

12.6**Directorate****Director****Manager****Attachment(s)****Draft Community Engagement Policy**

People, Partnerships and Performance

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1. Draft Community Engagement Policy 2024 [12.6.1 - 19 pages]
2. Your Say Consultation Feedback - CE Policy - 2024 [12.6.2 - 5 pages]

Purpose

For Council to consider the final draft Community Engagement Policy, at **Attachment 1**.

Officer Recommendation**That Council:**

- a. **Having considered submissions received on the draft Community Engagement Policy, adopts the final draft Community Engagement, at Attachment 1 to this report.**
- b. **Writes to submitters thanking them for their submissions on the draft Community Engagement Policy and advising of Council's decision.**

Background

Under the *Local Government Act 2020 (the Act)* all Councils must adopt and maintain a community engagement policy that has been developed in consultation with community, and that gives effect to the community engagement principles listed in *the Act*.

Brimbank's current Community Engagement Policy was adopted in 2021 and was due for review in 2023.

In July 2022, Council approved the Revised Community Engagement Policy 2021. This included an update to the Policy which allows for the remuneration of a Community Panel. The Community Panel is a group of community members who are available for Council to consult on important projects, plans, issues, and strategies in a targeted and effective manner. The Brimbank Community Voice (BCV) was established in June 2023.

In December 2022, Council endorsed a further resolution to be enacted following the establishment of the Community Panel. This resolution stated that Council undertakes a process of deliberative engagement in 2023 to inform a full review and update of the Community Engagement Policy.

Following the deliberative engagement process, a Draft Community Engagement Policy 2023 was presented to Council at the December Ordinary Council Meeting 2023 and endorsed for broad community consultation.

Matters for Consideration

Broad community consultation between 5 February – 3 March 2024 showed significant support of the Draft Policy with 65% of respondents in support of the Draft Policy.

Respondents also agreed, or strongly agreed with:

- Support of the Statement of Policy Principles 82%
- Support of 'how' Council engages 79%

No further updates were made to the Draft Policy as a result of broad community consultation.

The final Draft Community Engagement Policy (Draft Policy) is informed by:

- The *Victorian Local Government Act 2020*
- The International Association of Public Participation
- Victorian Auditor General's Office Better Practice Guide: Public Participation in Government Decision Making
- Benchmarking with other local Victorian Councils
- Workshops with Councillors and staff
- Deliberative engagement process with Brimbank Community Voice
- Broad community consultation.

Based on the above, the following updates have been made when compared to the previous policy, and are reflected in the final Draft Policy (**Attachment 1**):

Area	Details of change	Reason
Principles: Fairness	Inclusion of 'remuneration' as part of the support and practical assistance Council offers community members to access and participate in community engagement opportunities.	Previously, the policy stated participants in community engagement activities would be unremunerated. This does not align with best practice standards in accessibility and the establishment of the BCV Panel.
Policy Scope	Expansion of policy scope definition to be clear that this policy applies to 'community engagement activities as directed by Council, recommended by Council officers, or legislated by the Victorian Local Government Act 2020', and no other processes such as community and service requests or complaints.	Addresses BCV feedback about how and when Council applies this policy
Definitions	Expansion of definitions in the policy to include terms not previously covered, and extension of community engagement resources/processes. Additional or amended definitions include: BCV; community; consultants/contractors; Councillors; deliberation; International Association of Public Participation (IAP2); participatory engagement; public participation; stakeholders.	Staff and BCV panel members highlighted the need for additional definitions to capture the extension of community engagement resources at Brimbank, the inclusion of BCV.

New section: What is Community Engagement?	Not included in previous policy.	To provide a clear description of Community Engagement and its link to IAP2, and articulate that this policy adopts the IAP2 standards and principles. Supports community, staff and Councillors understanding of the public participation spectrum. Feedback from staff, Councillors and BCV requested clarity on what informs community engagement activities.
New section: Policy Influence	Expands the policy link to IAP2.	To clearly articulate and expand on <i>how</i> community engagement at Brimbank is linked to IAP2 standards and principles. Feedback from staff, Councillors and BCV requested clarity on what informs community engagement activities.
Update: When we engage	Expansion of several types of engagement.	A more detailed explanation of when Council engages and external influences on engagement. Feedback from staff, Councillors and BCV requested clarity on what informs community engagement activities.
Update: Who we engage	Expansion of different stakeholders, including examples of community stakeholder and the BCV.	The BCV was not formed when the previous policy was written. Provides community with examples of all the different stakeholders Council engages with.
Update: Roles and Responsibilities	Inclusion of the role of Mayor as prescribed in s18c of the Victorian Local Government Act 2020.	As prescribed in s18c of the Act, the Mayor is to lead engagement with the community on the development of the Council Plan.
Document format	Reformatting of policy document.	To reflect standard policy document format.

The final Draft Policy articulates Council's commitment to undertaking best practice community engagement to effectively inform decision making processes. It provides

guiding principles and approaches that are key to designing engagement opportunities for authentic community participation.

To support the implementation of the Draft Policy a comprehensive Community Engagement Toolkit (Toolkit) is being developed. The Toolkit will operationalise the principles of the Draft Policy. It will guide staff through the necessary tools and strategies required to encourage active participation in civic decision-making processes.

In addition to the methodologies prescribed by the International Association of Public Participation spectrum, the Toolkit will also include guidance and strategies on:

- Supports required by community members to participate in civic decision-making processes (e.g.: accessibility supports, Auslan, translators, transport assistance, childcare, hybrid activities, etc).
- Engaging with First Nations people.
- Engaging lesser heard demographic groups (e.g.: children and young people, seniors, CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse) communities, disability groups).
- Remuneration options for community members participating in engagement activities.

