day-to-day service activities.

Council maintains a community engagement policy that defines the principles underpinning Council’s engagement activities, the role of Councillors, Council staff and consultants responsible for engaging with the community on behalf of the City of Melton, and the methods that Council will use to engage the community.

These Guidelines are supported by the Melton City Council Community Engagement Toolkit, which provides guidance and direction to the overall planning of Council engagement activities, including data collection and use.

Melton City Council draws upon the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) as a useful resource for planning and implementing stakeholder and community engagement. IAP2 has developed a model of stakeholder and community engagement that promotes the values and leading practices associated with involving the public in decisions that impact their lives.

For more on the IAP2, visit [http://www.iap2.org.au/](http://www.iap2.org.au/)

3.1 Statutory requirements

Consultation and engagement requirements for Local Government are outlined within a number of legislative acts in Victoria. Specifically, the Local Government Act 1989 outlines Council’s role to:

- act as a representative government and considers community needs when making its decisions.
- advocate local community interests to other communities and governments.
- be a responsible partner in government, taking the needs of other communities into account.
- Foster community cohesion and encourages participation in civic life.

Further, the Local Government Act 1989 requires Councils to develop a program of regular consultation with its community in relation to the services it provides by which Council must be responsive to the needs of its community.

In addition to the Local Government Act, community engagement is required under the following legislation:

- Planning and Environment Act 1987
- Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008
- Road Management Act 2004
- Victorian Disability Act 2006

The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 provide further requirements that relate to community engagement by stating “every person in Victoria has the right, and is to have the opportunity, without discrimination, to participate in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives.”
3.2 Ensuring alignment - the Integrated Planning Framework

Melton City Council operates within a strategic and integrated approach for the planning and delivery of services to meet the current and future needs of the community.

Integrated planning aims to ensure that we remain adaptive, responsive and viable. This is aided by understanding the external environment and our community’s needs and aspirations, which enables path setting within our resource capability; and allowing Council to make informed decisions on behalf of our community.

The City’s Integrated Planning Framework is the approach of research and community engagement to set a strategic direction, which reflects where the City has come from, where it is going and how it will get there:
4. How the Framework works

Melton City Council’s approach to community engagement is based on the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum of engagement activities, adapted as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inform</td>
<td>Provide the community with balanced and objective information, to assist them in understanding the issue, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consult</td>
<td>Obtain community feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involve</td>
<td>Work directly with the community throughout the process to ensure that community concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborate</td>
<td>Partner with the community in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empower</td>
<td>Providing opportunities and resources for communities to contribute to solutions by valuing local talents and skills and acknowledging their capacity to be decision makers in their own lives.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The diagram below articulates the suite of three (3) documents that are interrelated and should be reviewed in context of each other, in providing direction and support with regard to community engagement:

- **Community Engagement Policy**: Establishes the public commitment of Council's position, investment in and direction with meaningful community engagement.
- **Community Engagement Guidelines**: Provides the context and structure of Council's engagement including detail on the associated resources, supports structures and tools to deliver successful processes.
- **Community Engagement Toolkit**: A step by step tool that provides instructional guidance for engagement planning, delivery and evaluation.
5. Council’s Engagement Principles and Objectives

The following principles underpin Council’s approach to community engagement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeliness</th>
<th>Council will seek early purposeful engagement and to regularly involve the community in ways that are timely, open, easily understood as genuine opportunities for the community to influence a decision.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consideration and feedback</td>
<td>Council will inform its communities on issues and provide feedback as to how its input has been used in inform Council decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>All options are valued and considered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous improvement</td>
<td>Council is committed to learning from each engagement experience to improve its approach to engagement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following highlight Council’s Objectives for community engagement:

- The Melton City community is well informed about issues, strategies or plans that may directly or indirectly affect them.
- Council meets its legislative requirements regarding community engagement in all areas of its service delivery.
- Community engagement is clearly linked to the goals and objectives of the 2013-17 Council Plan.
- Improvement of civic governance through assisting elected representatives and officers to understand, and be informed by, the views of Melton City communities when making decisions on their behalf.
- Improved decision-making, by ensuring decisions are soundly based on evidence of informed community opinion and take account of the views and experiences of those affected by them.
- Increased level of community ownership and acceptance of decisions affecting the Local Government Area (LGA).
- Feedback is provided to the community regarding the effects of their input on Council’s decision-making.
- Appropriate tools and techniques are used in a programmed approach of annual consultation with periodic activities to plan, carry out and evaluate community engagement.
6. Our Community Engagement Roles

Community Engagement can take many forms, including face to face and remote, each of which can involve written, verbal or other forms of communication. Council staff, consultants and Councillors who attend or facilitate community engagement sessions are there to provide contextual information, listen and support the community in providing their input.

