



Ku-ring-gai Council

Policy

Community Engagement Policy

Version Number 1

Adopted: 17 August 2021

Effective: 18 August 2021



Community Engagement Policy

Table of Contents

Controlled Document Information	3
Authorisation Details	3
Related Document Information, Standards & References	3
Version History	3
Policy	4
Purpose and Objectives	4
Scope	4
Responsibilities	5
Policy Statement	6
Benefits of Effective Community Engagement	7
Engagement Principles	7
International Association of Public Participation (AP2) Spectrum	8
Engagement Practice	8
Definitions	10

Controlled Document Information

Authorisation Details

This is a Controlled Document. Before using this document check it is the latest version by referring to Council's Controlled Document Register. Unless otherwise indicated, printed or downloaded versions of this document are uncontrolled.			
Controlled Document Number:	176	TRIM Record No:	2020/364169
Controlled Document Type:	Policy		
Controlled Document Name:	Community Engagement Policy		
Version Number:	1		
Department:	Corporate Communications		
Distribution:	Internal and External		
Review Period: Max < 4 years	4 years	Next Review Date:	August 2025
Document Status:	Adopted		
Approval Type:	Council Resolution		
Version Start Date:	18 August 2021	Version End Date:	

Related Document Information, Standards & References

Related Legislation:	Local Government Act (NSW)1993 • Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 • Environment, Planning and Assessment Act (NSW) 1979 • Government Information (Public Access) Regulation 2009 • Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act (NSW) 1998	N/A
Related Policies (Council & Internal)	None	N/A
Related Documents - Procedures, Guidelines, Forms, WHS Modules/PCD's, Risk Assessments, Work Method Statements, etc.	International Association for Public Participation (2005) Planning for effective public participation Ku-ring-gai Community Participation Plan 2020	N/A
Other References	None	

Version History

Version Number	Version Start Date	Version End Date	Author	Details and Comments
1	18 August 2021		William Adames	First Version. Note this policy replaces the Community Consultation Policy.

Policy

Purpose and Objectives

The community and stakeholders of Ku-ring-gai have an important role in shaping the Council area. This policy is issued to outline Council's commitment to engaging with Ku-ring-gai's diverse community and to ensure that all sectors of the community are offered a range of equitable, accessible and appropriate opportunities to participate in Council engagement activities.

The policy aims to encourage participation in engagement and help support meaningful conversations with our community and stakeholders. This approach underpins Council's willingness to engage the community of Ku-ring-gai to contribute to accountable and transparent decision-making processes. It also assists Council to better understand the views and expectations of the community in Council activities and decision-making.

The objectives of the policy are to:

- Ensure that Council is informed of and able to respond to community needs and aspirations;
- Provide all sectors of the community with accessible and appropriate opportunities to participate in decision making on both present and future issues;
- Provide credibility and authenticity to community engagement processes by ensuring those who participated are informed of the outcome and where possible how their contribution effected the final decision;
- Ensure staff understand and effectively implement the Community Engagement Policy;

Scope

This policy applies to all Ku-ring-gai Councillors, employees of Council and external consultants employed as representatives of Council who organise or convene community engagement activities. Council will apply this policy to all projects and activities where it makes decisions that will potentially interest or impact the community or where a significant policy development or change occurs.

Legislative minimum required standards for community engagement/notification relating to planning matters are outlined in the Ku-ring-gai Community Participation Plan. The CPP covers areas including:

- Development and associated applications
- Planning Proposals
- Development Control Plans
- Contribution Plans
- Planning Agreements
- Local Strategic Planning Statements

Council understands the importance of local planning projects and how they can impact the community. Therefore, where appropriate Council may undertake additional engagement, guided by this policy, above the minimum notification requirements outlined in the CPP, to ensure the community is aware and can contribute to the project.

