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Responsible Officer: Customer Service Coordinator

AIM

This policy has been developed to provide a clear and consistent framework for community consultation and involvement in the development of Council policy, planning and service monitoring within the Wyndham municipality.

BACKGROUND

This policy is not prescriptive in providing a process to be applied in all circumstances. The principles outlined in this policy provide the general framework for consistency across the organisation. The related procedural document provides a checklist for the design of specific consultation programs.

This policy recognises that the involvement of Councillors will need to be considered on a case by case basis as part of the program design mentioned above. In general terms the larger the scope and scale of the project, the greater the involvement of Councillors will be.

Council's 2000-2005 Corporate Plan contains two critical success factors (CSFs) that address the issue of community consultation

CSF 17 – Leadership & Governance

Objective 19.1

To have achieved best practice in key areas of governance, particularly openness, management of community assets, and responsiveness to community input as well as compliance with Council's Code of Ethics, statutory and legislative requirements

Also

CSF 19 - Communication

Objective 19.1

To have used a variety of methods, including new technology as well as print and verbal information, to inform residents and local business on Council activities, and provide opportunities for involvement.

BEST VALUE

A key principle contained within the Best Value framework, introduced by the Victorian State Government in 2000 states:

“ a Council must develop a program of regular consultation with its community in relation to the services it provides “.

“ Council must report regularly to its community on its performance in relation to the Best Value principles “

POLICY STATEMENTS

Wyndham City Council accepts the following definition of Consultation in this policy.

Consultation is a central principal in sound planning and decision making. It allows Council to make informed decisions about issues which affect its citizens. The consultation process aims at allowing opportunity for citizens to be informed and to make their concerns heard and be taken into account, before Council makes a final decision. It involves the use of methods ranging from information sharing to participatory decision making to ensure Council is aware of the views of citizens affected by a potential decision or policy change.

Principle One: Wyndham City Council sees effective community consultation as a principal means through which the future planning and strategic development of Wyndham will occur.

Principle Two: Wyndham City Council will approach all consultations with the aim of being clear on who should be consulted, about the questions to ask and the timeframe it should be conducted in. This will achieve outcomes that address the priority issues of concern to the Wyndham community.

Principle Three: Wyndham City Council endorses the use of a variety of mechanisms for community consultation to complement the many means by which residents wish to express their opinion and preferences. Council will, within resource limitations, facilitate the various options in regard to consultation mechanisms both from its own initiative and as and when requested by the community.

Principle Four; Wyndham City Council commits itself to cater to the busy lifestyle of its residents and allow full and proper participation in the decision making process by providing sufficient time for considered responses to be received.

Principle Five; Wyndham City Council is committed to ensuring that all consultation documents are of suitable quality and as simple and concise as possible. They will be made widely available and effectively drawn to the attention of relevant groups and

individuals so that consultation on issues is conducted in an informed atmosphere of shared knowledge and mutual respect

Principle Six: Wyndham City Council supports and encourages the continued development of networks of interests in its community and undertakes to facilitate communication within and between networks so that effective consultation can be made.

Principle Seven: Wyndham City Council commits itself to ensuring that primary consultations (such as meetings, focus groups, information sessions) take place in the locales and neighbourhoods of Wyndham, with good accessibility for residents.

Principle Eight: Wyndham City Council commits itself to improving the ability of officers in conducting consultation and to provide training in how effective community dialogue can be developed.

Principle Nine: Wyndham City Council commits to carefully and objectively analysing the responses and making the results widely available. This will include an account of the views expressed and reasons for decisions taken.

Principle Ten: Wyndham City Council will review and evaluate each consultation conducted as part of a process of continuing improvement on consultation methods.

POLICY INITIATIVES / ACTIONS

1. THE QUALITY COMMUNITY PLAN

The Quality Community Plan (QCP) is a Council-initiated; community directed program, targeted to discern what kind of Wyndham, residents' want developed by the year 2015. The Plan was an example of extensive consultation using meetings, focus groups, written surveys, phone-ins, stakeholder meetings etc to gather the information necessary to formulate the plan. This plan will continue to be reviewed and updated on a regular basis (approximately every 3 years) and represents an ongoing commitment to holistic and total community consultation, with community leaders leading debate and discussion.

2. THE MUNICIPAL STRATEGIC STATEMENT

The Municipal Strategic Statement is a core component of the Wyndham Planning Scheme, linking strategic policy to local planning provisions. It provides the strategic framework and direction for land use and development within the municipality. Wyndham's Municipal Strategic Statement has been developed following an extensive community consultation process and is subject to a three yearly review.