As a general rule, Council representatives and officers should avoid becoming participants in the collection of raw community views or express either their professional or personal opinions, as this may influence or bias community input. This extends also to remote and written community engagement, as care must be taken in framing written and online engagement to ensure it is not biasing a particular direction. Council staff involved in community engagement can receive training to ensure they understand the responsibilities and requirements of accurate data collection and documentation.
6.1 Welcome to Country and Respect for Traditional Owners

Officers should give consideration to the role of Councillors hosting and/or introducing forums. Similarly, thought should be given to acknowledgment of traditional land owners and/or Welcome to Country ceremonies.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are the oldest continuing cultures in our living history. Council understands its role in the reconciliation process where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Australians, who live and work here, belong to a continuing, strong and growing culture. As part of Council’s commitment to recognising the significance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and aligned with Council’s Reconciliation Policy, consideration should be given to providing acknowledgement to the traditional custodians of the land in which the community engagement activity is being held.

In most cases the following acknowledgement is sufficient at the commencement of community engagement activities:

“Melton City Council acknowledges that the land it now occupies has a history that began with the Indigenous occupants, the Kulin Nation.

Council pays its respects to the Kulin Nation people and their Elders and descendants past and present.”

If it is known that there are other Aboriginal community elders present, the following should also be included in the acknowledgement:

“Council extends this respect to the Elders of other Aboriginal groups here today.”

If the community engagement activity is of a significant nature or where dignitaries such as Councillors, Members of Parliament or Traditional Owners are attending, a more formal acknowledgement through arranging a formal a Welcome to Country ceremony with the consent of the Traditional Owners should be arranged. Note that Welcome to Country ceremonies often incur a fee.

Welcome to Country ceremonies are a custom of great importance to Aboriginal people across Australia and must be organised through the appropriate channels. If you require assistance with the acknowledgement or would like to arrange a Welcome to Country, please contact Council’s Community Capacity Team.
6.2 Investing in Skills and Innovative Engagement Processes

Council will continue to build the capacity and best performance of the organisation to deliver community engagement, by providing staff with the appropriate skills and information to plan for, manage and facilitate engagement activities.

Organisational leadership will embed community consultation and engagement principles within our staff induction and training processes, to continuously build core competencies in community engagement, knowledge and capability.

Our Community Engagement Toolkit assists staff in managing and facilitating community engagement activities and include a series of engagement methods, templates, checklists and other additional useful resources.

Council will continue to encourage innovation and creativity of its officers in engagement methodologies, to ensure broad and accessible community access to influencing Council decision making, particularly with use of interactive web-based technologies.
7. Why Engage – Planning & Purpose for Community Engagements

Planning is the key to any successful engagement. Careful deliberation of the issue and or reason for engagement needs to be considered prior to commencement, including the:

- Purpose of the process and objective/s of engagement;
- Identification of the stakeholders / participants involved;
- The nature of the issue (single issue or multifaceted that is linked to other projects);
- Suitability of the level of engagement; and
- Appropriateness of the method/s of engagement.
- Available timeframes (urgent versus long term) and resources available for engagement.

Council’s Community Engagement Framework supports flexible approaches to consultation, as it appreciates that ‘one size does not fit all’. Each engagement should be appropriate to the specific situation.

It is essential to ensure that engagements are meaningful to participants and make best use of Council resources and time, with a clear objective and use of the proposed data to be collected. There are typically three predominant Engagement Drivers:

i. **Key Strategic and Policy Issues**

   Engagement would relate to broader aspects of the City or regional issues (western Melbourne, adjacent LGA’s and/or Interface/Growth Council matters) such as the Council Plan, the Municipal Strategic Statement, or the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, some of which are legislated to require community engagement or exhibition.

