

Putting you in the Picture

Implementation Report

INTRODUCTION

This report is a companion document to the *Community Engagement Framework* and *Consultation Report*. It provides further detail on the initiatives proposed by Council and outlines some of the considerations that will be taken into account during their implementation.

Community submissions received on the draft *Community Engagement Framework* stress the need for Council to take demonstrable action if citizens are to be confident that Council's efforts to strengthen engagement processes will make a real difference to their opportunities to participate. This implementation report responds to those concerns by providing detail on how Council will implement the *Framework* during the 2009-2010 financial year.

The document therefore contains:

- detail on each of the proposed initiatives
- how they are designed to respond to community priorities
- the proposed benefits of each
- relationship of each initiative to the others
- an indication of how and when they will be implemented

The report emphasises that some initiatives are prerequisites to others, and there is therefore a logical timeline for implementing the changes. For instance, guidelines can help staff to prepare well-planned consultations, but the effectiveness and success of those consultations will be reduced if action is not taken to help citizens find out about them. In other words, reliance on advertisements in the Courier and information on Council's website needs to be supplemented with other communication avenues for staff to advertise and create interest around consultations.

The timeline also makes it clear that the initiatives cannot all be achieved overnight. Some of the initiatives need to be further developed and trialled to ensure that the community gets good value-for-money. Adherence to new methods that are not proving effective (for instance, in increasing participation) would be contrary to the aim of the Framework and to citizen concerns that initiatives are cost effective.

The timeframes in the report are indicative only. Actual milestones will depend on scheduled work programs and priorities facing the different responsibility areas.

Finally, the implementation report does not cover consultations on matters falling under the Planning Act where there are specific provisions to be met.

Toscana Consulting
September 2009

Initiative 1: Framework and Guidelines

Action

Consult the community on the draft *Community Engagement Framework* and prepare staff guidelines for a consistent whole-of-council approach to meeting engagement standards.

Progress to date

Council will decide on the final *Community Engagement Framework* at its September / October Meeting. Initial work has started on staff guidelines in anticipation of Council's decision.

Background

The Community Engagement Framework documents Council's commitment to community engagement and outlines an improvement strategy to meet that commitment, as well as providing information on how Council governs. The document was prepared following an extensive review of the literature (Appendix A) and a comprehensive community survey that demonstrated the high priority that the District community places on community engagement. The survey also revealed the specific preferences, priorities and concerns that citizens would like Council to address so as to strengthen its engagement practices.

Staff guidelines are needed to ensure that:

- a consistent standard of consultation and engagement can be delivered across Council;
- staff have the support to develop their skills in planning and conducting consultations;
- Council's engagement practices are consistent with the principles being promoted by the South Australian Local Government Association; and
- Council's engagement practices are based soundly on what the local community wants.

The guidelines will provide support to staff through online templates, checklists, stakeholder contact lists, training and mentoring. Most importantly they will provide guidance in planning and thinking through consultation steps – what is the decision to be made, when to consult, the area of community influence, who is to be consulted, their role, how they can be best reached and involved, and how they will be informed and provided with feedback. It is only when all these bases are covered that consultation can be effective and *meaningful* by clarifying how decisions are made and the role the community plays in this process.

The guidelines will also ensure efficiencies by centralising information such as stakeholder lists, suitable meeting venues, opportunities for reaching different community sectors (eg older persons/youth/working parents), advertising templates and deadlines, a listing of approved facilitators, approval processes,

Proposed benefits

- there is a public commitment to engagement, and visible response to community priorities;
- the engagement approach is an *agreed* approach between Council and the community;
- it is a realistic approach, based on Council's ultimate responsibility for decision-making (based on a clear understanding of community needs and desires);
- internal capability is strengthened in the areas the community wants;
- staff are supported in developing new skills and practices
- engagement is more efficient, effective and meaningful.