The Toolkit is scheduled for completion in June 2024.

Community Engagement

Following Council's endorsement at the Council Meeting December 2023, the Draft Policy was released for community consultation for a period of four weeks from 5 February to 3 March 2024.

Consultation included:

- Broad municipal wide engagement through Council's online interactive 'Your Say' web page.
- Issuing a media release about consultation on the draft policy.
- Promotion on Council's social media channels and customer facing centres.
- Promotion through targeted emails and newsletters to various stakeholders such as community groups and service providers.

A total of 24 residents provided feedback through Council's Your Say interactive engagement web page.

The consultation sought response to understand:

1. Community support of the engagement principles.
2. Aspects of the community engagement process important to the community.
3. How community would like to take part in community consultations.

In addition to broad community consultation on the 'Your Say' web page, the draft Policy has also been informed by workshops with Councillors and staff, and a deliberative engagement process with BCV.

The workshops provided an opportunity to:

- Learn about and review the current community engagement policy.
- Identify areas for improvement and offer suggestions.
- Consider how key stakeholders will work with the policy.

The feedback from the broad community consultation, and workshops with Councillors, staff and BCV confirmed widespread support for the draft Policy.

A summary of the broad community consultation outcomes is included at **Attachment 2** to this report. The priority themes across all consultation can be summarised as follows:

Priority themes
Community-centred Governance Council works together with community, and community feels involved and valued.
Community Empowerment and Trust-building Engagement is transparent and accessible and builds community trust in decision-making. Council ensures diverse communities are engaged.
Effective Civic Participation and Community Impact Engagement leads to better decisions and makes a difference. Council engages on difficult issues.

Feedback from the broad community consultation is being used to inform the development of the staff Community Engagement Toolkit, due for completion in June 2024.

Resource And Risk Implications

Resource requirements can be met within the Annual Budget 2023/2024.

Community: potential impact on community, including public trust and customer service impact

- Yes – Council reviewing and updating its approach to community engagement in consultation with community members is a crucial factor in building trust with the community in Council decision making.

Regulatory: legal, legislative, or regulatory implications including the rights/obligations of stakeholders

- Yes - The *Local Government Act 2020* requires Council to adopt and maintain a Community Engagement Policy that is developed in consultation with the community. The current Community Engagement Policy 2021 is due for review in 2023.

There are no Environmental, Financial or Safety risks identified.

Legislation/Council Plan/Policy Context

This report supports the Council Plan 2021-2025 strategic direction and objective of:

4. Leadership and Governance - A high performing organisation that enacts the vision and decisions of Council through the delivery of quality and innovative services - A fairer place for all

- Engaged and Responsive - Community insights are valued to enhance connection and engagement with Council
- High Performing and Accountable - Our workforce strive to enhance services and liveability for the Brimbank community.

This report complies with Brimbank Community Engagement Policy 2021 and requirements under the *Local Government Act 2020* and the requirements of the following:

- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- *Public Administration Act 2004*
- *Planning and Environment Act 1987*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*
- *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*
- *Child Safe Standards, Victorian Commission for Children and Young People*
- *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2004*
- *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011*
- *Gender Equality Act 2020*

Council officers contributing to the preparation and approval of this report, have no conflicts of interests to declare.



DRAFT Community Engagement Policy 2024

Contents

1	POLICY PURPOSE	4
2	POLICY SCOPE.....	4
3	DEFINITIONS	5
4	STATEMENT OF POLICY PRINCIPLES	6
5	SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS	7
6	ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.....	15
7	POLICY OWNERSHIP	17
8	APPROVAL.....	17
9	RELATED POLICIES & LEGISLATION	17

1 POLICY PURPOSE

Our community and stakeholders play a vital role in shaping Brimbank. Community engagement is considered to be an essential component of good governance and leadership.

The purpose of this policy is to guide best practice community engagement in order to effectively inform Council decision-making processes.

The Brimbank Community Engagement Policy (the Policy) provides guiding principles and approaches that are key to designing engagement opportunities for authentic community participation. These are in accordance with the Victorian Local Government Act 2020, the Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO)¹ Public Participation Principles and the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2)².

2 POLICY SCOPE

2.1 This policy covers

All community engagement activities as directed by Council, recommended by Council officers, or legislated by the Victorian *Local Government Act 2020*.

2.2 This policy applies to

Councillors, all Council service areas, teams and employees, as well as contractors and consultants undertaking work on behalf of Council.

Applying the policy should start at the planning stage of any project or initiative, when a change in service, activities or infrastructure is considered; when an issue is raised and requires community or stakeholder input for a decision; or when more information or evidence is required.

Engagement may be required at multiple stages within a project, program or development.

2.3 This policy does not cover

Community engagement processes that are subject to prescribed processes such as land-use planning applications and amendments to the planning scheme or other Council processes such as community and service requests or complaints.

Council may not engage when it has an adopted policy, strategy or decision that determines a clear direction for implementation which has already been the subject of appropriate community engagement.

3 DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy, Council adopts the following definitions:

¹ An independent officer of the Victorian Parliament that audits public sector agencies.