   Strategic and Policy issues could include availability of draft documents for community comment prior to Council adoption and through the establishment of advisory groups, steering committees or through special one-off forums to create the exchange of ideas.

ii. **Local Issues**

   Engagements where Council seeks to engage with the community on area specific issues e.g. park master plans, etc. Local issue engagement activities provide opportunities to give and receive information and may include the establishment of project reference groups or listening posts.

iii. **Council Service Operations**

   Engagement that manages activities associated with Council’s core services and projects allocated in Council’s budget. Engagement within this area could include service / program evaluations and customer satisfaction through surveys or focus groups made up of key stakeholders and users.
8. Levels of engagement and when and how to engage

The following provides an overview of Council's direction and approach in regard to Community Engagement; however readers should refer to Council’s Community Engagement Toolkit for greater detail on the process and considerations in developing Community Engagement Plans.

Who should be consulted and to what extent?  
When in the process should you engage?  
How can you access the groups you need?

8.1 Who to engage

To determine who needs to be consulted, you need to determine who your stakeholders are. Stakeholders are people who might be impacted by, or interested in, your project.

For example, if a new road is going to be built, there are a number of people who might be impacted: people who will use the road; people who live near the road; people who live near other roads connected with this one that might experience more/less traffic as a result of this new road; businesses adjoining this road and the existing roads; and schools/public buildings/parklands/open spaces that may have access difficulties or benefits due to this road, or may have increased risk; the local residents association... and the list goes on. People with an interest could also include: potential home buyers, environmental groups, developers etc.

Other interested parties could include project partners, service providers, funding bodies and other levels of government such as state government agencies, who all also need to be consulted.

Not all of these stakeholders has equal interest or will be equally impacted. Mapping these stakeholders will help you determine your strategy for engaging them.

Community-based stakeholders usually fall under one of two categories:

i. **Place based Groups:**
   Relate to a defined geographical area, e.g. City wide, a Council Ward, a suburb/s, or a small neighbourhood.

ii. **Special Interest/Thematic Groups:**
    Relate to a community that share a demographic characteristic (i.e. young people, older adults, people with a disability, migrant groups, or sporting groups) or community members who share a particular issue, experience, or interest.

Stakeholder Mapping Tool can be found in the toolkit.
Decisions with a whole of municipality community impact or interest should consult residents in each of the following geographic areas to ensure adequate representation:

- Melton Township
- Eastern Corridor
- Diggers Rest
- Rockbank
- Eynesbury/Exford
- Toolern Vale

Care should be taken to promote gender balance in these engagements, ensuring women are represented roughly fifty per cent. Several additional special interest groups have been identified due to the specific needs, perspectives and insights they may contribute. These groups should also be consulted in ‘whole of community’ decision-making:

- Young people
- Seniors (65+)
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- People with a Disability and Carers
- Families

Depending on the nature and size of your project and your stakeholder assessment, you may be able to either consult the public directly, or you can consult one of Council’s advisory committees as a representative body. Note that consultation with Council’s advisory committees needs to be planned well in advance. Most advisory committees only meet quarterly and not all may be in the position to provide out-of-session advice.

As appropriate, children should also be consulted, as per Engaging Children in Decision Making: A guide for consulting children, available on the Melton City Council website. The Western Region Youth Charter is Melton City Council’s endorsed commitment for engagement with young people, and can be found on the Council website.

Ensure you also consider Internal Stakeholders in your planning, as internal teams may also have significant input to offer your project, and may be impacted by the outcome. Internal engagement is also included in the Annual Community Engagement Program and can be undertaken with the support of the Community Engagement Advisory Committee.

Each group will have its own preferences, so it is important to think of the specific demographic you are working with, and what they might need from us to enable their participation, for example: location, format of engagement, or child care arrangements.

Contact the relevant specialist staff member for advice.
Appropriate timing of engagements from a planning perspective is also crucial to ensure adequate planning and delivery timeframes that:

- are aligned and or synergise with other engagements that may be occurring across the City (avoiding conflict with, or replication of, other engagements).
- are achievable to reporting commitments made (i.e. Council and or Executive team expectations), external body timelines, and commitments made for reporting back to participants.
- address the level of urgency of an issue.

Staff should make contact with the Communications team early in the process to develop a Communications Plan that compliments the Consultation Plan if required.

### 8.2 When to engage

The timing of community engagement with each stakeholder group depends on the nature of your project as well as the type of stakeholder concerned. The level of impact and interest held by the individual or group should determine when and to what level they need to be consulted.