Prerequisites / related strategies

For staff to implement new practices, new corporate systems need to be in place

- online status board in place (initiative 2)
- Council report templates in place (initiative 7)
- additional communication avenues (initiative 6)

Implementation

Action	Who	By When
Follow up Council decision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • disseminate Council Engagement Framework following Council meeting (eg library copy, residents' associations, key community groups, email stakeholder list of interested citizens) • advertisement in Courier and on website • provide copy to relevant government agencies (eg SA LGA) and neighbouring councils 	Office of the CEO	end Oct 2009
Develop staff guidelines / training and trial in Projects Section <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure guidelines incorporate Council decisions in relation to Council Report templates, online status board, and other initiatives in the Engagement Strategy; • ensure guidelines / training clearly directed at achieving Engagement Standards, and provide background on the intent of those standards to address existing gaps in consultation processes; • ensure guidelines / training meet intent of SA Local Government Association Guidelines eg emphasis on planning and follow through; • ensure guidelines / training result in quality assurance (minimum standards are met consistently). 	Projects Section	end Feb 2010
Launch Framework, signalling initiatives now in place: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop communication collateral, emphasising how citizens can get involved (e.g. rates notice insert) • organise public event / or piggy back launch on other event (eg Mt Barker show) known to attract wide attendance • arrange media coverage, and provide speaking material for Councillors to use at different forums 	Customer Services Section	March 2010
Implement 'prerequisite' corporate systems and processes, as specified on following pages	Various	end Feb
Extend guidelines and training to other areas of Council. Consider the development of seminars / guest speakers or study tour to assist with training / mentoring.	Organisational Development Section	end June 2010

Initiative 2: Online Status Board

Action

Introduce an online status board advising citizens of recent, current and upcoming consultations, and providing an update 'at a glance' on progress and important milestones

Background

This initiative responds to community concerns about finding out about consultations and being kept informed of their progress. The initiative proposes that Council's website contain an easily accessible central spot where recent, current, and upcoming consultations are displayed.

The initiative also takes into account survey findings on the need for cost effective solutions to the diverse communication needs of the community. (Survey respondents were split 56% / 44% on the ways that Council should improve communication, with 56% indicating that Council should increase or improve its ways of communicating and 44% indicating that local papers and Council's website are enough).

Examples of online status boards used by Onkaparinga, Playford and Adelaide City Councils are provided over the page.

Proposed benefits

- one stop shop for citizens to find out and to track what's happening
- helps to market Council's engagement program
- low cost initiative once established

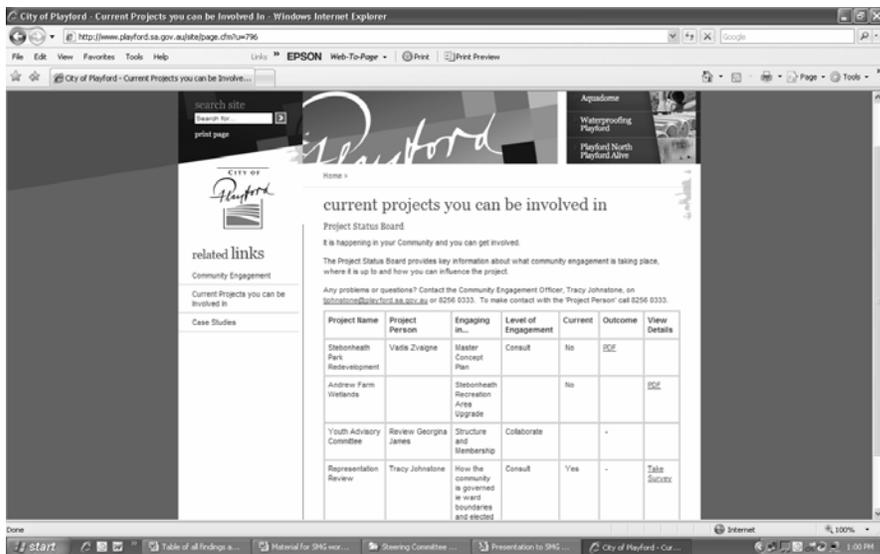
Prerequisites / related strategies

Prerequisites: for this initiative to succeed, all staff conducting consultations need to be aware of their responsibility to post and update information on the central status board.

