POLICY

Policy Name	Community Engagement Policy
Policy Category	Statutory
Department / Officer	Office of the Chief Executive Officer / Strategy and Engagement Business Partner
Date Adopted	24 August 2026
Date/s Reviewed	
Review Frequency	Every Three years or as required
Strategic Plan Reference	Aspiration 6: We are a financially sustainable and well-governed organisation 6.2 Ensure our community is well informed and has opportunities to inform decision making.
Attachments	

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out how the City of Victor Harbor will undertake community engagement in accordance with Sections 50 and 50A of the *Local Government Act 1999* and the Community Engagement Charter. This Policy will provide a clear and consistent approach for informing, involving and consulting with the community to support transparent and accountable Council decision-making.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all statutory community engagement activities undertaken by Council in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1999* and the Community Engagement Charter. It is to be used by Council Members, employees, contractors and volunteers involved in the planning, delivery or evaluation of community engagement.

This Policy does not apply to processes governed by the *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016 (PDI Act)*, which is subject to the Community Engagement Charter and legislative requirements under the PDI Act.

3. Policy Statement (Summary)

The City of Victor Harbor is committed to delivering community engagement that is meaningful, inclusive, timely and proportionate to the significance and impact of decisions. Council will provide reasonable opportunities for community members to:

- Access clear and accurate information about proposed decisions
- Participate in engagement processes appropriate to the scope and impact of the matter

- Provide feedback that is genuinely considered in decision-making

Council will clearly communicate:

- What is proposed and the purpose of the proposal
- How community feedback will inform decision making
- How community input influenced the final outcome

Engagement activities will support constructive dialogue and be accessible to diverse community.

4. Legislation and Compliance

Section 50A of the *Local Government Act 1999*, requires Council to adopt a Community Engagement Policy and this policy must be consistent with the Community Engagement Charter which is established by the Minister for Local Government under Section 50 of the *Local Government Act 1999*.

5. Definitions

Act means the *Local Government Act 1999.*

Charter means the Minister for Local Government's Community Engagement Charter published in the South Australian Gazette on 11 December 2025.

Communications Team means the Communication Officer and Strategy and Engagement Business Partner.

Community means business owners and people who live, work, study, visit or do business in the City of Victor Harbor, and any stakeholders that may be affected by council decision/s.

Community Engagement means the process of seeking input or feedback from the community regarding a decision that may affect them. This includes any activity where council provides information on a decision or invites comments on a matter. For the purpose of this policy, community engagement and public consultation mean the same.

Community engagement toolkit means various tools designed to assist the staff and external consultants engaged by Council to implement community engagement. It provides a step-by-step guide to planning, promoting, delivering and reporting on community engagement activities.

Public consultation means the same as Community Engagement.

Senior Management Team means Chief Executive Officer, Director Corporate and Customer Service, Director Community and Development, Director Environment and Infrastructure and Group Manager Governance and Finance.

Stakeholders mean business owners, individuals or organised groups who have an interest in Council's decision-making and who are affected by council's decisions.

Submissions mean contributions made by members of the community and stakeholders, expressing an opinion in writing (including on Council's community engagement website) relating to a matter and/or proposal which will be considered in council's decision-making process.

6. Policy Content

6.1 Community Engagement Categories

Council will apply the following engagement categories in accordance with the Community Engagement Charter. Engagement requirements are set out for each category and must be applied proportionately, having regard to the scale, impact and level of community interest.

6.1.1 Significant – Annual Business Plan and Rating Policy

Minimum requirements:

- Publish information on Council website and in a local news publication
- Provide clear, plain language explanation of the proposal, purpose and impacts
- Explain how community feedback will inform the decision
- Invite submissions and provide clear instructions for participation
- Provide a minimum consultation period of 21 days
- Hold a public meeting where the community is invited to provide submissions (written or verbal), the public meeting may be part of a Council meeting or a separate event
- Provide a summary of community feedback to Council prior to decision-making

6.1.2 Significant

Minimum requirements:

- Publish information on Council website and in a local news publication
- Provide clear, plain language explanation of the proposal and its impacts
- Invite submissions and provide a minimum 21-day consultation period
- Invite people who have made a written submission to attend a council meeting to speak to their submission before the decision is made.
- Seek and consider community feedback
- Provide a summary of feedback to Council

6.1.3 Standard

Minimum requirements:

- Publish information on Council website
- Provide clear and accessible information about the proposal
- Invite submissions and provide an appropriate consultation period
- Seek and consider community feedback

6.1.4 Local

Minimum requirements:

- Target engagement to affected stakeholders or local community
- Use appropriate notification methods to reach impacted parties
- Provide accessible information and opportunity for feedback

6.1.5 Inform

Minimum requirements:

- Provide timely and accessible information to the affected community

6.2 Statutory Consultation Requirements

Where consultation requirements are prescribed under the *Local Government Act 1999*, Council will comply with those legislative obligations as a minimum standard. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Representative Reviews (Section 12)
- Status of a council/change of names (Section 13)
- Adoption or amendment of the Community Engagement Policy (Section 50)
- Strategic Management Plans (Section 122(6)
- By-laws (Section 249)
- Policies relating to Orders (Section 259)
- Stormwater Management Plans (Schedule 1A, Clause 16(2)(c))

For the above matters, Council will:

- Undertake all consultation steps required by the Act
- Apply additional engagement in accordance with this Policy and the Community Engagement Charter where appropriate
- Ensure engagement is proportionate to the significance and impact of the decision
- Council will undertake the engagement process specified by any Stormwater Management Authority Guidelines when acting under Division 3 of Schedule 1A of the Act.

6.3 Council decisions subject to Consultation

Where the *Local Government Act 1999* requires Council to follow its Community Engagement Policy, Council will undertake consultation in accordance with the requirements set out in this Policy and the Community Engagement Charter. This includes:

- Principal Office – Opening hours (Section 45)
- Code of Practice – Access to meetings and Documents (Section 92)
- Annual Business Plan (Section 123)
- Changes to the basis of rating (Section 151)
- Differential Rates (Section 156)
- Community land – Revocation of classification (Section 194)
- Community land – Management Plans (Sections 197 to 198)
- Community Land – lease or licence (Section 202)
- Roads – permits affecting traffic (Section 223)
- Vegetation planting with significant impact (Section 232)

For the above matters, Council will:

- Apply the engagement category in accordance with Clause 6.1.
- Undertake engagement proportionate to the significance and impact of the matter.
- Meet all mandatory requirements of the Charter relevant to the category.
- Follow the community engagement process outlined in Clause 6.4.

6.4 Community Engagement Process

The following outlines the community engagement process for community engagement categories:

1. Develop a Community Engagement Plan.

The Community Engagement Plan should:

- Identify the engagement category
- Defines objectives and methods
- Ensures accessibility and inclusivity

2. Obtain approval

The Community Engagement Plan should be endorsed by Council or Chief Executive Officer for the engagement approach.

3. Information Provision

Provide clear information that explains:

- The proposal
- The reason for the proposal
- The intended outcomes
- How feedback will be used

4. Engagement Delivery

Conduct engagement using methods appropriate to the category.

5. Feedback Collection and Analysis

Collect, collate and analyse all submissions and feedback

6. Community Engagement Submission Report

Prepare a community engagement submission report that:

- Summarises engagement activities, key themes and feedback
- Demonstrates how community input has influenced recommendations

7. Decision Making

Where a decision is required, Council considers the Community Engagement summary report and then makes a decision.

8. Closing the Loop

Council's decision should be clearly communicated to the community which outlines:

- The outcome
- The reasons for the decision
- How community feedback was considered and influenced the outcome

6.5 Discretionary Community Engagement

Council acknowledges that the *Local Government Act 1999* and the Community Engagement Charter may not prescribe engagement requirements for all decisions,

activities, or processes, and that Council is not obliged to assess or undertake community engagement for all such matters.

However, the Council or Chief Executive Officer may determine that community engagement beyond the minimum legislative or policy requirements should be undertaken. Consultation may be appropriate for projects involved:

- Significant capital expenditure
- Economic, social, environmental, or cultural importance
- High community interest
- Enhanced decision-making through public engagement.

Guidance materials such as the City of Victor Harbor Community Engagement Toolkit, Local Government Association of South Australia Community Engagement Framework and IAP2 resources may be referenced.

6.6 Roles and Responsibilities

6.6.1 Council

Council is responsible for:

- Making decisions under the Local Government Act on behalf of the Community
- Participating in and advocate for community engagement processes and activities
- Considering community input as part of its decision making along with other relevant information including legislation, policy, resources, expert advice and previous council decisions.

6.6.2 Chief Executive Officer

The Chief Executive Officer or delegate is responsible for:

- Leading and overseeing the implementation of the Community Engagement Policy across the organisation.
- Ensuring Council and all staff adhere to the Policy's principles and legislative requirements.

6.6.3 Directors

The Directors are responsible for ensuring council employees:

- Comply with this Policy; and
- Develop a community engagement plan for all relevant consultation and engagement activities

6.6.4 Communication Team

Communications Team are responsible for:

- Providing advice and assistance to council employees and the community in adhering to the Policy and drafting a community engagement strategy; and
- Reviewing the Policy

- Maintaining a register of recognised representative and peak bodies and ensuring registered bodies are notified directly when Council commences a community engagement process relevant to their members.

