

Victorian Child Friendly Cities Network

23rd March 2018

1.00- 3.00pm

LGPro Offices, Level 3/58 Lorimer St, Docklands

Chair: Neil Rogers Whitehorse
Minutes: Anne McGregor Moreland

Welcome and attendance

Linda Harman, Darebin; Bridgid Keele, Whittlesea; Kerryn Adams, Whittlesea; Jenny Sheriff, Ballarat; Bo Li, VLGA; Cath Black, Maribyrnong; Kate Beveridge, Cardinia; Caroline Meier, Knox; Virginia Lloyd, Casey; David Wright KU Services; Hayley Crawford, Port Phillip; Nicole Lindsey, Brimbank; Karina Viksne, Moonee Valley; Nadine Ford, Moonee Valley; Kate McCaughey, Moonee Valley; Claire Sideris, Monash, Ann Addinsall, Casey; Sarah O'Donnell, Yarra.

Apologies – Sheryn Prinzi - Banyule, Wendy Jones, Ballarat.

Bo Li Senior Policy Advisor VLGA

An overview of the implications of the new Local Government bill on public participation. What is required?

- Government is keen to present the bill in the middle of the year;
- Shift from prescriptive legislation to principle-based legislation instead;
- Consultative, transparent approach to policy development. Bill makes this more explicit;
- A need to meet principles of good governance;
- An engagement policy is required;
- VLGA has conducted 5 round table consultations (Maryborough, Hamilton, Shepparton, Melbourne and Mayor's weekend);
- Input from elected representatives and staff;
- Passing of Bill will be beginning of ongoing consultation with Councils;
- Strong case for additional resourcing around implementation of this policy;
- Some part of current Act may shift over to Regulations;
- Flexibility around how individual Councils implement this policy;
- Nine governance principles, 5 supporting principles;
- Overarching model that accommodates different approaches for different groups;
- Challenges, impetus to make Councils look at how they interact with customers;
- Opportunities for CFC Network to have influence in this area.

Bo Li is happy to be contacted at VLGA if there are any further queries. Here is the link to a New Local Government Act in Victoria

https://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0023/91139/Narrative-for-A-New-Local-Govt-in-Victoria-FINAL.pdf

**Kerryn Adams City of Whittlesea, Consultation and Engagement Support Officer
(Presentation attached inc Kerryn's contact details)**

About City of Whittlesea's approach to community engagement with a new framework, policy and templates developed to support this process and how children and young people will be included.

- Acknowledge that the City of Whittlesea is not an expert or professing to be a leader in community engagement.
- Council's existing 'Consultation and Engagement Framework' was established and implemented in 2012. In 2016/17, we undertook a review of our framework and created a new policy. This was driven by a number of internal and external factors:
 - 1) Legislation** – the LG Act 1989 and the and the LG Act Review which is steering Councils towards increasing opportunities for all members of the community to make meaningful contributions to decision-making and seeking to broaden the range of people who have access to such opportunities. The LGPRF also states all Councils must have a Policy in place by June 2017.
 - 2) Industry authorities** – VAGO now audits Councils on their Participation and Engagement practice, process and performance; and IAP2 which is widely used by Councils and sets an international standard for public participation
 - 3) Council** – aligning with our Community Building Strategy and Principles, other existing strategies and policies, and Council's vision.
 - 4) Community** – being the key to purpose and process of P & E (as noted in the participation process) and the right of community members to influence decisions which affect them. When we refer to 'community' we consider this from a holistic perspective so are also including children and young people. For example, in the 2016 AHS, 38% of households reported they didn't feel they had opportunities to have a real say on issues that are important to them.
- For the City of Whittlesea the key areas of focus through having the Policy and Framework are:
 - 1) Clarifying purpose and terminology** used across Council regarding community participation and engagement. During the review, it emerged that some staff were confused by what is meant by consultation and how it is different to community engagement or participation. Industry authorities such as VAGO and the International Association for Public Participation use the word 'participation' to define the process by which a community has input into the government decision-making process. Up until now, the City of Whittlesea has used the word 'consultation' to mean the same thing. The development of the Policy and Framework strengthens and clarifies what Council means by participation and engagement and its approach towards it. I will talk more about this on the next slide.

2) Simplifying processes and resources – this has included reviewing and revising the templates Project Managers use when planning, undertaking and evaluating participation activities, whilst giving the necessary support required to do this in the simplest way. An example was we previously had separate communications and engagement plans. This is now combined into one template.

3) Ensuring we have resourcing to support staff to undertake community engagement: We have a P&E advisor who can support with the planning and implementation of activities and a research team who can advise/support with analysis and reporting and a comm’s team to support with messaging and promotion. We also have some new online tools to help people engage (e.g. Social Pinpoint, Poll Everywhere, Have your say page).

4) Improving reporting and sharing of information – via online portals and coordination across Council. There was a lot of feedback received on this via the review.

5) Greater accountability and transparency, ensuring the Policy and Framework are mandatory and practice is led by our Directors and Managers. The Framework also clarifies the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders at different stages of the process. Greater focus on being realistic about the scope and timing of projects.