² A global member association which seeks to promote and improve the practice of public participation or community and stakeholder engagement

Term	Definition
Community	Includes individuals or groups who live, work, play, study, visit, invest in or pass through Brimbank City Council.
Community Engagement	A planned process with the specific purpose of working with individuals, groups and organisations to encourage active involvement and influence in decisions that affect them or are of interest to them.
Consultants/ Contractors	External organisations/individuals who at times assist or lead Council engagement processes.
Council	Brimbank City Council being a body corporate constituted as a municipal Council under the Local Government Act 1989. A local government authority responsible for providing various municipal services and functions to the residents and businesses within its jurisdiction.
Councillors	Individuals holding the office of a member of Brimbank City Council.
Deliberation	Long and careful consideration or discussion.
Deliberative engagement	The process of obtaining public feedback through long and careful consideration or discussion. Deliberative engagements take place at the highest three levels of influence on the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum, 'Involve', 'Collaborate' or 'Empower'.
IAP2	IAP2 is an international organisation advancing the practice of public participation.
Participatory engagement	A process of obtaining public feedback on analysis, alternatives or decisions. Participatory engagement typically occurs when feedback is invited on ideas, alternatives or draft documents.
Representative engagement	A process to ensure feedback is received from the people who will be impacted by an upcoming project or policy.
Public participation	An alternative definition to 'community engagement'.
Stakeholders	An individual, group or organisation with a strong interest in the decisions of Council and are directly impacted by their outcomes.
Brimbank Community Voice Panel (BCV)	A group of community members who have registered to take part in Council surveys, workshops, focus groups, discussions and other forms of deliberative engagement as required.

4 STATEMENT OF POLICY PRINCIPLES

Council's commitment to community engagement is underpinned by six (6) core principles that guide the way it plans and delivers engagement opportunities and activities. The principles have been

informed by the [community engagement principles](#)³ set out under Section 56 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

4.1 Responsiveness

Council values the insights of our community and respects the time and effort the community gives towards informing our decision making. Therefore, Council will allow sufficient time for review of information and respond to the engagement and input from the community in a timely and constructive manner.

4.2 Fairness

Council values the insights of our community and ensures that it makes decisions and provides advice based on merit and without bias, favouritism or self-interest. Council ensures that community engagement participants are entitled to reasonable support to enable meaningful and informed engagement. Support may include practical assistance with access and information through such things as transport, child care, remuneration for time, information translation, and interpretation.

4.3 Accountability

Council is committed to being clear about the scope and objectives of the engagement. This will demonstrate that results and outcomes are consistent with the commitment made at the outset of the process.

4.4 Transparency and integrity

Council will ensure those affected by a Council decision understand the scope of the pending decision, the decision-making process, and any constraints on this process.

Transparency is key to the engagement process, and Council commits to be clear about the contribution participants are asked to make, and the responsibilities associated with this.

Council is committed to sharing the engagement findings and clearly communicating decisions back to the public in a way they understand.

4.5 Respect

Council shows respect and makes every reasonable effort to include all of our community in community engagement processes, taking into account the needs of diverse communities to be able to participate meaningfully.

4.6 Human Rights

Council promotes human rights and takes into account strategies and legislations that shape the approach to public participation e.g. Brimbank Social Justice Charter, Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.

5 SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

5.1 What is Community Engagement?

Community engagement is based on the democratic idea that everyone who is affected by an issue

³ <https://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au/council-governance/local-government-act-2020/principles-of-the-local-government-act-2020> Attachment 12.6.1

that impacts them and/or their community should have a say in the decision-making around it.

For the purposes of this policy we have adopted the recognised definition of the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2):

'Community engagement is a planned process with the specific purpose of working with individuals, groups and organisations to encourage active involvement and influence in decisions that affect them or are of interest to them.'

Community engagement is sometimes also referred to as public participation.

5.2 Why we engage the community

Community engagement is much more than just getting feedback on a policy or project. Effective and authentic community engagement:

- Leads to better decisions because it provides evidence-based information and gives wider perspectives on issues.
- Builds community ownership, or at the very least, appreciation of the rationale for a particular decision.
- Builds trust with the community through being transparent and responsive to community input. Strengthens relationships and partnerships with community which can be used at later stages of the project or for other projects.
- Increases the community's knowledge and understanding of the issues around the project or policy.

5.3 Policy influence

Brimbank City Council is guided by the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation to deliver its consultation projects. IAP2 is recognised as the international leader and peak body for the community and stakeholder engagement sector.

The IAP2 spectrum demonstrates the possible types of engagement with stakeholders and communities across five levels.

In planning a community engagement process, Council staff will determine at which levels we will engage based on the significance, complexity and anticipated level of impact on what is being proposed, and what corresponding commitment we will make to stakeholders and/or the community. This decision will guide the nature and methods of engagement.

The Community Engagement Framework that supports this policy aims to maximise community participation, and contains a range of engagement techniques that can be used to achieve the most effective outcomes.

The Community Engagement Framework includes a set of guidelines for different methodologies and tools for a variety of outcomes across the IAP2 spectrum.

IAP2 Engagement Spectrum					
	Inform	Consult	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Public participation goal	<i>Provide the public with balanced and objective</i>	<i>To obtain public feedback on</i>	<i>To work directly with the public throughout</i>	<i>To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision</i>	<i>To place the final decision making in</i>

	<i>information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives, opportunities and or/solutions.</i>	<i>analysis, alternatives and/or decision.</i>	<i>the process to ensure that the concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.</i>	<i>including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.</i>	<i>the hands of the public.</i>
Role of community and/or stakeholders	Listen	Contribute	Participate	Partner	Lead
Our commitment to community	We will keep the community informed.	We will keep the community informed, listen to issues and provide feedback as to how input will affect the decision.	We will ensure aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives and provide feedback as to how input will affect the decision.	We will look to the community for advice and incorporate this advice into the alternatives.	We will implement what you decide.
Examples of tools and techniques	Communication tools: - Promotional posters - media releases - information on website - social media - Fact sheets - Newsletter - Door knocking	- Your Say Brimbank website - Public meetings - Surveys - Public comment - Listening post - Open house	- Your Say Brimbank website - Workshops - Focus groups - Forums - Planning groups	-Your Say Brimbank website - Advisory committees - Deliberative polling - Consensus building - Community panels	-Your Say Brimbank website - Citizens' jury - Ballots
Brimbank's Approach	Participatory engagement		Deliberative engagement		
Examples of when this engagement level may be appropriate	- In the event of an emergency - Undertaking a playground redevelopment		- Seeking input from Advisory Committees on key initiatives, strategies and plans - Facilitated discussions on developing community vision key directions - Development of the Community Vision, Council Plan, Financial Plan and Asset Plan		

A project may involve one or more of the above levels of consultation depending on the complexity of the project and the decision which needs to be made. Legislative requirements can also restrict the level at which Council engages.