As a general rule, the following applies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Group (as outlined in Section 9.1)</th>
<th>Level of Impact and Interest</th>
<th>When in the process to engage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key Stakeholders</td>
<td>High Impact</td>
<td>Engage as early as possible, to ensure this group can have maximum input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Interest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard to Reach</td>
<td>High Impact</td>
<td>Engage throughout, seeking input – this group may require multiple attempts to encourage input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Interest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watchers</td>
<td>Low Impact</td>
<td>Engage throughout, seeking to inform. This group will actively participate, and should be kept informed of developments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Interest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absentees</td>
<td>Low Impact</td>
<td>Inform at key milestones during the process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Interest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more information about stakeholder mapping, and to determine the appropriate level of engagement, please see the Community Engagement Toolkit.
8.3 How to engage

When commencing a project, thought will need to determine the level of impact any decision may have on the community.

Council’s community engagement approach has been developed using the International Association for Public Participation’s IAP2 Spectrum for Public Participation. The Spectrum outlines five levels of community engagement, with the lowest level of engagement being ‘Inform’, while ‘Empower’ involves the greatest level of public participation in decision making processes.

The Spectrum assists in correlating your desired outcome with appropriate levels of engagement. The higher the level of community ownership you seek to create, the higher the level of community input must be accommodated, and the ‘deeper’ the level of engagement that must take place.

Always bear in mind that Community Engagement is a process used to make better decisions, and is not to get an agreement or validation of an intended decision.

In planning, it is important to take into account the implications of the proposed level of participation. Establishing correct expectations of all parties, including the decision maker (i.e. Council or management) and the community will prevent committing to a level that is never intended to be given (i.e. do not design processes that claim to be empowering but merely offer consulting levels of participation). This will also help to manage assumptions on results and outcomes that were in no way proposed.

Different groups will likely have different needs and preferences in how you conduct the engagement. For example, young people of school age may prefer face to face engagement, but will likely not be independently available during schools hours; working parents may prefer online engagement to fit around their schedules; and CALD groups may require less written and more verbal engagement – and in some cases interpreters. Specialist staff have developed guide sheets for those undertaking these engagements, with the following groups:

- Young people
- Seniors (65+)
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- People with a Disability and Carers
- Families

The table over page helps to identify engagement goals, level of commitment to the community and examples of consultation techniques across the Spectrum.

Community Engagement Guidelines
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of community engagement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>IAP2 Spectrum engagement activities</strong></td>
<td>Inform</td>
<td>Consult</td>
<td>Involve</td>
<td>Collaborate</td>
<td>Empower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engagement Goal</strong></td>
<td>Provide the community with balanced and objective information, to assist them in understanding the issue, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.</td>
<td>Obtain community feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.</td>
<td>Work directly with the community throughout the process to ensure that community concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.</td>
<td>Partner with the community in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.</td>
<td>Providing opportunities and resources for communities to contribute to solutions by valuing local talents and skills and acknowledging their capacity to be decision makers in their own lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community Commitment</strong></td>
<td>We will keep you informed.</td>
<td>We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.</td>
<td>We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.</td>
<td>We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible</td>
<td>We will implement what you decide.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Example suitable consultation techniques** | - Fact sheets  
- Web site/s  
- In Person Meeting  
- Written Letters  
- Flyer / Newsletter  
- Notice in Local Paper  
- Media Release  
- Displays | - Focus groups  
- Surveys  
- Public meetings  
- Suggestion Box  
- Public Exhibition for Public comment  
- Interviews  
- Focus Group Session  
- Stakeholder Meetings | - Workshops  
- Deliberate Polling  
- Community Workshops  
- Community Debates  
- Site Tour / Meeting  
- Open Days  
- Ward Meetings  
- Community Reference Groups | - Community Advisory Committees  
- Consensus building  
- Participatory decision-making  
- Taskforce or Working Party  
- Consensus conference | - Citizen judging panels  
- Ballots  
- Delegated decisions  
- Citizens’ Juries  
- Joint Ventures |
9. Implementation and Approvals

These Guidelines are provided to guide and support Councillors, officers and consultants to deliver the best possible community engagement outcomes.

Whilst innovation and appropriate levels of spontaneity mustn’t be stifled, Council needs to ensure effectiveness and efficiency in its engagement practises. As practitioners, we all need to make certain that we are appropriately representing Council and the organisation, avoiding duplication of Council resources, and respecting our community.

