

MACEDON RANGES SHIRE COUNCIL

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION FRAMEWORK - NOVEMBER 1999

INTRODUCTION

Macedon Ranges Shire Council has developed this Community Consultation Framework to provide clear guidelines for both the community and Council on how and when the community will be consulted on matters being considered by Council.

The document has been developed by the Councillors with input by Managers at the Council.

This framework for consultation:

- Defines what the Council means by consultation
- Outlines the principles on which the consultation framework is based
- Lists the different ways in which the Council can consult with people (the consultation tools)
- Groups the different sets of circumstances for consultation (the circumstances)
- Outlines what consultative tools are most appropriate in what circumstances.

DEFINITION OF CONSULTATION

Consultation is a process of two way, informed communication between the council and the community on an issue or project prior to Council making a decision on that issue.

- Community participation and input into the making of decisions is integral to democratic governance
- Consultation is a means of obtaining that community input.
- It fulfils a need to ensure community views can be identified and communicated.
 - Consultation enhances the councillors' decision making process.
 - Consultation will occur within a planned timeframe. The community will be informed of the length of the consultation period at the start of the process so that people will be clear about how long they have to make contributions.

PRINCIPLES

Inclusiveness

- The consultation must encourage the involvement of people who are affected by or interested in a decision
 - Affected and interested parties will be given equal opportunity to do so, including groups who have traditionally not participated previously
 - Affected groups and interested parties can select their own representative to work with Council
 - The type of consultation or contact that is made is sensitive to a group's particular needs.

Purpose

- Consultation is purpose-driven. It will occur where a policy is not in place to inform the decision making of Council.
- The type of consultation that is chosen is appropriate for the task
- There is a clear statement about what the consultation is about
- There is a clear statement about what the role of Council is and what the role of the participants are in the consultation
- There is a commitment from the Council and staff to the principles and processes that this document defines in relation to consultation

Provision of Information

- Information relating to the consultation is to be made readily available so that participants can make informed and timely contributions
- Information relating to the consultation can be accessed easily by everyone involved before key decisions are made
- Information must be presented in an easily understood format
- All information on issues that the Council is consulting upon will be available unless it is of a commercially sensitive or personnel nature
- In some circumstances, council may determine to recover part of the cost of providing the information. These circumstances may include situations where documentation is costly to reproduce ie maps/plans/lengthy reports etc. In such instances the council will endeavour to facilitate access via individual viewing, loaning of the material and or other appropriate methods.

Informed Consultation

Consultation is most effective when people have the facts before them. This will mean that Council will need to have the officers do some development work on an issue or proposal, prior to the commencement of the consultation.

- This work will generally be described as the scoping work or study. This scoping work will be the factual information that Council puts into the public arena for consultation.
- On occasions Council may develop a preliminary preference for a particular position. When this occurs, Council will indicate what that preliminary position is. This will assist the community to understand where the Council stands at the start of the consultation.
- If the progress of a matter that Council is or has consulted on is delayed or extended due to unforeseen circumstances or if the matter is part of the development of a broader issue that may not be completely resolved for some time, the Council will provide appropriate updates to those who have participated in the consultation process.

Informing People of the Final Outcomes

Council will ensure that after a decision has been made upon which consultation has been sought and received, the persons who provided feedback and or had input into the process will be informed of the final decision and the reasons for it.

METHODS OF CONSULTATION

As a guide, Council has analysed the types of consultation that are appropriate in a range of circumstances.

The methods of consultation are:

A Write to every affected household or group. Information will be given on how the recipient may give feedback.

B Surveys or other forms of formal market research that are independently conducted and are statistically valid

(Note : Matters that are identified as requiring surveys will be determined by Council on a case by case basis when the scoping of the matter and the full consultative program is presented to Council)

C Council's Shire-wide newsletter/Council's fortnightly News Page (currently in the Telegraph and Midland Express newspapers) Utilise local community and school newspapers when and where appropriate

D Letterbox flyer to specific area

E Council-organised community forums/meetings with interested groups across the Shire

F Media releases and/ or media advertisements

G Input via advisory committees (if relevant one exists) or affected groups or if determined by Council the establishment of an Advisory committee for a specific project / proposal.

