Bass Coast Shire Council Communication and Engagement Strategy 2015-18

Review – Objectives and Outcomes March 2018

1. Information is accessible and flows freely between the community and Council	
Key initiatives	Outcome
1. Prioritise resources to allow more direct Council communication eg Coastell, social media, etc.	Completed Council launched Facebook in January 2016. As of March 2018 Council has grown our following to approximately 4,000 people, and has also consistently reached high numbers of Facebook users. Council has developed a better understanding of what our community likes to see and engage with on Facebook, with some of our posts reaching up to 60,000 people and Live Facebook Q and A sessions with Councillors extremely popular and well received. Electronic Coastell was launched in Summer 2016/17. As of November 2017 we have approximately 1,000 electronic subscribers, 1,000 readers through Facebook and mail out around 250 printed copies. Council also established a Bass Coast Shire Instagram account, a Bass Coast Youth Facebook page, and has continued

1. *Information is accessible and flows freely between the community and Council*	
Key initiatives	Outcome
	to utilise the Business in Bass Coast Facebook page and Council Twitter account.
1.2 Introduce a Council Facebook page to allow one-to-one engagement with ratepayers and residents online	Completed See above.
1.3 Review website infrastructure, content, contacts and usability	Completed. Since the review, Council has commenced a website redevelopment in 2017. It is due to be completed by June 2018. Simple Integrated Marketing has been appointed to redevelop the website. As of March 2018, website content is being reviewed and prepared along with a revised website structure. This is in preparation for the new website build. Council has also run two community and one school student workshops in November and December 2017 to obtain community and user feedback. Infrastructure, content, contacts and useability will all be addressed as part of the redevelopment. Council has also introduced a new process for the community to update the Community Directory to ensure content is kept up-to-date.

1. Information is accessible and flows freely between the community and Council	
Key initiatives	**Outcome**
1.4 Work with local media to enhance communications and engagement. Council recognises the contribution that local and regional media provides in keeping our community informed about Council. Council will continue to work with local media outlets to improve the flow of information to the community about Council's operations and services	Completed/ongoing Council has continued to advertise weekly in two local newspapers and periodically in other publications and media outlets. Council has also invested in improving working relationships with both advertising representatives and journalists. Across the whole organisation, Council contributes approximately $90,000 per annum towards advertising. This includes local newspaper and community newsletter updates, radio advertising, recruitment and tender adverts, local magazines and tourist advertising. We have also worked closely with 3mFM to promote Council activities through their morning program and regular Council News show, and made better use of our regular 30-second ads, which we hadn't used in the past. We've also consistently distributed media releases, the majority of which are printed in local newspapers. On average over the last three years, Council promotes over 230 media releases and notifications and responds to approximately 400 media enquiries per year. Council has improved the process of responding to media enquiries with the

1. *Information is accessible and flows freely between the community and Council*	
Key initiatives	**Outcome**
	Mayor spokesperson on the majority of responses. Officers provide greater support with technical responses.
1.5 Develop a 12-month communications plan to meet the information needs of different segments of our community and support Council to explain its work	Completed Council's Communications and Engagement Team developed a 12-month calendar that guides the work plan for the year. It has been designed to be flexible and able to be amended to allow for upcoming communications opportunities and projects that arise as a result of funding opportunities, community issues, events or other unforeseeable circumstances. The 12 month calendar was used for 2016/2017. While it was a good resource, the excel spreadsheet was limiting. In March 2017, the Communications Team began using an online tool, Trello, which allows the team to plan, track, assign, comment and categorise media releases and enquiries, social media enquiries and posts, speaking notes, publication copy and more. Trello is proving an extremely effective and user friendly tool to plan and manage the demands of communications management. Communications and Engagement Team have worked closely with staff across the organisation to highlight the need to develop Communications Plans well in advance. This has seen a significant improvement in staff seeking assistance

1. Information is accessible and flows freely between the community and Council	
Key initiatives	**Outcome**
	or planning their engagement well in advance.
1.6 Involve the Communications Team in executive level meetings to facilitate early identification of communication and engagement needs	Completed The Communications and Engagement Team have continued to meet with the CEO and the Mayor on a weekly basis to discuss any communication and engagement needs, and are regularly included in email and phone conversations with the Executive Team so they are well aware of any issues that need addressing. The Manager Advocacy and Engagement attends Executive Meetings more frequently as part of the new focus on Advocacy and improve operational awareness.