5.4 Types of community engagement

Council undertakes a range of community engagement activities which can broadly be defined as participatory or deliberative engagement practice. Most of Council's community engagement projects are likely to include both practices at various levels.

Attachment 12.6.1

5.4.1 Participatory Engagement

Participatory practices take place at the first two levels of influence on the spectrum, 'Inform' and 'Consult' and involve one-way information exchange either from Council to community, or community to Council. Participatory engagement typically occurs when feedback is invited on ideas, alternatives or draft documents. Examples of participatory engagement practices may include surveys, listening posts, polls, ideas gathering, making a local law, acquiring or selling land and submissions.

5.4.2 Deliberative Engagement

Deliberative practices take place at the highest three levels of influence on the IAP2 spectrum; 'Involve', 'Collaborate' or 'Empower'. Deliberative engagement allows for discussions and the possibility of consensus if needed.

The key features of a deliberative process are to come to a decision by providing information, prioritising and weighing solutions. Deliberation can be scaled to fit the size and impact of the project. Some projects may require a skilled facilitator to ensure a fair and equitable process.

This method is best suited for projects with an outcome that will have a far reaching or long term effect, and issues where there is considerable community concern or division about the options. Examples of deliberative practices in Brimbank may include:

- Working with committees, advisory groups or reference groups over time.
- Participants are asked to consider and prioritise ideas.
- A representative group participates in a series of information sharing and discussions so as to reach a consensus.

5.4.3 Statutory requirements

As a local government, Brimbank City Council is required to meet a wide variety of legislative obligations. Many of these obligations relate to when and how engagement must occur, such as the *Local Government Act 2020*. Brimbank City Council will meet all of its legislative engagement requirements and this policy is designed to complement and support these existing requirements.

Council will ensure the community is invited to participate in the development of its strategic plans and that engagement opportunities give effect to the principles listed in this *Policy*.

5.4.4 Community Engagement Approach

Item	Community Engagement Approach
Community Vision	Deliberative engagement
Council Plan	Deliberative engagement
Financial Plan	Deliberative engagement
Asset Plan	Deliberative engagement
Budget	Participatory engagement
Making of a Local Law	Participatory engagement
Acquiring or selling land	Participatory engagement
Other statutory and non-statutory plans, strategies, policies, service planning and capital works projects	To be selected depending on the complexity of the matter

5.5 When we engage the community

5.5.1. Legislated community engagement

Some elements of community engagement are directed by statutory requirements. The *Local Government Act 2020 (the Act)* requires that a Council must adopt and maintain a Community Engagement Policy.

The Act further sets out minimum requirements for Council to apply their Community Engagement Policy in the development of the following long term plans: Planning and Financial management, Community Vision, Financial Plan, Revenue and rating planning, Asset Plan and a four-year Council Plan.

In addition, the Community Engagement Policy will guide the development of other statutory obligations such as the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan and the Council's Local Laws

5.5.2 Non-legislated community engagement

Council is committed to the notion that good governance is based on the belief that those impacted by a decision may have important contributions to make in a decision-making process. Council will engage with the community on decisions beyond mandated legislation to ensure we are achieving the best possible community outcomes.

Council will promote opportunities for the community to actively participate in the following processes:

- Where a proposed change to Council activities or strategic direction may significantly affect the community in terms of the economy, lifestyle, environment, wellbeing or amenity of the municipality.
- When developing new or reviewing existing policies, strategies or plans.
- Introducing a new service; discontinuing an existing service; or substantially changing or reviewing a service that may significantly affect how services are provided.
- Proposals for changing the way in which public space looks, is used or enjoyed.
- Planning and development of major projects and capital works, including public buildings, centres or other infrastructure.
- Urban development/redevelopment proposals, such as structure plans, that may significantly alter the existing amenity or characteristics of a geographic area.
- Any circumstance where Council needs more information or evidence to make an informed decision.

5.5.2 Circumstances where Council's engagement with the community will be limited

There are times when Council's level of engagement with the community and key stakeholders will be limited. In certain circumstances, Council may only be able to inform the community and stakeholders of Council's decisions and actions. Examples include when:

- Council is not the lead agency
- An immediate resolution is required
- There is a risk to public safety
- Specialist or technical expertise is required
- An initiative involves confidential or commercial information
- There are clear and defined legislative responsibilities that must be met
- Developing or reviewing internal policies and procedures.

5.6 Who we engage

Seeking a diverse range of views on the plans, strategies and policies of Council is imperative to ensure that community engagement and feedback is representative of the whole community.

Attachment 12.6.1

We understand that some of our stakeholders face barriers to participate in the Council decision

making process. We commit to designing and delivering engagement methods that will reach and encourage participation by groups that are diverse for example in age, gender, culture, abilities and socio-economic background. This includes encouraging participation through community groups, sporting groups, faith groups, and cultural groups.

Council notes that in accordance with section 56 of *the Act*, '*Participants in community engagement must be representative of the persons and groups affected by the matter that is the subject of the community engagement*'.