H Personal contact or meetings on site, as requested

J Council attendance at community organised meetings or briefings

K Feedback at Council Service Centres

L Public exhibition of the relevant documentation with submissions invited

M Feedback formally requested/ Informal surveys

N Notifications on site (if appropriate)

TYPES OF CONSULTATION

Council believes that there are basically six different groups of issues on which it will wish to consult:

Group One Matters that are significant 'one-off' issues

For example : the temporary closure of a sporting facility for maintenance works

Group Two Matters that change the current arrangements/uses on a single site

For example : Any significant redevelopment of a community facility

Group Three Matters impacting on an area or neighbourhood

For example : Traffic management proposals/solutions, streetscape proposals

Group Four Service Planning Matters which have impacts across the Shire

For example : Changes to the garbage service

Group Five Major Plans which have impacts across the Shire

For example : Residential / Industrial Reviews, Open Space Planning, Tourism Strategies

Group Six Major projects or issues with Shire wide impacts

For example : Shire Aquatic Centre

In circumstances categorised as group one, two or three, few examples beyond the type above were identified as having an impact or being significant enough to necessitate extensive consultation.

In such circumstances, consultation is more likely to involve a specific party, groups or neighbourhood (ie: those that may be affected) than the wider community, and the appropriate consultative tools would be selected from the attached matrix.

Town Planning Applications - see specific Planning Application Consultative Protocol.

APPROPRIATE CONSULTATION

This framework will apply predominantly to matters requiring a decision by Council. It will not necessarily apply to routine, day-to-day activities such as:

- maintenance activities,
- implementing an existing plan
- where the work is integral to the work of an advisory committee.

Note: This framework relates to obtaining community input before the Council makes a decision on the matter, ie. consultation. When the decision has been made and the decision is being implemented/the activity is routine, it is more appropriate for the Council to inform/advise.

THE IMPACT OF STATUTORY OBLIGATIONS

Council has responsibilities and makes decisions under a wide variety of State and Federal legislation. In many instances the legislation sets standards and provides minimum requirements in regard to notifications and referrals.

This Consultative Framework is designed to complement any statutory obligations the Council may have and to ensure the Councils principles of consultation are

applied.

CONSULTATIVE PROTOCOL FOR PLANNING PERMITS

In dealing with any planning application, Council uses the following consultative protocol:

- An assessment of the impact of the proposed development on surrounding residents / landowners will be undertaken by the Planning Officer. This may, if appropriate, involve an on-site inspection
- On the basis of the assessed impact, the Planning Officer will make a decision on the necessity or otherwise and / or extent of notifications required to surrounding residents/ landowners

In making this decision the Planning Officer will consider amongst other issues the scale of the development, the nature and type of use or development and the impact on the surrounding area. The Planning Officer will consider whether there is any material detriment to any person as is required by State legislation.
- All Councillors are advised of every permit application weekly, including the extent of advertising and referral to authorities
- Notifications to surrounding residents / landowners will advise people on how they can view any plans and supporting information on a proposal. In such instances the information will be available at the relevant Council Service Centres
- In circumstances where the Planning Officer decides that a proposal has the likelihood of having impacts beyond the immediate neighbourhood area, public advertising of the proposal will occur in the local newspaper(s) and if appropriate, a sign placed on the site advertising the application
- In some circumstances where high levels of community interest are anticipated (eg. Kyneton Supermarket), community information sessions will be held, either by the developer alone or jointly with Council
- All submissions on a proposal will be considered in determining any application. If there are objections, the Planning Officer will convene and facilitate an Applicant/Objector(s) meeting involving the relevant Ward Councillor and other interested Councillors
- Any Planning Application that the Planning Officer intends to refuse (ie issue a Notice of Refusal) will be referred to Council for decision. Applicants and Objectors will be advised of Council's decision
- Planning Applications that have Shire-wide or significant community input and/or interest, will be referred to Council for decision

IMPLEMENTING THE CONSULTATION

On the following page the Council outlines which communication tools it believes are the most appropriate for each of the groups of circumstances.