2. A whole of Council approach is taken to community engagement, using best practice and clear guidelines to support staff

Key initiatives	Outcome
2.1 Strengthen our Community Engagement Policy and ensure all staff understand their responsibilities under the Policy	Completed The Community Engagement Policy was updated and adopted by Council in September 2015. The Communications and Engagement Team attended department meetings across the organisation to highlight the responsibilities of all staff members when engaging with the community, including a strong emphasis on 'closing the loop'. This understanding has been strengthened again through recent Community Engagement initiatives such as the Council Plan and Three Bin System.
2.2 Create a practical toolkit to support staff to understand the triggers and agreed processes for engagement	Completed Officers reviewed and refined the Communications Plan template to make it easier for staff to complete and offered more support to staff when developing Communications Plans. Templates for media releases, community newsletters, invitations, and FAQs are available to assist staff when developing communication materials. A greater focus and take up on both Facebook usage (including live Q and A sessions) and face to face 'pop-ups' and drop-in sessions has been adopted by teams and has been well received by the community and Councillors.

2. A whole of Council approach is taken to community engagement, using best practice and clear guidelines to support staff

Key initiatives	Outcome
2.3 Require staff to report against the Toolkit at fixed points during each project work plan	Completed/Ongoing The revised Communications Plan includes areas to record progress and provides feedback on how the Plan was implemented and the impact it had; however this can be improved on, as reports are not consistently completed and need to be used to address what worked and what didn't in order to highlight areas for improvement. Post engagement debriefs have been introduced to ensure continuous learning and improvement is recognised.
2.4 Review internal communications to ensure staff have access to regular, high quality information about Council's current activities and plans, so that they can inform and support community members	Completed The Communications and Engagement Team conducted an internal survey seeking feedback on a variety of internal communications tools, including the Shire Crier, Intranet and all user emails We received completed surveys from 120 staff members. The feedback helped to identify what was working well and areas for improvement such as consistent communication planning templates, greater use of social media and using pop-ups. We also completed a review of our intranet in April 2017 and found a significant number of pages are not used and are out-of-date. A refresh on our Intranet may follow the website redevelopment.

2. A whole of Council approach is taken to community engagement, using best practice and clear guidelines to support staff	
Key initiatives	Outcome
	The Communications and Engagement Team regularly present to departments across the organisation and have further improved their relationships with officers through various projects.

3. Council staff members have the capacity to engage effectively at the local level

Key initiatives	Outcome
3.1 Invest in training to enhance in-house engagement skills	Completed Approximately 30 staff members across various business units participated as 'community engagement champions' in the organisation and completed their IAP2 Certificate in Engagement training in 2016. They represented key service areas from across the organisation and have been proactively using their knowledge and experience in cross-departmental projects as well, for example, Council Plan engagement and the Three-Bin System roll out.
3.2 Identify community engagement champions in each business unit to lead and monitor activity against agreed processes	Completed See above.
3.3 Develop an internal Community Engagement Register so staff can quickly find planned and current engagement activities	Completed The Communications and Engagement Team maintain an internal Community Engagement List as part of the 12-month calendar. Engagement activities are shared with the organisation through regular updates and Shire Crier so staff can see what Council is engaging with the community. This also asks staff to provide updates so the register can be up to date.

4. Engagement processes reflect diverse community needs and voices. Diverse opportunities are created for people to be informed about and have input into issues that impact their quality of life.

Key initiatives	Outcome
4.1 Take engagement activity into our community with a program of 'pop-up' stalls located at key community events and high foot traffic locations. Community members who do not usually seek out Council engagement will be able to meet Councillors, receive or provide information and ask questions	Completed/Ongoing As of January 2017, Council has held regular pop-up stalls at local events and projects, including the Council Plan 2017-21, the Sound Shell in The Glade, introduction of the Three-Bin System, and the development of the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2017-21. Other examples include Cowes Activity Centre Plan, Phillip Island Integrated Transport Study (PIITS), Rate Capping, Sport and Active Recreation Needs Assessment (SARNA) and Youth Action Plan 2016-20. In 2016/17, some Councillors also introduced coffee catch-ups, where they made themselves available to chat with community members about a variety of issues at designated times at local cafes across the Shire. At this stage it is recommended that 'pop-ups' are used as an engagement tool related to specific topics or projects.
4.2 Develop specialised tools and staff advocates to promote engagement with harder to reach groups, including young people, seniors, people with disabilities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members	Completed Staff advocates or 'community engagement champions' took part in IAP2 training to develop their skills to engage with harder to reach groups. This has resulted in improved communication and engagement with