Where possible and relevant, Council seeks to recruit members of the Brimbank Community Voice Panel and/or community members with 'lived experience' of the issue, plan or policy under consultation. As part of community engagement, Council may also seek input directly from a range of the existing community-based organisations, clubs and groups in Brimbank.

Examples of our community stakeholder groups include:

- Business owners and workers
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents
- Neighbourhood houses and community centres
- Resident associations
- Carers
- Residents including ratepayers and renters
- Children and young people
- Non-resident ratepayers
- Rough sleepers
- Community advocacy groups (e.g. 'Friends of...')
- Not-for-profit services
- Schools and education providers
- Kindergartens and childcare centres
- Council service users
- Older people
- Service groups
- Culturally and linguistically diverse people
- Shoppers and diners
- Other government agencies and tiers of government
- Sports and recreation clubs
- Parents and guardians
- Students
- Diverse groups such as the LGBTQIA+ community
- Emergency services
- Park users
- Visitors
- Families
- People with disability
- Heritage groups
- Motorists
- History interest groups
- Arts and culture community
- Business and industry
- Police
- Environmental groups
- Seniors
- Local, State and Federal MPs
- Council employees
- Students
- Public transport users
- Active transport users
- Local media
- Social media pages

Attachment 12.6.1

5.6.1. Brimbank Community Voice Panel

Brimbank Community Voice is a program that supports Brimbank Council to further embed community engagement within the organisation and meet the priority of deliberative engagement under the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Brimbank Community Voice is intended to empower the community to participate in civic decision making, and remove barriers to Council Officers undertaking engagement by providing a representative cohort of the community to draw on for engagement opportunities.

5.6.2. External stakeholder organisations

Along with the community stakeholders, Council is committed to working with other service providers, funding bodies and agencies that are external to Council that provide a deep understanding of broad issues, technical input, support, facilitation and parameters that surround a decision. Some examples of external stakeholder organisations include: Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Department of Health and Human Services, VicRoads, Victorian Planning Authority, neighbouring Councils etc.

5.6.3. Committees, advisory groups or reference groups

These may be linked to certain Council assets or Council portfolios and have their own terms of reference. These committees are reviewed at the start of each Council term.

Examples of committees may include:

- LeadWest Committee
- Audit and Risk Committee
- Brimbank Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reconciliation Action Plan Consultative Committee
- Brimbank Arts Advisory Committee
- Brimbank Economic Employment Advisory Group
- Brimbank Youth Council
- Chief Executive Officer Employment Matters Committee
- Disability Advisory Committee
- Heritage Advisory Committee
- Safety Wellbeing Partnership
- Social Justice Coalition – Strategic Implementation Group
- St Albans Town Centre Partnership Group
- Sunshine Town Centre Partnership Group
- Sydenham Park Consultative Committee
- Brimbank Community Fund
- Brooklyn Community Representative Group
- Calder Highway Improvement Committee
- Cleanaway Community Benefit Fund – Review Panel
- Local Government Working Group on Gambling
- Melbourne Regional Landfill Community Reference Group
- Metropolitan Local Government Waste Forum
- Western Melbourne Tourism.

5.7 How we engage

Council will call for different levels of engagement based on significance, complexity and anticipated level of impact on what is being proposed and the stakeholders to be targeted.

Care will be taken to adhere to the engagement principles, set clear engagement objectives and consider statutory processes, community interest, opportunities for co-designing engagement projects, political sensitivity, time, resources and budget constraints.

The communication channels and engagement methods we use will be those suitable to the purpose and those our community prefer, and we will ensure their accessibility. We are committed to engagement that is representative of the individuals and groups that are affected by a proposed Council outcome or decision.

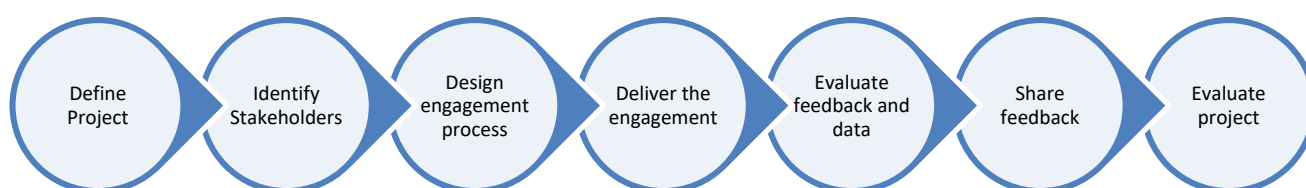
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We will use Council channels to keep our participants and the broader community informed of the engagement outcomes and let them know how their feedback has been used to inform Council outcomes or decision making.

We value and recognise the contribution of participants who have given up their time to provide feedback or attend engagement activities.

5.7.1 Community engagement process

Council's approach to the design and delivery of engagement practices consists of seven key phases:



Step 1: Defining the project

The project must have a clearly defined scope, purpose and objectives so the community understand the level of influence they have on the decision-making process and are provided with transparent information.

Step 2: Identifying stakeholders

This stage seeks to determine who needs to be involved, and how they will be involved and their level of interest. There must be a process of both external and internal stakeholder mapping to ensure that those directly impacted by the project, or have interest or influence, will have the opportunity to participate in the decision making process.

Step 3: Designing the engagement process

With a clear understanding of project parameters and key stakeholders, Council determines the level of engagement based on the IAP2 level of engagement. The IAP2 spectrum identifies and defines each of the five levels of engagement. It details promise to the community and example methodologies for each level of engagement ensuring that both Council and the community have shared expectations and understanding of the commitment to engage.