For instance it proposes that when it is consulting on a 'one-off' issue, eg. the temporary closure of a sporting facility for maintenance works, the Council would consult affected groups. Conversely it would not produce a community bulletin or necessarily include the matter in the Council's community newsletter.

The resurfacing of the Romsey Tennis Courts would be an example of a significant 'one-off' issue that may not require a decision by the Council, but would involve consultation utilising a range of the tools identified on the matrix overleaf. In this case, the Council would:

- Write to the Tennis Club and Committee of Management (Tool 'A' on the matrix)
- Seek the input of the Tennis Club and the Committee of Management (Tool 'G' on the matrix)
- Respond to phone calls/meet on site if requested or necessary (Tool 'H' on the matrix)
- Invite feedback at the Council's Romsey (nearest) and Woodend (where relevant Council Unit is located) Service Centres (Tool 'K' on the matrix)
- Ask for feedback in writing (Tool 'M' on the matrix)
- Put a notice on site (Tool 'N' on the matrix) when the works are being undertaken.

Applying the matrix overleaf, the redevelopment of the Kyneton Mechanics Institute

site would be an example of a 'change to current arrangements on a single site'. In this case, the Council would:

- Write to affected groups (Tool 'A' on the matrix), eg. the Bowling Club, the Senior Citizens' Club, the Band, and the Historical Society
- Publicise the proposal through the Council's newsletter or the fortnightly news page (the use of Community based or School newspapers would not be necessary in this instances, however if the site was in an area where such a newspapers existed it could be used) (Tool 'C' on the matrix)
 - Hold a community forum (Tool 'E' on the matrix)
 - Advertise/issue a media release about the proposal (Tool 'F' on the matrix)
- Respond to phone calls/meet on site if requested or necessary (Tool 'H' on the matrix)
- Invite feedback at the Council's Kyneton (nearest) and Woodend (where relevant Council Unit is located) Service Centres (Tool 'K' on the matrix)
- Ask for feedback in writing (Tool 'M' on the matrix)
- Put a notice on site (Tool 'N' on the matrix) when the works are being undertaken.

Note: This is an example of implementing more than what is outlined on the matrix.

In consulting on the development of a major plan impacting across the Shire, the Council would always utilise the consultative tools ticked on the matrix overleaf to generate the broadest range of views from throughout the Shire.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION

		Write To Every Affected Household Or Groups	Surveys or other forms of formal market research* (see below)	Council's Shire Wide Newsletter** (see notation below)	Letterbox Flyer (To Specific Area)	Council-organised Community Forums Meetings	Media Release/ Advertisement	Input via Advisory Committee/Group (If Relevant One Exists)	Personal Contact or meetings on site	Attendance at Community organised Meetings	Feedback At Service Centres (by phone, in writing/in person)	Public Exhibition With Submissions Invited	Feedback Formally Requested/ Informal Surveys	Notification On Site (if appropriate)

		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	J	K	L	M	N
1.	One Off Issues	ü	X	X	X	X	X	ü	+/-	ü	ü	X	+/-	ü
2.	Changes to current arrangements on a single site	ü	X	X	+/-	+/-	+/-	ü	+/-	ü	ü	X	ü	ü
3.	Area or neighbourhood impacts	ü	X	+/-	X	ü	ü	ü	+/-	ü	ü	X	ü	ü
4.	Service Planning with Shire wide impacts	X	+/-	ü	X	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü	X
5.	Major Plans with Shire wide impacts	X	+/-	ü	X	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü	X
6.	Major Projects with Shire wide Impacts	X	+/-	ü	X	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü

Statutory Planning Matters - refer Statutory Planning Consultative Protocol

ü method to be used X method not appropriate +/- will be used when appropriate

* Note : Matters that are identified as requiring surveys/other forms of formal market research will be determined by Council on a case by case basis when the scoping of the matter and full consultative program is presented to Council)

** Shire-wide newsletter refers to Councils newsletter to residents or Council's fortnightly News page published in local newspaper/s, and/or community/school based newspapers.