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Key initiatives	**Outcome**
	identified groups through the development of advisory groups or networks and the delivery of specific projects and campaigns, ie Council Plan 2017-21, Youth Action Plan 2016-20, etc. This requires a mix of tools including digital, print and face-to-face. No single method has proven to be sufficient. Council also proactively includes 'hard to reach' or special interest groups in regular communications (meetings/newsletters/group email) through Rural Engagement Group, Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee, Home and Community Care (HACC), Young Leaders, local Secondary Schools (including Bass Coast Specialist School) and Developers Forum. The Bunurong Land Council was appointed the registered aboriginal party in July 2017. Officers are working with them to establish agreed communication and engagement channels. Council has a Councillor and staff representative on the South Coast Inclusion Network (LGBTI) to engage on matters specific to this community.
4.3 Ensure the staff toolkit includes a diverse range of engagement opportunities to be considered, including social media, web and hard copy tools	Completed When developing Communication and Engagement Plans, all staff are provided with opportunities to promote events and issues through a wide range of tools, including advertisements, media releases,

4. Engagement processes reflect diverse community needs and voices. Diverse opportunities are created for people to be informed about and have input into issues that impact their quality of life.	
Key initiatives	Outcome
	direct contact, and social media. If unsure of the appropriate methods, the Communications and Engagement Team are pro-active in recommending tools and explaining how they can be best utilised.

5. There is clarity and transparency about how community input influences decisions

Key initiatives	Outcome
5.1 Ensure every community consultation process includes a report back mechanism, including at a minimum a web report and an explanation of how community feedback influenced the decision-making process	Completed/Ongoing We have been encouraging staff to 'close the loop' and ensure community members who provided input or feedback are kept up-to-date on progress and ultimately, Council's decision. Details of community consultation and the feedback and comments received from the community are regularly included in Council reports and to Councillors before a Council decision is made. The reports are published on Council's website. Examples of 'closing the loop' and being open with the feedback include: Council Plan 2017-21, annual Budget and introduction of Three-Bin System with FAQs and feedback published on Council's website.
5.2 Where possible, Council should acknowledge individual contributions with a level of detail that reflects the effort put into the submission	Completed See above. Acknowledgement letters are drafted for submissions and feedback received. Example includes Council Plan 2017-21 and Annual Budget submissions. Where specific feedback or comment is received, for example, in the form of a written submission, an email, or a Facebook comment, a reply will be sent acknowledging the receipt of the feedback. As in examples above, these contributors will be kept in the loop with results of the engagement.

6. Local knowledge and experience is integrated into decision making and solution building	
Key initiatives	**Outcome**
6.1 Build relationships with existing community groups	Completed/Ongoing In 2016, Council hosted a Community Building Workshop for community groups and organisations, and as a result, introduced the Community Builders Network for interested community groups and members to join. The group meets eight times per year for discussion and support, as well as for skill building opportunities. Staff have also been working closely with community groups on projects that impact them, such as master plans for recreation reserves, changes to Council's waste services, Community Grant applications and inviting them to attend a number of workshops and meetings across the Shire. Council's Facebook Page has strong links with local community pages who regularly share events and posts to help spread the reach of our posts. Council has also engaged with community groups to communicate on specific campaigns for example the Three Bin System and the Website Redevelopment Project.
6.2 Develop a register of interested citizens and community groups for specific issues and topics. Interested community members must be able to opt into these groups so that fresh voices are heard	Completed/Ongoing The Community Sounding Board was launched in June 2017, giving community members the opportunity to opt in for emails detailing engagement opportunities relating to their interests,

5. There is clarity and transparency about how community input influences decisions	
Key initiatives	**Outcome**
	locations or topics. To date over 119 people have registered. Although the number is low, there are opportunities to further increase this through promotion and greater usage.
6.3 Ensure project timetables allow sufficient time for providing community information and seeking input	Completed The Communications and Engagement Team encourage staff to begin planning for communications relating to their projects at the beginning of their project planning and at least four weeks in advance, and ensure consultation periods are left open long enough for our community to have a realistic opportunity to get involved and provide feedback.