Responsibilities

The Elected Council is responsible for:

- Giving due consideration to community feedback captured through engagement when deciding on matters that may be of specific interest, or have a significant immediate, short medium or long-term impact on the community
- Supporting - through agreement and approval of budgets - and encouraging the application of best practice community engagement and where appropriate participating in community engagement activities.

The General Manager and Directors are responsible for:

- Ensuring that this Policy is properly implemented and applied across all departments of Council

Directors/Managers/Supervisors are responsible for:

- Applying this policy to ensure that community engagement is undertaken at a level appropriate with the project impact
- Maintaining an appropriate level of involvement in the engagement process

Project Coordinators/Contractors are responsible for:

- Liaising with the Community and Business Engagement Coordinator to identify and plan appropriate methods/techniques, timing and stakeholder groups
- Maintaining an appropriate level of community involvement in the decision making process
- Ensuring adequate feedback regarding engagement outputs is provided to all participants and where appropriate, to the wider community
- Evaluating engagement processes and outcomes to ensure continuous improvement
- Assisting to maintain the community engagement register

Community and Business Engagement Coordinator is responsible for:

- Providing ongoing support and advice to staff/contractors in planning and undertaking of community engagement
- Ensuring Council's Community Engagement Policy is regularly reviewed and meets best practice standards in local government
- Identifying training needs and development opportunities for staff in engagement
- Overseeing maintenance of the community engagement register

Manager Corporate Communications is responsible for:

- Ensuring compliance with this policy across all departments of Council
- Ensuring Council's Community Engagement Policy is regularly reviewed and meets best practice standards in local government

Policy Statement

Benefits of Effective Community Engagement

Effective Community Engagement:

- **Enables** Council to deliver projects, programs and services to its community more effectively
- **Assists** Council in accessing the rich and diverse knowledge and opinions of the Ku-ring-gai community to ensure decisions to meet all community stakeholder needs are robust and informed
- **Builds** positive relationships between the community and Council and enhances the reputation of Council

Effective community engagement is mutually beneficial for both the community and council:

- The **community benefits** by contributing their local and general knowledge, experience, skills and opinions to project and program development.
- The **Council benefits** by capturing this information whilst having the opportunity to seek feedback and test concepts and ideas with local people.

Effective engagement also creates opportunities to build, demonstrate and foster mutual respect and trust between Council and the community.

Ku-ring-gai Council's commitment to effective community engagement recognises the important connection between elected representatives, staff and the community and potential benefits derived by using these to make better decisions. This approach is in line with use of participatory democracy techniques by leading international, Federal, State and Local Government agencies.

Genuine engagement with the community underpins sustainable decision-making. Sustainable decisions are technically feasible, economically viable (now and in the future), environmentally compatible, and publicly acceptable (within legal and legislative frameworks). A commitment to continuous improvement in this area helps to ensure that decisions reflect the needs and aspirations of both present and future generations.

One of the outcomes of this policy is to build the 'social capital' of the community. Bringing the community together to jointly share in the responsibilities of decision-making can translate to an increased level of trust in and knowledge of public administration and to help clarify Council's levels of responsibility while improving the overall relationship between the community and Council.

Engagement Principles

In practice, Council is committed to robust and transparent engagement practices, where all affected community stakeholders have an opportunity to participate. Council's engagement:

- Has clear aims and objectives
- Is adequately resourced (staff, budget and time)
- Is undertaken appropriately for the scope and impact of the project
- Is inclusive and accessible for the community to participate
- Seeks to meet best practice and continuously improve and adapt to changing needs of the community.

These principles align with **NSW Social Justice Principles**:

- **Equity** - There is fairness in decision making and prioritising and allocation of resources.
- **Access** – All people have fair access to services, resources and opportunities to meet their basic needs and improve their quality of life.
- **Participation** – Everyone has the maximum opportunity to genuinely participate in decisions that affect their lives.
- **Rights** – Everyone's rights are recognised and promoted.