Related strategies: Other initiatives for improving communication avenues include informal Councillor forums (initiative 5) and new communication avenues (initiative 6).

Implementation

Action	Who	By When
Design and organise status board on website as part of the overall review of Council's website	Communications	end Dec 2009
Incorporate procedures on using status board in staff guidelines. Disseminate information to all staff, once process has been trialled for projects staff	Projects Section	end Dec 2009
Advertise the availability of the Board (as part of wider promotions on website improvements): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eg through (library) electronic information board, Council newssheet, email stakeholder lists. 	Projects Department	Jan/Feb 2010
Extend use of status board: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eg email alert to associations / stakeholders when new item added to the Board 	Customer Services Department	June 2010



Adelaide City Council:

In Progress	Closing Date
<u>World Tennis Challenge 2009</u>	19 September, 2008
Future	Planned For
Draft Victoria Park / Bakkabakkandi Master Plan	Sep - Oct 2008
Completed	Conducted
<u>3 Mobile Test Match</u>	August 2008
<u>Classic Adelaide Rally</u>	August 2008
Archived Completed Consultations	
<u>Consultations completed July 2007 to December 2007</u>	

Initiative 3: Customer Request Management System

Action

Implement a computerised customer service system to log and track customer enquiries and requests and provide a mechanism for ongoing feedback on services.

Progress to date

- Council's customer request management system is now operational and staff have been trained in its use;
- Council's website now contains a site for citizens to register requests and complaints, which are then entered into the customer request management system for actioning;
- statistics on the numbers and types of requests and response times are being produced and analysed to identify work flow issues and business process improvements.

Background

Council's customer request management system is now in place so that all incoming correspondence can be registered, acknowledged, and have responsibilities and actions assigned.

This responds to citizen concerns about some correspondence, particularly emails, not being acknowledged or followed up. The new system is ensuring that all forms of customer contact – mail, email, website, requests to the front office - are entered into the system and are allocated correctly so that progress on an issue can be tracked and resolved.

The system also responds to issues raised by citizens about 'knowing who to talk to in Council', as processes ensure that requests for information are correctly allocated to the responsible officer.

Proposed benefit

- improves responsiveness to customer requests and complaints
- ensures that progress can be tracked and citizens can be informed where their issue is up to
- ensures that correspondence does not 'fall through the cracks' because of unclear responsibilities
- allows routine matters to be dealt with promptly, and for business systems to be automated in the longer term
- facilitates the establishment of 'one stop shop' call centre and other customer service initiatives, should Council decide to move in this direction in the future.

Prerequisites / related strategies

This initiative is stand alone. It complements other engagement initiatives by improving community access to information and responsiveness to requests. It supports consultations by facilitating the management, acknowledgement and follow up of community input.

Implementation

Action	Who	By When
Continued development of the system and processes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continuous improvement of work flows and business processes • training and mentoring staff in the use of the system • full integration of electronic records and customer request management systems • analysis of reports and work with Divisions to identify appropriate service levels for responding to different types of requests. 	Various	Ongoing

Initiative 4: Governance Policy

Action

Publish a 'governance' policy explaining how Council sees its role, its relationship with citizens and its commitment to community engagement, and explaining how it determines which matters go to community consultation and how it makes decisions.

Progress to date

The Community Engagement Framework contains the beginnings of a Governance Policy by outlining when Council consults the community, how Council makes decisions, and how citizens and Council can work as a team.

Background

The initial survey of citizens on their priorities for community engagement indicated that:

- many citizens are unaware of the council's role, who their local Councillors are and how they govern on behalf of their community;
- there is a lack of understanding of the many factors involved in council decision-making, the areas of community influence and that consultations are more than a referendum of votes;
- there are some misperceptions that consultation is a battle ground or an avenue for protest – even an avenue for vested interests to exert pressure on Council.

The development of a governance policy (and future component policies) would address these gaps and misunderstandings, and help to promote a partnership approach to community engagement and participation of citizens in the governance of the District.

The Governance Policy would be the 'umbrella policy' for other Council policies relating to ethics and accountability, Council meeting practice, strategic planning etc.