7. Council has a 'face' across our community and actively engages with its community	
Key initiatives	Outcome
7.1 Monthly community briefings giving Council the opportunity to directly engage with community groups and associations	Completed In 2016, Council began hosting monthly Community Connection Sessions (originally Community Engagement sessions) which provide community groups and members the opportunity to present, ask questions and discuss issues directly with Councillors. The sessions have been highly utilised by the community and are often booked out weeks in advance.
7.2 Senior staff to be available to talk to community groups to build relationships	Completed/Ongoing Senior staff have made themselves available to speak with community groups at their meetings, or community meetings held by Council, during a number of large engagement projects, including information sessions for rate capping and the Budget in 2016, and for the Council Plan and Budget in 2017. Examples of other projects that have involved senior staff include Cowes Car Ferry, Cowes Jetty Triangle and Transit Hub, Three-Bin System roll out, Skate Strategy and strategic planning matters. These opportunities have been well received and will continue.
7.3 Executive Team meetings to be occasionally rotated through community locations taking the opportunity to engage with key stakeholders	Commenced/Ongoing Meetings have been held at Phillip Island Nature Parks, Westernport Water and Bass Coast Health with meetings also

Key initiatives	Outcome
7. Council has a 'face' across our community and actively engages with its community	

Key initiatives	Outcome
	rotated to Grantville, Inverloch and Cowes. Council's Ordinary Meetings are now rotated around the Shire, with meetings now held in Grantville, Inverloch, Wonthaggi and Cowes.
7.4 Review opportunities to enhance engagement at Council meetings	Commenced/Ongoing Council's Ordinary Meetings are now rotated around the Shire. Meetings now held annually in Grantville and Inverloch, and held regularly in Wonthaggi and Cowes, making them more accessible to community members. Rotating these Meetings has increased their accessibility. Anecdotal feedback from Councillors and staff is that there has been a noticeable increase in new faces from the community in the gallery. Council has also invested in audio equipment to amplify Council discussions during Meetings. Council is still considering Live streaming Meetings with consideration being given to accessibility requirements (transcripts of video) and logistics of rotating Meetings a challenge.
7.5 Provide high quality and early information to Councillors to enable them to act effectively for their community	Completed/Ongoing Council introduced the Councillor Weekly Bulletin in November 2015, which is sent to Councillors on a weekly basis and includes up-to-date information regarding a wide variety of Council projects, media releases distributed

7. Council has a 'face' across our community and actively engages with its community	
Key initiatives	**Outcome**
	during the week, responses to Councillor queries and correspondence from external stakeholders. The Communications and Engagement Team also meet weekly with the Mayor and CEO to discuss opportunities and issues.

Councillor Feedback Summary

Councillors were asked to consider the Strategy objectives and outcomes in November 2017 and provide feedback on what they would like to keep doing, start doing and stop doing.

Keep
- Facebook Q and A sessions which proved very popular with the community in providing a direct engagement platform to ask questions directly to a Councillor and receive a response
- Rotating Council Meetings across the Shire to enable greater participation from different communities outside of Wonthaggi and Cowes
- Maintaining a strong focus on Social Media to effectively reach people across our community and non-permanent residents
- Continuing to engage with business, tourism and community groups and special interest groups such as the Rural Engagement Group
- Supporting informal catch-ups with the community such as 'Cuppa with a Councillor'
- Continuing with Community Connections Sessions, but placing a greater emphasis on closing the loop and addressing any potential actions that come from these sessions. Due to time constraints it may need to limit the number of presentations.
- Facilitating and promoting developers forums
- Producing Coastell Newsletter (print and electronic) an efficient way to reach non-resident ratepayers
- Engaging with local media and newspapers

Stop
- Ineffective use of time – Example: Ensure Question Time (Council Meeting) and public presentations are concise and succinct to enable Meetings to progress in a timely manner

Start
- Rotating locations and venues for Council Briefings
- Engaging on a more regular basis community newspapers and publications (subject to Budget)
- Attending Secondary Colleges for student views
- Attending Community and Business Group Meetings
- 'Walking the Beat' – Going out in our town and community main streets to engage the community
- Increasing Facebook Q and A opportunities
- Reviewing Council Plan 2017-21 progress publically with the community

- Reviewing internal Councillor Weekly Bulletin/Councillor request process to ensure consistent and clear process in dealing with customer requests. When a Customer request/complaint is forwarded to Councillor Support by a Councillor, the actioning officer needs to also contact the customer with the response/resolution, not just respond via the Councillor Weekly Bulletin – closing the loop

Communications and Engagement Strategy Review Staff Survey Summary

Council staff were asked to consider the methods of communication and engagement they have used over the last 12 months and identify what were the most popular or successful methods used. The survey results identified using a mixture of methods works well with continued use of social media, print media and face-to-face activities such as 'pop-ups' being well received by the community and increasing reach.

Alternatively, using single methods or just relying on digital mediums or print mediums on their own was least successful on reaching people in our community.

The same can be said about closing the loop on engagement opportunities with our community with feedback received identifying numerous methods of communication as the most effective way of confirming with our community what Council has heard from an engagement. Examples include using summaries and reports through website pages, responding to submissions and correspondence directly with the individuals, providing media releases and interviews, distributing project newsletters and sharing results on Council's social media channels.