We also need to ensure all engagements are appropriately documented, and data stored consistently so that valuable information can be shared internally to support decision-making and the shared learning of community views.

All parties also need to be on the ‘same page’ and have a broader awareness of where, when and how we are engaging with the community in representing our Council; as such all need to be aware of these Guidelines and associated tools prior to implementing any engagements, and follow the below approval process for all community engagement:

Officer develops Community Engagement Plan

Approved by line Manager

Endorsed by Community Engagement Advisory Committee

A schedule of Community Engagement Advisory Committee meetings can be found on the intranet.
9.1 Community Engagement References

9.1.1 Community Engagement Policy

Council maintains a Community Engagement Policy which governs Council’s investment into engagement practices.

The policy defines the principles underpinning Council’s engagement activities, the role of Councillors, Council staff and consultants responsible for engaging with the community on behalf of Melton City Council, and the mechanisms which Council will use to engage the community.

It should be used as a point of clarification and direction when interpreting direction in consideration of potential engagements.

9.1.2 Community Engagement Guidelines (this document)

The Guidelines provide direction on when to engage and the appropriate level of engagement. It provides instructions on how to engage and the planning of engagement activities, as well as how to evaluate engagement activities.

These guidelines also provide links and directions to other documents of relevance in planning and conducting community engagement.

9.1.3 Community Engagement Toolkit

The toolkit provides templates, sample questions and models, and other tools to assist in community engagement.
9.2 Community Engagement Support Structures

9.2.1 Community Engagement Advisory Committee

The Community Engagement Advisory Committee develops Council’s community engagement Framework and processes. The Committee importantly helps facilitate a whole of Council approach towards the planning, development, delivery and evaluation of effective community engagement activities.

Specifically, the Committee:

- Promotes the Community Engagement Framework and Policy through their involvement with service teams and directorates.
- Members act as ‘engagement’ champions that continue to encourage discussion about community engagement among Executive, the leadership forum, directorates and service teams.
- Are available to present to and or support teams to understand and use the Framework and associated planning tools, including the sharing of learning and development experiences to improve knowledge, understanding and practice across the organisation.
- Review and update the Annual Consultation Plan and Register and associated documents.
- Identify and at times ‘showcase’ best practise examples of organisational excellence in community consultation via presentations and internal information sources such as the staff weekly update and the intranet.

The Committee is also interested in supporting Council’s continued direction to facilitate the establishment of a range of partnerships between all levels of government, business and community organisations. In the context of community engagement, the Committee seeks to value add in making connections for external partners that will:

- provide a flexible vehicle to respond to community issues through sharing of local data and consultation results; and
- undertake specific consultations projects or activities of mutual benefit to the municipality and its communities.

Staff should submit Community Engagement Plans to this advisory committee for comment, and to ensure clarity of understanding of the requirements of Community Consultation and Engagement.

A schedule of Community Engagement Advisory Committee meetings can be found on the intranet.
9.2.2 Community Engagement Support and Training

The Community Engagement Advisory Committee facilitates Community Engagement Support and Training for all staff who are planning to, currently, or have recently undertaken community engagement. This group meets quarterly, and provides a platform for discussion, advice and collaboration in community engagement. This includes training for staff around ethical and compliant collection and storage of personal data, and an overview of Council’s commitments under the Community Engagement Framework. For more information about this working group please contact Coordinator, Community Capacity.

9.2.3 Community Planning Department

The Community Planning Department is available to provide some support and advice to enable application of the Framework. This support may include supporting an internal engagement planning session early in the project, assisting to identify an appropriate approach to specific engagement activities and providing advice on local community groups that may be appropriate to involve in a project.

The team also maintains Council’s repository of outcomes/data of past consultations, which may be appropriate for you to review prior to embarking on another engagement when the data already exists. This repository includes both primary data that Council has gained from our community and secondary sources of data from census data or research undertaken by bodies such as other levels of government who may have engaged with our community on similar issues that you may be seeking. This is presented in a simple, easy to use manner, similar to the demographic census data available on the Council website.

9.2.4 Service Leaders and staff

All services across Council are expected to support the delivery of the Community Engagement Framework. Leaders will contribute to staff induction, guidance and approvals of community engagement in accordance with the Framework.

Leaders are required to, where appropriate, to seek advice from line management, the Community Engagement Advisory Committee or the Community Capacity Team, particularly:

- Seeking advice and guidance regarding appropriate community engagement methodologies before the inception of any project or review.