Participatory engagement and deliberative engagement methods and formats will be scaled to suit project complexity and the level of influence. Therefore where deliberation is deemed essential, Council will be further guided by the following five (5) deliberative engagement principles:⁴

1. **Randomly selected participants** are selected through a process using, as far as possible, a random selection that provides as unbiased and representative cross-section of the community as practical. This selection process is applicable to Brimbank Community Voice Panel.

2. **Ample time is allowed** for participants to understand the issue, weigh up the options put forward and make thoughtful and informed recommendations.
3. **There is a clear remit.** Council should provide a clearly defined scope of interest that openly shares the problem to be addressed.
4. **Upfront authority.** Participants must be assured that Council will give careful consideration to their recommendations.
5. **Provision of a broad range of information** representing a diversity of viewpoints must be available for deliberations to lead to an informed and considered outcome.

Step 4: Delivering the engagement

A project and engagement plan must be developed prior to engaging the community. During this process much consideration is taken to understand best practices to encourage community members to participate and mitigate any barriers to participation. Consideration and emphasis is placed on ensuring Council practice our Policy Principles. Council connect with existing networks, go to where the community is and impact lies, consider provision of accessible opportunities for all to engage equally, provide varying methods and ways to engage in the project, and offer information that is inclusive, transparent and fair.

Step 5: Evaluation and data analysis

As part of Brimbank's objective for continuous improvement and innovation, this step requires that the community engagement feedback and data is analysed. If different data collection processes have been used, treat each data set separately. Analyse common data sets or information to identify community preferences, priorities and themes.

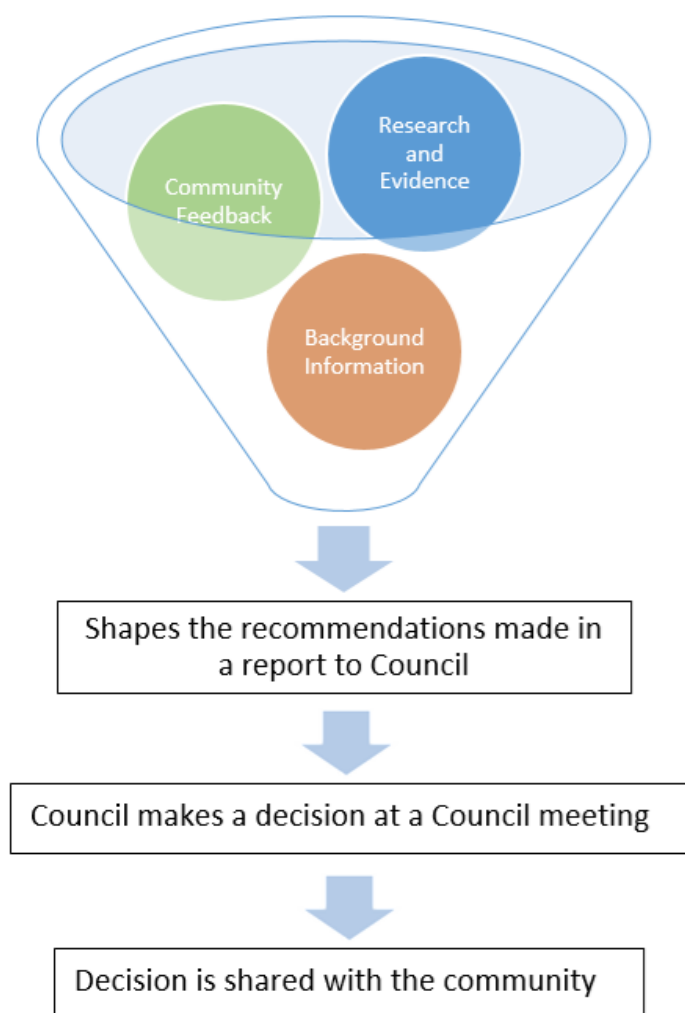
Step 6: Sharing the feedback

This stage is where Council communicate the community's feedback to decision makers for their consideration. Once a decision is made, Council communicate details about the engagement process, its findings and any decisions made to participants and relevant stakeholders through for example sending letters, emails or posting outcomes on the Council's website (Your Say Brimbank). It is particularly important to provide detail about how any decisions were made. These outcomes should also be shared with Council colleagues and additional key stakeholders. The final outcomes of the engagement process should be made available via a range of communication methods to the wider public.

Step 7: Evaluate project

The final stage involves evaluating the process undertaken to identify any key learnings and understand the effectiveness of the process. Evaluation criteria will ideally be identified at the start of the project. Evaluation should consider not only the effectiveness of the process, but also analysis of who was involved and how effective the methods used were in capturing a representative sample of the identified community. Evaluations should summarise the key learnings and be shared with the project team and Council colleagues. These learnings should be considered before planning new engagement processes and used to further improve our engagement practice.

5.7.2 Understanding the decision-making process at Brimbank City Council:



6 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1 Mayor and Councillors

Mayor and Councillors are responsible for:

- Endorsing and adopting the Policy.
- Supporting the implementation of the Policy.
- Upholding the Principles of this Policy.
- Promoting participation in engagement activities.
- Championing commitment to community engagement in their interactions with the Brimbank community.

-
- Considering community engagement results in informing opinions and making decisions.
 - As prescribed in s 18c of the Act, the Mayor is to lead engagement with the community on the development of the Council Plan.

6.2 Council staff (Executive Management, Managers and Staff involved in community engagement)

Council staff are responsible for:

- Developing, implementing and continually monitoring and evaluating the Policy.
- Execute community engagement as transparently and effectively as possible.
- Councils Community Engagement Unit maintain a Community Engagement Framework and toolkit and coach staff in its use and application of evaluation frameworks.
- Ensuring cross organisational collaboration to design a genuine and meaningful engagement process.
- Providing relevant information to ensure the community participates meaningfully.
- Documenting and reporting engagement findings to Council and the community.