Staff were asked about when they start planning for their engagements and it was pleasing to see that most responses identified that planning commenced three to six months prior to the event or project.

Bass Coast Shire Council Communication and Engagement Strategy 2015-18

Revised Edition March 2018

Suggested changes to document are in red

Front Cover - change title, remove 2015-18 and include 'Revised Edition 2018'

Content – Page 1 – Update and include revision date and list of changes with reference to upcoming review following the LGA Bill

Our Community – page 2

The Bass Coast Shire is home to 33,000 people spread across 864 square kilometres of land. With spectacular coastline and rich hinterland, Bass Coast is a place of exceptional natural beauty.

During the summer season the population swells to well over 80,000 people and we welcome more than 3.4 million visitors every year. The local economy is based on tourism, agriculture, construction and retail. Wonthaggi is our largest regional centre, with other large townships at Cowes and Inverloch.

Many residents live in small coastal and agricultural towns, each with its own character. With large numbers of holiday and second homes, the municipality includes a high proportion of non-resident landowners. When we talk about the Bass Coast community, we acknowledge that this includes many smaller diverse communities with diverse needs.

As a vibrant region within easy commuting distance of Melbourne, Bass Coast is experiencing rapid growth in its economic base and a growing population. More than 30 per cent of residents are aged over 60, with higher proportions of retirees/empty nesters and seniors than the rest of regional Victoria.

To ensure the communities of Bass Coast work together to make important decisions about their region, Bass Coast Shire Council has made communications and engagement a key priority.

This Communications and Engagement Strategy has been developed to create robust systems for collecting and sharing information with our community, understanding different points of view, and informing decision-making.

Better engagement, better outcomes – page 3

In early 2015 Bass Coast Shire Council launched the "Better Engagement, Better Outcomes" project. The purpose of the project was to gather feedback and ideas on the best ways for Council to engage with residents, ratepayers and community groups on decisions that affect the Shire.

This Communication and Engagement Strategy is built on the information gathered from more than 360 people who took part in the project, as well as previous research.

Strategy Review 2018 (add sub-heading**)**

A review was conducted in 2018. Consistent with the previous version of this Strategy, Council agrees that the most important factors to support community engagement are access to clear and accessible information, ensuring diverse points of view are considered, understanding how decisions are reached and playing an active role in developing solutions.

Council will continue to think carefully about the timing of community involvement, to provide more feedback on how community input influences decisions, and to consider a wider range of views and ideas.

Following the many ideas, experiences and expectations gathered from community members, Councillors and staff during previous consultations developed seven key themes (listed on page 3) which still remain relevant and will continue to guide the Strategy.

Successful Use of Strategy (add sub-heading**)**

This review follows the very successful and well-received community engagement to develop the Council Plan 2017-21. This engagement was the broadest and most comprehensive community engagement ever undertaken by Council, reaching over 60,000 people through social media and speaking directly with over 820 people who provided over 3,000 individual comments.

Council was recognised by Local Government Professionals (LGPro) for its Council Plan community engagement with the Award for Best Practice and Innovation in Council Plan Development in 2017.

Seven Key Themes and Objectives – page 3

1. Maintain information flow and access between the community and Council
2. Take a whole of Council approach to community engagement using best practice with clear guidelines to support staff
3. Continue to build the capacity of Council staff to engage effectively at the local level
4. Ensure the diversity of community needs and voices are reflected in engagement processes, and that diverse opportunities are created for people to be informed about and have input into issues that impact their quality of life
5. Provide clarity and transparency about how community input has influenced decisions
6. Integrate local knowledge and experience in decision making and solution building

7. Ensure that Council has a 'face' across the community and actively engages with its constituency

Our goals – page 4

Bass Coast Shire residents and ratepayers have diverse needs and opinions, innovative ideas and a wealth of local knowledge. Council is able to make better decisions on behalf of the community it serves when it draws on those resources.

A strong partnership between Council and our community is necessary to support the democratic process. An informed, empowered and connected community that is involved in the decisions that affect quality of life in the region will make Bass Coast a better place to live and work.

This Communication and Engagement Strategy has three objectives:
- To support good decision-making by Council
- To communicate and engage with respect, trust, openness and accountability
- To build a strong partnership with our community

It aims to increase community ownership and understanding of project, policy and strategy decisions, which can support the long-term sustainability of those initiatives and generate a sense of belonging and pride in our achievements.

Our goals are to improve our engagement with our community by better utilising existing resources investigating and implementing new methods to engage with our community and keeping it contained within existing budgets.