3. THE CORPORATE PLAN

A part of Wyndham's mission statement contained in the Corporate Plan is to "find solutions for existing and emerging issues through leadership and consultation ...". Also contained in the plan are 21 critical success factors (CSFs) which are the areas where we need to succeed if Council is to achieve the 2015 Vision. The majority of these will require consultation with the community and identified stakeholders to identify both needs and possible solutions to the issues being faced.

4. ANNUAL BUDGET CONSULTATION PROCESS

The proposed Annual Plan & Budget is subject to statutory obligations of consultation including:

- Sections 144 and 146 of the Local Government Act 1989 and Sections 90 and 91 of the Local Government Regulations 1990, making the Proposed Annual Plan & Budget available for public inspection.
- Section 93 of the Local Government Regulations 1990, that Council give public notice and have ready for public inspection all the prescribed particulars with the information to be available at suitable locations and appropriate timeframe to receive submissions.
- In accordance with Section 150 of the Local Government Act 1989, Council resolves to notify and place on public notice its intention to adopt the Annual Plan & Budget

In addition Council has resolved to conduct an additional public meeting for the purpose of presenting the key features of the Proposed Annual Plan & Budget and to provide an additional opportunity for public input prior to consideration and adoption. This is promoted by means of advertising and personally addressed letters to key stakeholders throughout the municipality.

5. THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The Communication Strategy is designed by Council to improve all forms of written and verbal communication by Council so that information is delivered effectively and efficiently to the community. Council reviews all its means of communication on a regular basis so that a variety of information mechanisms are available to the community. The increased use of technology, in particular the Internet, will see the ongoing development of Council's Home Page. The Community Directory remains one of the key publications, which continues to evolve to suit the needs of its audience.

6. PARK IMPROVEMENT PLANS

The Park Improvement Program is designed to enlist the support of the local community in improving local parks and playgrounds in their vicinity. The process involves:

- Public meetings using overheads, phot images etc as part of presentation
- Survey of school students (particularly for playgrounds)
- Establishment of working group with local representatives
- Draft recommendations for improvement are circulated to all residents in the area
- Feedback on the recommendations are distributed to the working group and alterations made to the plan where necessary.
- Plan endorsed by Council and work commences often using members of the local community to assist in the works

The Park Improvement Program is successful due to the strong ownership the community has for its local parks and playgrounds.

7. LOCAL AREA TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

The process followed in the development of LATM plans is very much aimed at having the community involved in the decision making to enhance the plan's effectiveness. The steps include:

- Notice of public meeting distributed to residents in area (precinct) under review
- Public meeting held where issues are raised by residents. Also conduct election of residents committee
- Bulletin detailing summary of issues raised at public meeting distributed to residents in precinct
- Develop actions based on issues raised at public meeting
- Residents committee input and review into LATM plan at committee meeting no. 1
- bulletin / questionnaire distributed to all residents indicating draft LATM plan
- resident committee review of responses, amendment of draft LATM plan and finalise actions and staging of treatments at committee meeting no. 2

The overall process takes three months on average, but can be longer if issues need to be further discussed with other organisations such as schools, Westrans and VicRoads.

8. COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

Council has established the Community Partnerships program to work with the Wyndham community in meeting local needs. The program encourages community groups and neighbourhood associations to work in partnership with Council to complete projects important to the community

9. COMMUNITY GRANTS SCHEME

The Community Grants Scheme is available to for community projects and initiatives occurring in the Wyndham community. Community grants are available to non-profit organisations for projects / initiatives which enrich the Wyndham community.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Legislative requirements:

- Statutory requirements for the public exhibition of proposals, such as planning permit applications, proposed road closures, building works, sale or lease of land / buildings and similar matters. These processes are clearly set out in the legislation governing the Council's activities in these areas, for example, the *Local Government Act 1989* and the Πλαννινγ ανδ Ενπιρονμεντ Αχτ 1987.
- Formal meetings of the Council, Corporate Committee and the City Development Committee provide an opportunity for the community to formally ask questions of the Council.
- Advisory committees, some of which are formed under the Local Government Act 1989, to provide Council with expert and community input regarding specific matters, for example, Quality Community Plan Taskforce.

Wyndham City Council Corporate Plan 2001-2006
Wyndham City Council Consultation Guidelines