7. Risk Management

Council recognises that effective community engagement is critical to transparent, accountable and informed decision-making. The risks associated with community engagement are managed through the consistent application of this policy, the Charter and relevant legislative requirements.

8. Implementation/Delegations

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for the implementation and application of this policy, and where necessary reporting the outcomes of consultations to the Council.

Specific engagement activities to be undertaken in relation to any particular decision, activity or processes shall be determined on a case-by-case basis, by:

- Council, by resolution;
- the CEO;
- a delegate with the power to undertake community engagement under the Act, the Charter or this policy; or
- a delegate with power to make a decision or undertake an activity or process that requires community engagement under the Act, the Charter or this policy.

Council, the CEO or a delegate are not required by this policy to undertake, or to consider or determine whether to undertake, additional engagement activities or methods beyond those prescribed. Any decision to undertake engagement beyond the requirements of this Policy is made at the absolute discretion of the decision maker.

9. Related Documents

City of Victor Harbor Community Plan 2030
City of Victor Harbor Community Engagement Toolkit
Community Engagement Charter (11 December 2025)
IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

10. Availability of Policy

This policy is available on Council's website at www.victor.sa.gov.au.

Attachment 1

The table provided at Attachment 1 outlines the typical Community Engagement Charter category and minimum engagement requirements for common legislative matters. The table below is only a guide and each matter must be assessed individually to ensure appropriate categorisation and compliance with the Charter.

Matter	Legislation	Typical Charter Category	Minimum Engagement Requirement
Principal Office – Opening hours	Section 45	Inform / Standard	• Publish information on Council website • Provide clear and accessible information about the proposal • Invite submissions and provide an appropriate consultation period • Seek and consider community feedback • Provide timely and accessible information to the affected community
Code of Practice – Access to meetings and Documents	Section 92	Standard	• Publish information on Council website • Provide clear and accessible information about the proposal • Invite submissions and provide an appropriate consultation period • Seek and consider community feedback
Annual Business Plan	Section 123	Significant – ABP and Rating	• Publish information on Council website and in a local news publication • Provide clear, plain language explanation of the proposal, purpose and impacts • Explain how community feedback will inform the decision • Invite submissions and provide clear instructions for participation • Provide a minimum consultation period of 21 days • Hold a public meeting or provide equivalent opportunity for verbal submissions (The public meeting may be part of a council meeting or a separate event). • Provide a summary of community feedback to Council prior to decision-making

Changes to the basis of rating	Section 151	Significant – ABP and Rating	• Publish information on Council website and in a local news publication • Provide clear, plain language explanation of the proposal, purpose and impacts • Explain how community feedback will inform the decision • Invite submissions and provide clear instructions for participation • Provide a minimum consultation period of 21 days • Hold a public meeting or provide equivalent opportunity for verbal submissions (the public meeting may be part of a council meeting or a separate event). • Provide a summary of community feedback to Council prior to decision-making
Differential Rates	Section 156	Significant	• Publish information on Council website and in a local news publication • Provide clear, plain language explanation of the proposal and its impacts • Invite submissions and provide a minimum 21-day consultation period • Invite people who have made a written submission to attend a council meeting to speak to their submission before the decision is made. • Seek and consider community feedback • Provide a summary of feedback to Council
Community land – Revocation of classification	Section 194	Significant	• Publish information on Council website and in a local news publication • Provide clear, plain language explanation of the proposal and its impacts • Invite submissions and provide a minimum 21-day consultation period • Invite people who have made a written submission to attend a council meeting to speak to their submission before the decision is made.

			• Seek and consider community feedback • Provide a summary of feedback to Council
Community land – Management Plans (Adoption / Amendment)	Sections 197 to 198	Significant	• Publish information on Council website and in a local news publication • Provide clear, plain language explanation of the proposal and its impacts • Invite submissions and provide a minimum 21-day consultation period • Invite people who have made a written submission to attend a council meeting to speak to their submission before the decision is made. • Seek and consider community feedback • Provide a summary of feedback to Council
Community Land – lease or licence	Section 202	Significant	• Publish information on Council website and in a local news publication • Provide clear, plain language explanation of the proposal and its impacts • Invite submissions and provide a minimum 21-day consultation period • Invite people who have made a written submission to attend a council meeting to speak to their submission before the decision is made. • Seek and consider community feedback • Provide a summary of feedback to Council
Roads – permits affecting traffic	Section 223	Local / Inform	• Target engagement to affected stakeholders or local community • Use appropriate notification methods to reach impacted parties • Provide accessible information and opportunity for feedback

Vegetation planting with significant impact	Section 232	Local	• Target engagement to affected stakeholders or local community • Use appropriate notification methods to reach impacted parties • Provide accessible information and opportunity for feedback