Council decision-making must take into consideration the diverse views of the community, laws and regulations, finances, human resources and social impacts.

Within the communities of Bass Coast, there will be different opinions on many decisions. However, our community is more likely to understand decisions if we build stronger processes to listen to diverse views and more clearly explain how the variety of views were considered in making final decisions.

This strategy outlines how Council will fulfil its promise to create genuine opportunities for active public participation in decision-making. From recent experience obtained through successful engagements, good planning, design, a mix of communication methods (print, digital and face-to-face) with a focus on closing the loop are critical to having the best outcomes that influence decision making.

Council acknowledges the importance of engagement in order to deliver services to the community. A number of Council staff have completed their IAP2 Certificate in Engagement, so staff have colleagues who can assist to develop engagement plans.

Our Approach – Page 5

<u>What is community engagement?</u>
Community engagement is a planned process to work with identified groups of people on an issue. It includes a spectrum of activities that inform people about, and involve them in, decision-making processes. Examples of community engagement tools include websites, letters, surveys and other research, public meetings, workshops and committees.

<u>When is community engagement used?</u>
The best decisions will be made if those affected by the outcome have had the appropriate opportunity to participate in the process.
Council will also consider community engagement when a proposed change or decision is likely to:
- Have significant impact on quality of life in the region
- Impact on services or facilities for residents and ratepayers
- Have a significant budgetary impact
- Involve a level of conflict, controversy or sensitivity

Different levels of community engagement are appropriate for different types of issues. The cost of engagement (including the demand it makes on community and staff time) should represent good value for ratepayers, given the scope and scale of the decision.

<u>Using IAP2</u>
The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) has developed a set of tools to promote community involvement in decision making.

Council will use the IAP2 tools to guide its approach to communication and engagement activities.

<u>Core values</u>
The IAP2 approach is built on seven core values, outlined below:

- Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process
- Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision
- Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers
- Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision
- Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate

- Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way
- Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision

IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

The IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum describes different levels of public participation that may be appropriate in a community engagement program.

Differing levels of participation are legitimate depending on the goals, time frames, resources and levels of concern in the decision to be made.

The public participation spectrum stretches from providing information, through to empowering the public to make the final decision.

If a decision has to be made because of legal or safety requirement (eg a road closure), community engagement might be at the "inform" level. Casting a vote is an example of activity at the "empower" end of the spectrum.

IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum – page 6

The IAP2 Federation has developed the Spectrum to help groups define the public's role in any public participation process. The IAP2 Spectrum is recognised as an international standard.

Increasing impact on decision →

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborative	Empower
Public Participation Goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	To partner with the public 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 public
Promise to the public	We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. We will seek your feedback on drafts and proposals	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	We will work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible	We will implement what you decide
Examples	» Newsletters » Websites » Open houses » Media releases » Advertisements	» Public comment » Focus groups » Surveys » Public Meetings	» Workshops » Deliberative polling	» Stakeholder advisory committees » Consensus-building » Participatory decision-making	» Stakeholder juries » Ballots » Delegated decisions

Our plan – pages 7 to 9

Council is committed to improving communication and engagement with the community it serves. There are clear connections between the objectives of this strategy and the seven key themes that emerged from community consultation.

The themes have been adopted as required outcomes of this Strategy for 2015 - 2018.

Objective	Required Outcome
To support good decision-making by Council	» Information is accessible and flows freely between our community and Council » A whole of Council approach is taken to community engagement, using best practice and clear guidelines to support staff » Council staff members have the capacity to engage effectively at the local level
To communicate and engage with respect, trust, openness and accountability	» Engagement processes reflect diverse community needs and voices. Diverse opportunities are created for people to be informed about and have input into issues that impact their quality of life » There is clarity and transparency about how community input influences decisions
To build a strong partnership with our community	» Local knowledge and experience is integrated into decision making and solution building » Council has a 'face' across our community and actively engages with its constituency

A set of initiatives were developed under each outcome to support its delivery. The initiatives and actions from the Communication and Engagement Strategy 2015-18 were completed and implemented over the three years. Many are ongoing and continue to be implemented as standard engagement processes.