6) Recognising Community is key to the purpose and process, able to genuinely influence decisions. Stronger emphasis on undertaking deeper deliberative community engagement processes to provide more opportunities for communities to shape decisions from the outset, where this is considered appropriate. Community engagement is not a ‘tick the box’ exercise.

7) Enhancing opportunities for collaboration and streamlining of community participation and engagement by having clear oversight of planned activities.

- A key point that we are often having to reinforce is the difference between general community building / community development activities compared to participation and engagement. While both focus on involving and working with community; **participation and engagement specifically relates to involving community when there is a decision to be made in relation to a Council matter, issue or project that is likely to affect them.**

A key element of our Policy and approach to participation and engagement with community is alignment with the Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum:

- Widely used by Councils and organisations – industry standard
- Based on increasing levels of public impact as you progress from ‘inform’ through to ‘empower’
- Simple, specific (internationally consistent) guidance on when, why and how to involve community in the decision-making process
- Traditionally Council has involved community at the first three levels of the spectrum, so a change in our new Policy and Framework will be

including the higher levels of collaborating with and empowering community as options for participation and engagement activities.

- We align with the full spectrum due to:
- The needs and interests of communities in the municipality
- The Local Government Act Review moving in this direction and
- VAGO's intent to audit Councils on more effective community participation and engagement.

It is important to note **we are not proposing that activities should focus on the upper levels of the spectrum**. Each participation activity should focus on the level most appropriate depending on the scope of the decision to be made, level of risk/interest, and ability of community to influence the outcome.

- The Framework was endorsed to accompany the Policy and ensure the purpose of the Policy is achieved:
 - To provide opportunity to community members to genuinely influence Council's decision-making processes;
 - To reach ALL potential stakeholders affected by or interested in a decision to be made;
 - To keep all stakeholders informed of the process and outcome of the decision
 - To report back to community once a decision has been made , letting community members know how they influenced the decision.

The Framework exists as an internal tool to make Project Managers and Council Officers aware of the support and resources available to them to ensure more effective participation and engagement

- Key Supporting Elements of the Framework
 - Consultation and Engagement Plan: articulate the aims and objectives, link to IAP2 spectrum, identify key messages, communication channels, what stakeholder can influence, identify engagement activities with times, dates, venues, budget, etc., potential barriers, complete an equity & inclusion checklist
 - Step by Step Guide: Start with *why*, STEP 2 – Clarify *what* we're engaging about , Identify *who* we need to engage , Determine *how* we should engage our communities, Undertake the engagement (*including roles and responsibilities*) , Evaluate the process, Collate and share your findings
 - The Network in an internal tool to share information across Council and upskill staff to advocate for and assist with better practice participation and engagement
 - We have Terms of Reference, Monthly P&E Reports, Network objectives (which evolve over time)
 - We have a template staff can use to compile their community engagement findings report. The focus is on summarising the findings and articulating how this links to the decision being made. The Focus is on evaluating and sharing information.
 - P&E Activities page – staff are required to upload all projects onto a SharePoint page and link key documents. Can filter it to get a sense of stakeholders involved, timing etc.

- We know there are challenges and gaps in the Policy and Framework. Here are some:
 - 1) Engagement versus participation – Clarification of the difference THAT PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT IS AROUND THE DECISION TO BE MADE AND GIVING COMMUNITY A CHANCE TO INFLUENCE IT; and using a common language across community and Council
Identifying the decision to be made and how the community can influence it
 - 2) Reaching ‘hard to reach’ communities –
 - Avoiding over consulting
 - Getting more people involved, offering more people the opportunity to influence decisions which affect them
 - 3) Sharing results in a meaningful way –
 - Developing a consistent method to collate and share results which help to improve our practice and achieve our vision
 - Ensuring the Policy and Framework are mandatory across Council – how do we do that? We need your help.

While some of the desired elements of the proposed Framework are straight-forward to implement, others have been more complex and require cultural change and up-skilling amongst staff, and take time to embed to result in improved practice.

We have found that it is important to ensure there is senior level support, resourcing, accountability and that we take a collaborative approach when it comes to community participation and engagement.

Discussion

General discussion regarding approaches to consultation and engagement, importance of feedback and evaluation when consulting with children and using different approaches and techniques to suit participants.

Advisory Group Update

Proposed CFCC Framework

- Agreement that Young People should be omitted from title and reference within document that children refers to 0-18 years;
- Positive comments about usefulness of framework for adopting Child Friendly Cities and Communities principles
- Claire to make changes and circulate.

Feedback and Wrap Up

- Both presentations well received. Very positive feedback.
- Suggestions for next meeting: Engage to Act (Sunbury), Youth Branch- The Field Trip.

Next Meeting: Friday 22 June. All meetings commence at 1pm and are held at LGPro Offices - Level 3, 58 Lorimer Street Docklands VIC.

Dates for the diary: Friday 14 September & Friday 30 November