- Ensuring that that the planning, development and implementation of all organisational surveys (internal and external) are co-ordinated through the Community Engagement Advisory Committee.

Each Community Engagement should have a community engagement plan. This needs to be signed off by your line manager and the Community Engagement Advisory Committee prior to implementation.

Community Engagement Plan Template can be found in the toolkit.
9.3 Community Engagement Tools

9.3.1 Community Engagement Toolkit

Council has developed a Community Engagement Toolkit to assist staff in their community engagements. This toolkit is a step-by-step resource to guide staff through the planning, implementation, reporting and review stages.

9.3.2 Annual Community Engagement Program

The Community Engagement Advisory Committee coordinates an Annual Community Engagement Program, which is provided to Council's Executive Team and Councillors, to be aware of all engagements for each financial year.

The Program assists Council officers in avoiding duplication, or over engaging, by promoting upcoming activities which could potentially have synergies to other projects.

The Program should be used as a tool to avoid conflict involving engagement activities, assisting with forward planning for community engagement projects and creating collective evaluation and reporting of Council's engagement activities and outcomes to the community.

The Community Engagement Advisory Committee will also provide advice on:
- where there is potential to merge or combine efforts and engagements;
- relationships of engagements to standard processes such as Council's Annual Household Survey; and
- consistent standards to author consultation questions

A schedule of Community Engagement Advisory Committee meetings can be found on the intranet.
9.3.3 Community Engagement Register

A Register for recording community engagement activities has been established to improve coordination and promotion of community engagement initiatives approved each financial year. It also allows for input of incidental community opinions and feedback outside of formalised engagement programs.

The Register assists Council officers in viewing, capitalising upon and cross promoting upcoming activities. The register is accessible from Council’s internal Intranet and maintained by Community Planning.

9.3.4 Community Engagement Web Page

The Community Engagement page of Council’s website provides updates on current engagement activity and opportunities for our communities to provide input. It is a public reference point for past and planned engagement activities to allow community to browse options and outcomes. Employed correctly, it is an accessible point to promote engagements and share with our community the outcomes of processes.

9.3.5 Melton Standard Data Set

There is a strong appreciation within Council of the benefits of sharing data. Data sharing enables a more comprehensive statistical picture to be drawn around specific areas of interest. Sharing the data held by Council, enables us to realise the potential of its existing engagements and information held. It reduces expense of new data collection by reducing duplication and effort. It also reduces the burden placed on individuals, households and businesses to provide information to government agencies.

Council’s central data repository is known as the Local Data Matrix. Council has determined that any engagements with the community need to ensure consistency in questions to ensure time series comparisons and information collection to be used for a variety of purpose, as such there is a series of standard or common data set questions that Council asks at each engagements (typically survey based); these include but are not limited to:

- What is your Age Group?
- What is your Sex?
- What is your Country of Birth?
- Do you speak a language other than English at home? (If yes, which language?)
- Which suburb do you live in?

Any officers intending to construct a survey must ensure the inclusion of Council’s standard data set questions and ensure approval of the survey prior to proceeding. This is to ensure appropriate inclusion of aspects such as Council’s Privacy Policy statement, an appropriate introduction to inform the participant of the use, and potential uses of the information gathered, and the inclusion of appropriate standardised questions.

Survey and Mini-Survey Templates can be found in the toolkit.

Standard Data Set Questions can be found in the toolkit.
10. **Prizes, Presents and Competitions**

Offering thank you presents to participants is commonplace, and can be highly beneficial in stimulating greater interest. If you intend to give such 'presents', it is important that you first ensure it is appropriate for the context, and seek approval from your manager. Many teams can share their experiences with you of what has been effective, and what hasn't. There is no obligation on you to provide such thank you presents as part of your community engagement plan, but you do need to think about how you might encourage people to participate. There needs to be something that captures their attention. This can be through making the process of engagement fun or attractive in some way, or through well-planned positioning at a venue or event that is likely to have a lot of people who will be interested in your project.

If you choose to provide Melton City Council branded merchandise as presents, please ensure adherence to Council’s Gifts and Merchandising Policy, available on the intranet.