Information is accessible and flows freely between the community and Council

Key initiatives:
- Prioritise resources and ensure a mix of methods are utilised to allow more direct Council communication eg Coastell, social media, pop-ups, etc.
- Maintain and grow Council's Facebook page to allow one-to-one engagement with ratepayers and residents online. Continue to promote the use of Facebook Q&A sessions
- Continue redevelopment and ongoing maintenance of a new website
- Continue to work with local media (print, radio, television and community newsletters) to enhance communications and engagement

- Maintain a 12 month communications plan and continue to regularly update the organisation which will support Council to explain its work
- Involve the Manager Advocacy and Engagement and/or Communications and Engagement Team in executive level meetings to facilitate early identification of communication and engagement needs

A whole of Council approach is taken to community engagement, using best practice and clear guidelines to support staff

Key initiatives:
- Review and amend Council's Community Engagement Policy 2015 following the finalisation of the *Local Government Act 2018* and ensure all staff understand their responsibilities under the Policy
- Continue to use the Communications and Engagement Plans Template and Toolkits to support staff to understand the triggers and agreed processes for engagement
- Review Council's Intranet, Councillor Weekly Bulletin and Councillor Portal to ensure Councillors and staff have access to regular, high quality information about Council's current activities and plans, so that they can inform and support community members

Council staff members have the capacity to engage effectively at the local level

Key initiatives:
- Continue to invest in the training and development of Councillors and staff to develop and maintain their communication and engagement skills, which will support the continued 'in-house' delivery of community engagement and establish community engagement champions across the organisation
- Promote the internal Community Engagement Register through the staff newsletter, so staff can quickly find planned and current engagement activities and provide updates

Engagement processes reflect diverse community needs and voices. Diverse opportunities are created for people to be informed about and have input into issues that impact their quality of life.

Key initiatives:
- Continue to use "pop up" stalls located at key community events and high foot traffic locations as an important engagement method when implementing communication and engagement plans. Community members who do not usually seek out Council engagement will be able to meet Councillors, receive or provide information and ask questions

- Continue to use a mix of engagement methods to reach groups, including young people, seniors, people with disabilities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members

There is clarity and transparency about how community input influences decisions

Key initiatives:
- Ensure appropriate community consultation process includes a closing the loop/report back process, including at a minimum a web report and an explanation of how community feedback influenced the decision-making process
- Where possible, Council will acknowledge individual contributions with a level of detail that reflects the effort put into the submission

Local knowledge and experience is integrated into decision making and solution building

Key initiatives:
- Build and maintain relationships with existing community and business groups
- Promote the use of Council's Community Sounding Board which includes a register of interested citizens and community groups for specific issues and topics. Interested community members must be able to opt into these groups so that fresh voices are heard
- Ensure project timetables allow sufficient time for providing community information and seeking input

Council has a 'face' across our community and actively engages with its community

Key initiatives:
- Continue to provide monthly Community Connections Sessions, giving Councillors the opportunity to directly engage with individuals, community groups and associations
- Senior staff are available to support Councillors and participate in face-to-face and online engagement opportunities to build relationships with our community
- Continue to rotate Council Meetings across the Shire to enhance engagement at Council Meetings
- Continue to provide high quality and up to date information through the Councillor Weekly Bulletin to Councillors to enable them to act effectively for their community

Recommended policy changes – page 10

The adoption of Council's Community Engagement Policy 2015 was an important opportunity to set out how Council will work with our community.
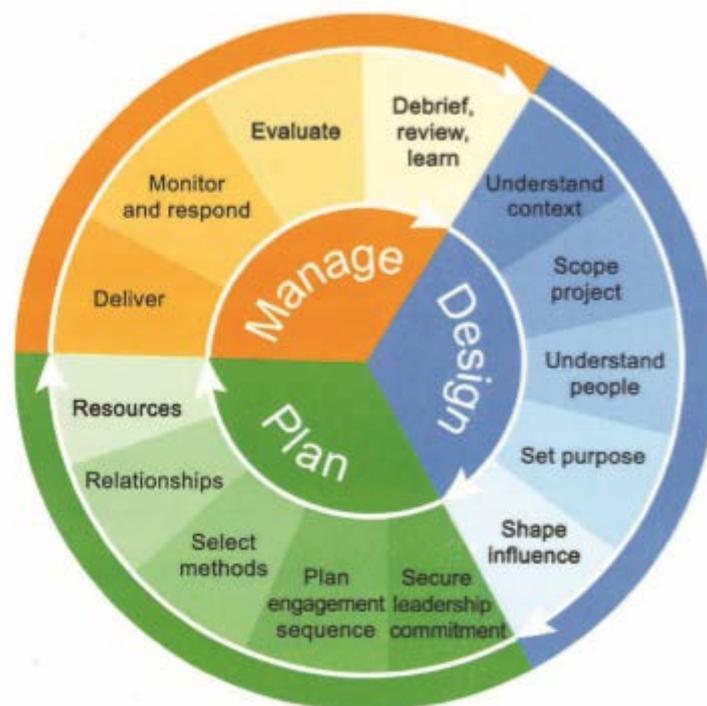
The finalisation and introduction of the new *Local Government Act 2018* will prescribe the development of a legislated Policy for all Council's to develop and adhere to. Council's current Policy will be updated to ensure Council meets its necessary legislated compliance to the new Act when introduced*.