6.3 Community members

Community members are responsible for:

- Becoming informed about how Council makes decisions.
- Reviewing engagement materials.
- Being respectful of others ideas and opinions.
- Adhering to the process and time frames.
- Understanding that a number of inputs contribute to inform Council's decision making.

6.3 Brimbank Community Voice Panel

Brimbank Community Voice Panel is responsible for:

- Increasing the diversity of community members participating in Council engagement activities
- Increase opportunities for the community to influence Council planning
- Reduce barriers to Council Officers engaging with the community
- Becoming informed about how Council makes decisions.
- Reviewing engagement materials.
- Being respectful of others ideas and opinions.
- Adhering to the process and time frames.

Understanding that a number of inputs contribute to inform Council's decision making.

7 POLICY OWNERSHIP

Responsible Director: Director People, Partnerships and Performance

Responsible Officer: Manager Communications and Community Engagement

Directorate: People, Partnerships and Performance

Unit: Communications, Community Engagement and Change

8 APPROVAL

Approved by: Council

Date:

9 RELATED POLICIES & LEGISLATION

- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- *Public Administration Act 2004*
- *Planning and Environment Act 1987*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*
- *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*
- *Child Safe Standards*, Victorian Commission for Children and Young People
- *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2004*
- *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011*
- *Gender Equality Act 2020*
- *Brimbank Social Justice Charter*
- *Brimbank Council Plan 2021-25*

INTERNAL USE ONLY

Version	Version notes	Adopted	Review
1	Adopted by Council	21/08/2018	21/08/2020
2	New <i>Local Government Act 2020</i>	16/02/2021	16/02/2023
3			

DRAFT

Brimbank City Council

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Draft Community Engagement Policy
‘Your Say’ Consultation Results
5 Feb – 3 March 2024
Respondents: 24



SNAPSHOT OF FINDINGS:

Community support of the Community Engagement Policy areas:

Area	% of respondents
Support of the Statement of Policy Principles	82%
Support of 'how' Council engages	79%
Support of the Draft Community Engagement Policy	65%

Top 5 ways respondents would like to participate in community engagement activities:

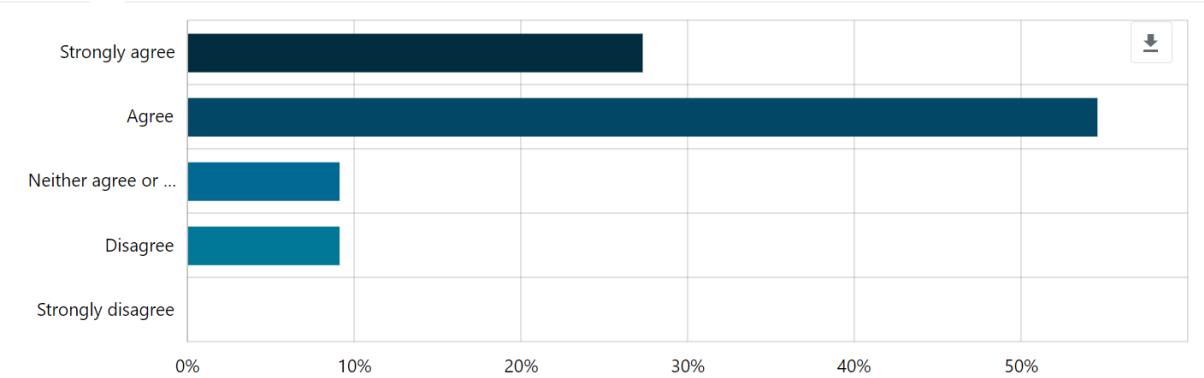
1. Surveys
2. Focus groups
3. Online Platforms
4. Email
5. Community workshops

Key themes of the open text feedback:

- Improve **accessibility** of the Policy document
- **Accessible** opportunities to participate in Council community engagement activities
- **Accountability** of Council to adhere to policy
- **Transparency** of remuneration for participating in Council community engagement activities

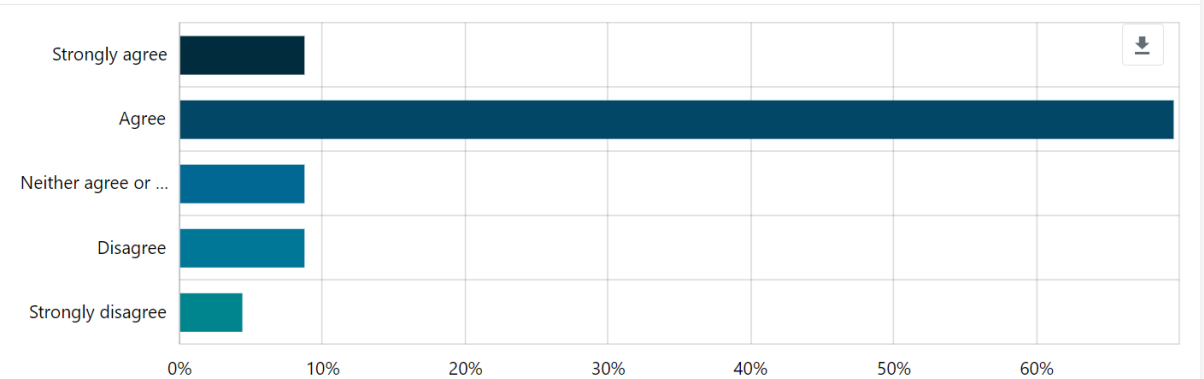
DETAIL OF FINDINGS:

1 Having read the ‘Statement of Policy Principles’, how strongly do you agree or disagree with them?



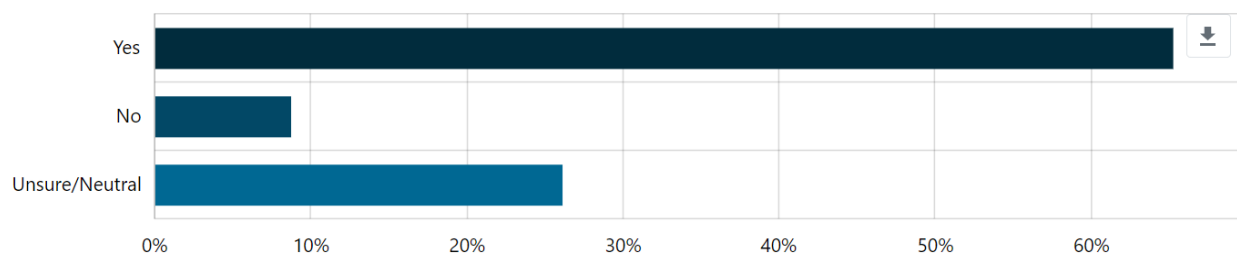
- Analysis:
- 82% respondents agree or strongly agree
 - 9% respondents neither agree/disagree
 - 9% respondents disagree

3 Having read ‘How we engage’, how strongly do you agree or disagree with Brimbank’s process?



- Analysis:
- 79% respondents agree or strongly agree
 - 9% respondents neither agree/disagree
 - 12% respondents disagree

5

Do you support the draft Community Engagement Policy?**Analysis:**

- 65% support
- 26% neutral/unsure
- 9% do not support

How do community want to take part in consultation?

	Engagement Method	Score
1	Surveys and questionnaires	13.22
2	Focus groups (small targeted discussions to delve deeper into specific issues and gather qualitative insights)	10.83
3	Online platforms (social media, community forums or dedicated online platforms like Your Say for discussions, polls and feedback)	9.5
4	Email	9.22
5	Community workshops (interactive workshops where residents can participate in planning or decision-making processes)	8.28
6	Text message surveys	8.06
7	Mobile app (receive updates, provide feedback, and engage in real-time discussions)	7.11
8	Neighbourhood meetings (meetings at the neighbourhood level to address hyper-local concerns and involve residents who may not attend larger events)	6.89
9	Phone call	6.39
10	Community events / Pop-ups (engage residents at local events, festivals, or markets to reach a broader audience and gather informal feedback)	6.22
11	Public forums (traditional town hall meeting where residents can voice their opinions and ask questions)	6.17
12	Town Hall webinars (virtual public forums or webinars to allow participation from the comfort of residents' homes)	6.11
13	Community liaisons (liaisons to represent different demographics (age, gender, culture, etc.) and ensure a range of voices are heard.	5.67

14	Education campaigns (information to educate residents on upcoming decisions, their impact, and ways to get involved)	5.28
15	Collaboration with schools and early learning centres (involve students and their families in community consultations)	4.33
16	Interactive mapping (pinpoint specific areas of concern or interest)	4.28
17	Podcast and web series (communicate updates and encourage participation)	2.67

Analysis:

When asked to rank their preferred method of participating in community consultation respondents highlighted the top 5 methods below:

1. Surveys
2. Focus groups
3. Online Platforms
4. Email
5. Community workshops

Open Text Feedback on the draft Community Engagement Policy on the Your Say consultation page

Key themes across the open text feedback on Your Say:

Your Say consultation open text feedback themes	Council Action
Accessibility of Policy document	Follow up opportunity to develop Easy English version of Community Engagement Policy (and policies in general)
Accessible opportunities to participate in community engagement activities	Provide different methods for community to participate in engagement opportunities reflecting respondents preferred methods of engagement. Incorporate support options into the Community Engagement Toolkit to ensure all members have an equitable opportunity to participate in engagement activities. Supports can include: accessibility devices, transport assistance, interpretation, or support with their caring responsibilities.
Accountability of Council to adhere to policy	Community engagement is a Council priority and legislative requirement. Council commits to transparent reporting, regular evaluations, and active encouragement of feedback from the diverse members of its community. The Community Engagement Framework and Toolkit will support the accountability of Council to adhere to the policy.
Transparency of remuneration for participating in community engagement activities	Suggested remuneration rates will be incorporated into the Community Engagement Toolkit, due for completion in June 2024. When determining the rate and method of payment, consider the: - nature of the work and intensity of the workload - time commitment - degree of accountability, complexity, and responsibility - the person's skills and lived experience

OVERALL SUMMARY

Feedback from the broad community consultation showed strong support of the:

- Draft Community Engagement Policy
- Statement of Policy Principles
- 'how' Council engages

No further updates were made to the Draft Community Engagement Policy from the broad community consultation feedback.

Feedback from the broad community consultation is being used to inform the development of the Community Engagement Toolkit, due for completion in June 2024.

The Toolkit will operationalise the principles of the Draft Policy. It will guide staff and community stakeholders through the necessary tools and strategies required to encourage active participation in civic decision-making processes.

Feedback from the broad community consultation is providing guidance and strategies on:

- supports required by community members to participate in civic decision-making processes (e.g.: accessibility supports, Auslan, translators, transport assistance, childcare, hybrid activities, etc)
- engaging with First Nations people
- engaging lesser heard demographic groups (e.g.: children and young people, seniors, CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse) communities, disability groups)
- remuneration options for community members participating in engagement activities