If you choose to include a competition or raffle in your community engagement plan, you will need to ensure you are compliant with the requirements of the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation, and may need to apply for a permit. More information can be found at [www.vcgr.vic.gov.au](http://www.vcgr.vic.gov.au)

11. **Interpretation and Sharing of Information**

Upon completion of your Community Engagement, you will have a lot of information that you need to sort through and make sense of. If yours has been single issue based, this may be a simple process. If it has included multiple issues, and/or multiple methods of engagement, this process can be quite complex.

Key questions to consider are:
- How will you collate and analyse the information?
- How will you monitor the compilation and distribution of the Feedback Report within the agreed timeframe?
• How will you know if your data is representative, that you have enough, and that its use is also appropriately represented?
• How will you monitor the implementation of Council's decision within an agreed timeframe?

The Community Engagement Toolkit assists with this process through provision of:
• Standardised formatting of databases
• Standardised sharing and storing mechanisms for data

Please ensure that you provide both raw data (verbatim, in the standardised format) and coded data to the Local Data Matrix as soon as practical, so that other teams can also access this in a timely manner.

12. Reporting

Reporting the outcomes of your community engagement is extremely important in maintaining Council’s good relationship and reputation in the community. Participants will have given up their time to give you their input, and will want to know how you are going to use this, and what the final outcome will be. For strategies/policies, this reporting will be done for the majority of participants through provision of the document itself.

12.1 Feedback Reports

For groups that have been more involved, for example attending a forum or focus group, or who have a particularly strong interest in your project, it is appropriate to provide a feedback report on the community engagement relatively quickly after the event itself (within one month). This demonstrates to participants that their views have been noted, and allows them to provide additional input if they so wish.

A Feedback Report needs to include the following:

• An introduction and background information.
• Outcomes of the community engagement process, including any key issues or trends identified
• Quantitative and qualitative data.
• Exact words and phrases used by people in comments to ensure they recognise their own input and become aware that other people may express different opinions to their own.
• A section for questions raised by the community and responses provided by Council.
• A summary of how the information has been analysed with any clear outcomes or indications of a division on a preferred outcome. This information is important for stakeholders as it demonstrates how varying views and aspirations are taken into account by decision makers within the broader policy and strategic frameworks as they consider the final outcome.
Feedback to participants can also be by letter, which doesn't always need to be specific to their input. A generic thank you letter outlining some key points can suffice in some situations.

12.2 Council Reports

Formal reporting to Council on the issue that sought the engagement needs to include a relevant level of detail in the “Consultation/Public Submissions” Section of Council's standard Agenda Reports.

12.3 Feedback to the Community

Feedback doesn’t need to be restricted to those who participated in the community engagement. Others in the community may also be interested in the findings, and you can provide snapshots of the data or summaries of the community engagement project to Communications, so that they can write articles for media release, display information on Council’s website and include it in the Moving Ahead newsletter.

Optional Feedback Report Template can be found in the toolkit.
13. **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Melton City Council values and supports innovation and creativity in driving continuous improvement. We constantly review what we do and strive to deliver the best possible outcomes. As such, we are committed to:

- Transparent processes of reporting outcomes of engagement back to our community; and
- Learning from each engagement experience to improve our approach to engagement.

It is expected that all engagements consider some form of internal coordination team debrief and evaluation to be undertaken to support continuous improvement. These evaluations should highlight key learnings that can be shared via the Community Engagement Advisory Committee, who may communicate the result across the organisation from a best practise perspective.

The final evaluation report may include:

- An introduction and description of the community engagement process
- Summaries of the evaluation of each phase of the process, including tracking against the pre-determined performance indicators
- Commentary on what worked and added value, what did not work and detracted from the process, areas for improvement, lessons learned, the sustainability of the decision made; and
- Recommendations for future community engagement projects

This evaluation should be made available to your direct line manager and the Community Engagement Advisory Committee.

Investment into evaluations of our Community Engagement projects and processes will ensure we excel as a high performance organisation of continuous improvement by aiding the organisation better improve its community engagement processes, celebrate success and learn from past experiences.
14. References

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<td>Annual Consultation Program and Consultation Register</td>
<td>Community Planning</td>
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<td>Code of Conduct for staff</td>
<td>Policy and Procedures Intranet</td>
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<td>Community Engagement Guidelines</td>
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<td>Community Engagement Toolkit</td>
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<td>International Association of Public Participation</td>
<td><a href="http://www.iap2.org.au">www.iap2.org.au</a></td>
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<td>Complaints Management Policy</td>
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<td><strong>Western Region Youth Charter</strong></td>
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