At the time of writing this revision, it is anticipated that the Act will be introduced in 2018 with the Communication and Engagement Policy to be completed within six months of January 2019.

Revised Toolkit including the Communication and Engagement Design, Plan and Manage process – pages 11 to 13

Council staff and our community need clear and consistent processes for community engagement. The following step by step process has been designed as a guide to assist the design, planning and management of community engagement based on the IAP2 principles.

Specific tools and training have been developed to support Council staff to implement this process.

Bass Coast Shire Council Communication and Engagement Strategy 2015-18
Suggested Changes for Revised Edition March 2018

Step 1:

Decide whether to engage

Council will always engage our community where there is a legislated requirement to do so. Council is required to consider the type of community engagement when a proposed change or decision is likely to:

- Have significant impact on quality of life in the region
- Impact on services or facilities for residents and ratepayers
- Have a significant budgetary impact
- Involve a level of conflict, controversy or sensitivity

If one of these criteria is met, community engagement planning should commence. Some other questions to consider at this time are:

- Is the decision genuinely negotiable or has it already been made?
- Would seeking community involvement bring new perspectives and enhance decision making?
- Would it be a risk to proceed without seeking community views?
- Does the likely cost of engagement represent good value for ratepayers, given the scope and scale of the decision?

This step requires the person developing the engagement to 'Understand the Context, Scope and the People'.

Step 2:

Set objectives for community engagement

What is the purpose of community engagement for this project, decision or issue? Is the purpose to identify community need, generate ideas, gather local information and knowledge, share information about problems and potential solutions or obtain feedback on a proposed change or activity?

Use the IAP2 Public Participation spectrum to think about how much impact community engagement will have on decision-making processes. There should be clarity at the outset about the expected level (from inform through to empower), which will help set expectations and guide activities.

This step requires the person developing the engagement to 'Set the Purpose'.

Step 3:

Identify stakeholders for engagement

Who should have the opportunity to participate in community engagement? Key questions include:

- Who is likely to be directly impacted?
- Who may be indirectly impacted?

- Will particular geographic or other groups (eg seniors, young people, local business, industry groups, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and people with a disability) be affected?
- How will Councillors, staff and/or subject matter experts within Council contribute to engagement?

This Step requires the person developing the engagement to 'Shape Influence and Secure Leadership Commitment'.

Step 4:

Draft the engagement plan

In developing the engagement plan, consideration will be given to the following questions:
- What information will stakeholders need to contribute to informed decision-making?
- What tools will be required for this community engagement? The following list includes some examples at different levels of the IAP2 spectrum:

    - Social Media – Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.
    - Newsletters
    - Websites
    - Drop-ins sessions and Open houses
    - Pop-ups
    - Media releases
    - Advertisements
    - Public comment
    - Focus groups
    - Surveys
    - Public meetings
    - Workshops
    - Deliberative polling
    - Stakeholder Advocacy committees
    - Consensus building
    - Participatory decision-making
    - Stakeholder juries
    - Ballots
    - Delegated decisions

- What timelines are needed to ensure community members can be genuinely involved?
- How will data be gathered?
- How will the information be used in decision-making?
- How will it be reported back to our community?

This step requires the person developing the engagement to 'Plan the Engagement Sequence and Select the Methods'.

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Step 5:

Confirm and approve plan

- Staff will work with their community engagement champion, managers and the Communications and Engagement Team (eg on media, advertising and event support elements) to confirm the plan
- Where possible, the plan should be tested with key community stakeholders to ensure the approach meets community need
- Appropriate executive and/or Councillor approvals will be secured

This step requires the person developing the engagement to 'Manage the Relationships and Resources'

Step 6:

Implement plan

- The Community Engagement Register will be updated so that all staff and Councillors are aware of the activity
- The community will be advised in accordance with the methods outlined in the plan
- Engagement will commence

This Step requires the person developing the engagement to 'Deliver and Monitor the Engagement, Responding as needed'.

Step 7:

Report back to our community

- What engagement occurred?
- What did our community say?
- How has that informed or influenced decision making?
- Share the results (at a minimum, online). Where possible, participants should be contacted personally

This Step requires the person developing the engagement to 'Evaluate and Review the Engagement'.