

Communications & Engagement

Policy

JANUARY 2016



CENTRAL COAST COUNCIL

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to provide guidance for the Central Coast Council (the Council) on internal and external communications and engagement. This includes the way the Council communicates and engages with people in our communities and involves them in dealing with the challenges and opportunities that matter most. It is the process of working collaboratively with interest groups within the community to make well informed decisions about major developments and strategic directions for the Central Coast.

This Policy aims to:

- . Demonstrate the Council's commitment to continually improve the way it communicates and engages with people internally and in our communities;
- . Provide direction to the Council's staff and elected members; and
- . Demonstrate the Council's commitment to good governance.

SCOPE

This Policy applies to Councillors, employees and volunteers, as well as contractors who provide services to the Central Coast Council

CONTEXT

The Council's Communications and Engagement:

- . Is fundamental to effective decision-making, service provision and good governance;
- . Is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process;
- . Includes the promise that the public's contribution will be considered in the decision making process;
- . Promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision-makers;
- . Seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision;
- . Seeks input from participants in designing how they participate;
- . Provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way; and
- . Communicates to participants how their input affected their decision.

MEDIA RELATIONS

The Council's Office of the General Manager is responsible for coordinating, approving and dispatching all media releases, photo opportunities and media briefings following authorisation by the General Manager.

The Mayor is the official spokesperson on behalf of the Council and the General Manager is the official spokesperson for all operational matters.

While it is recognised that Councillors are able to speak to the media as a function of their role, it is also recommended that they advise the Office of the General Manager of any media interactions in order to brief the Mayor and create a Council-wide perspective.

It is suggested that on issues where there is a significant and ongoing involvement by a Councillor, with the agreement of the Mayor, the Office of the General Manager will contact the relevant Councillor/s to appear in media photographs in relation to issues, programs or services pertaining to the Councillor.

The General Manager may authorise Directors or Group Leaders to make public statements to the media.

The following categories shall apply in relation to the determination of spokespeople:

Category	Type of Issue	Spokes person
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Council Policy; . Issues of a political nature; and . Highly significant and/or sensitive matters or projects affecting the Council or the entire municipality. 	Mayor.
2.	Local matters.	Mayor or Delegate.
3.	Operational matters.	General Manager or Delegate.
4.	Technical matters.	General Manager or Delegate.

The Mayor is responsible for allocating public speaking roles at Council organised events requiring Councillor participation.

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

The Council will use a mix of electronic, mail, print, radio and television media to ensure that the community and other relevant stakeholders are offered:

- . Timely and clear information about matters of broad community significance that are being considered by the Council; and
- . An appropriate opportunity for input.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

The General Manager will ensure that employees receive timely and accurate information about matters that may broadly affect the community and/or their employment.

SOCIAL MEDIA

There is an expectation that councils will engage with community members more thoroughly and regularly, addressing issues promptly, maintaining transparency and remaining openly accountable for community-based decisions.

Communicating with the community through social media platforms is an effective communication channel to meet these expectations. This Policy should be read in conjunction with the Council's Social Media Acceptable Use Policy – January 2016.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Council will work collaboratively with groups of people linked by the community they live in, special interest or similar situations to address issues affecting their wellbeing. Effective engagement is central to understanding the aspirations, needs and priorities of the local community and integrating community input into how related local public services are planned and delivered.

Engagement also goes beyond consultation. It extends to the way we communicate and engage with people in our communities and involve them in dealing with the challenges and opportunities that matter most.

KEY GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The principles that underpin the Council’s approach to engagement:

- . Inclusive Planning – The planning and design of engagement processes will include input from appropriate local officials as well as from members of intended participant communities;
- . Transparency - There will be a clarity and transparency about the engagement sponsorship, purpose, design and how decision-makers will use the process results;
- . Authentic Intent – A primary purpose of engagement is to generate public views and ideas to help shape local government action or Policy, rather than persuade residents to accept a decision that has already been made;
- . International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) – The Council commits to adapting the [IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum](#) as a best practice framework for community engagement processes.
- . Collaboration – Cooperative arrangements will be created to enable engagement participants to come together to achieve shared goals.
- . Capability Building – Council staff and the community will develop skills and ‘know how’ to achieve social and economic goals; and
- . Empowerment – The community will be supported to create partners, networks and/or a voice, in order to manage community-driven project outcomes.

IAP2’S PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM

IAP2’S PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM



The IAP2 Federation has developed the Spectrum to help groups define the public’s role in any public participation process. The IAP2 Spectrum is quickly becoming an international standard.

		INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 				
		INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	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.

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RELATED POLICIES, LEGISLATION AND TOOLS

This Policy should be read in conjunction with existing corporate policies including:

- . Customer Service Policy;
- . Information and Communication Technology Acceptable Use Policy – April 2014;
- . Social Media Acceptable Use Policy – January 2016;
- . Social Media Systems Management Policy – January 2016;
- . Employees Code of Conduct - November 2012;
- . Communications and Engagement Toolkit; and
- . Local Government Act (1993) *Tas.*

EVALUATION PROCESS

This Policy is reviewed when any of the following occur:

- . The related information is amended or replaced;
- . Evidence that the Policy no longer meets the needs of Council; or
- . Other circumstances as determined from time to time by the General Manager.

Notwithstanding the above, this Policy is to be reviewed at intervals of no more than two years.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Policy Owner	General Manager
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CHANGES TO POLICY

This Policy is to remain in force until otherwise determined by the General Manager.

Sandra Ayton
GENERAL MANAGER