International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum

Council's approach to engagement also seeks to meet the industry standard for community engagement. The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum illustrates that a variety of engagement techniques will reflect the IAP2 spectrum including:

- **Inform** – We will keep you informed.
- **Consult** – We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.
- **Involve** – 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.
- **Collaborate** – 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.

Engagement Practice

When Council will engage the community

Community engagement will be undertaken when Council considers that a decision or project is likely to have a direct or indirect impact on either whole or part of the community. The extent of engagement will be guided by the:

- Anticipated level of impact, be it positive or adverse
- The extent of existing data to convey community views on the topic
- Community appetite for engagement.

A number of situations will trigger engagement by Council, including:

1. In response to issues raised and/or engagement initiated by the community
2. Where proposed changes are likely to impact on the community, including service and program planning, development, project delivery or policy change
3. In planning the strategic direction of Council, and/or
4. When required by law, policy or agreement with a government agency or statutory body.

Community engagement will not occur in circumstances, which relate to minor operational matters, confidential or commercial in confidence information, or when Council must make emergency or safety related decisions.

Who will Council engage

For each engagement, Council will identify the communities, or stakeholders who are impacted and seek to engage with them to ensure appropriate feedback is available to guide project or decision-making.

This can include anyone who lives, works, plays, visits, studies or has an interest in the Ku-ring-gai local government area.

Engagement timeframes

The community will be involved at appropriate points in the project cycle, which will allow input based on project objectives and potential community impacts. Council will seek to provide the community adequate time to participate and aim where possible to run engagement for a minimum of 28 days (4 weeks). If school holidays occur in these periods, extensions will be considered, if possible.

Council will avoid community engagement during the summer holidays. All engagement projects will conclude prior to Ordinary Meeting of Council in December or commence after the beginning of the third week in January, unless under exceptional circumstances.

The above timeframes do not apply to matters associated with the Ku-ring-gai Traffic Committee, which work to different timeframes to align with meeting cycles and to address safety critical issues.

Accessible and Inclusive Engagement

Participants in the community engagement process should be valued, respected and welcome, regardless of gender, age, ability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and other attributes.

In undertaking any engagement, Council will ensure that our diverse communities can access, understand, and contribute to the process in a way that is appropriate, productive, and respectful.

Engagement will seek to understand and address barriers to participation at every stage of engagement from design, implementation, analysis through to monitoring and evaluation.

Promoting participation opportunities

Council will use a range of communications techniques to encourage participation in engagement projects. Mechanisms employed will be selected based on the target audience, anticipated community impact and interest, and value for money against the scope/scale and importance of the project. Consideration will be given to equity and access, as well as the use of digital and traditional communications mechanisms.

Reporting and Evaluation

Council will aim to inform the community on how its feedback has influenced a decision or project, including reporting on community engagement outcomes.

Where appropriate, access to a summary of engagement, including the communications and engagement methodology, key issues, findings, and where/how these were applied to project decisions will be provided to the community.

Outcomes reports and/or engagement summaries will be written in plain language and available via Councils website.

Council will also evaluate the effectiveness of its engagement processes to aid continuous improvement in its engagement activities. Key project information including lessons learned will be recorded in the Community Engagement register which will be used to plan future engagement and ensure the data captured from all engagement projects can be used across all Council operations. The evaluation process will also seek to measure if objectives of the engagement process were met and that the principles of this policy were effectively applied.

Definitions

Term / Abbreviation	Definition
Community	Refers to the people who have a stake and interest in the Ku-ring-gai Local Government Area (LGA) and includes people who: live, work, study, conduct business, visit, use or enjoy the services, facilities and public places located within the LGA.
Community Engagement	The involvement of the community in the decision making process of Council, where the community is encouraged to provide feedback on a range of issues that affect them.
Stakeholders	Individuals or groups who have an interest or are impacted by the decisions of Council, these may include business representatives, professional associations, local community groups, or other levels of Government and Government agencies.