Proposed benefits

- increased community awareness about council and its approach;
- realistic expectations about levels of influence over final decision-making;
- an approach that is 'win-win' for Council and the community;
- basis for closer relationship between Council and its community;
- opportunity for Council to exercise leadership in local government industry;
- opportunity for Council to develop its identity and set itself apart from other councils.

Prerequisites / related strategies

Prerequisites:

- the implementation of Council report templates (initiative 5) will improve transparency and understanding of decision processes, thus underpinning the Governance Policy;
- wide dissemination of the Community Engagement Framework (initiative 1) will help in promoting Council role.

Related strategies: the establishment of Councillor Forums provides further opportunities for Councillors to promote the role of Council..

Implementation

Action	Who	By When
Work with Councillors to finalise a Governance Policy, building on information within the Community Engagement Framework. Develop communication strategy for promoting Council approach to Governance.	Governance Section	March 2010

Initiative 5: Informal Councillor Forums

Action

Identify forums where citizens can meet informally with Councillors and staff, learn more about local matters, contribute ideas and debate issues.

Progress to date

Discussions have been held on possible formats for regular (eg quarterly) community forums / ward meetings in localities across the District. The availability of administrative support to organise the forums and the attendance of Council officers at those meetings has also been discussed.

Background

Comments received during the survey indicate that some citizens would like to see more of their Councillors and a number commented that they feel more comfortable speaking up in informal settings where they could also influence the agenda eg a more conversational style of meeting than those with formal speakers and facilitated exchange of comments.

The opportunities for citizens to discuss issues and ideas with Councillors in informal meetings needs to balance the costs of arranging such meetings with the likely attendance. Many other councils have trialled such forums with widely differing degrees of success. Councillors also attend a variety of community meetings and functions where they speak informally with community members so the forums would need to be clearly directed at reaching a different 'audience'.

In order to progress this issue it is recommended that the forums move away from the traditional 'town hall' approach and trial some innovative, well targeted meeting places, and be based around themes likely to attract interest beyond everyday issues:

eg 'induction' bus tour of the District for new residents
eg table at the Big Lounge Day for 'kitchen table' talks
eg stall at supermarket on Thursday night
eg stall for Councillors, plus native plant 'give away' at show days / markets
eg session on local radio

The opportunity to discuss issues around the State Government's 30 Year Plan as it unfolds is an obvious issue capturing the community's attention and would provide an opportunity for Councillors to provide information on Council's submission, as well as discuss other issues raised by residents.

Proposed benefits

- addresses citizen desires to see more of Councillors
- addresses preference for informal, free flow of conversation
- allows citizens to raise issues of key concern and interest to them
- provides opportunities for answers to be provided to questions on the spot
- provides opportunities to have concerns acknowledged and addressed
- facilitates involvement with a broader cross section of the community
- facilitates discussion of broad strategic issues as well 'backyard issues'.
- balances issue-based and project-based (reactive) consultations with opportunities for pro-active engagement

Prerequisites / related strategies

Related strategy: development of Governance Policy (and associated communications)

Implementation

Action	Who	By When
Work with Councillors to agree on options to trial for each ward	Governance Section	Dec 2009
Participate in the development of forum themes	Various	March 2010
Trial 3 forums (1 trial for each ward)	Governance Section	Feb - May 2010

Initiative 6 : Communication Avenues

Action

Assess different communication avenues to supplement the use of Courier advertisements and Council's website, and implement the most practical, cost effective, and preferred avenue for citizens to regularly receive Council news.

Progress to date

Council has recently considered a report about the relative costs of producing the quarterly *Summit* newsletter compared with the costs of a regular Council column in the Courier. Council resolved to receive further information on the development and dissemination of a regular Council newsheet (a less costly but more regular information bulletin to the *Summit Insight*).

Background

Comments received through the community survey indicate that many people are simply not finding out about Council consultations (and other notifications) that are advertised through local papers and Council website. Many would like to see more information from Council and for Council to find better ways of communicating information, even if it costs more.

This initiative proposes that (a short) list of options for improving communication flows be analysed at the one time so the relative cost benefits of each can be assessed, taking account of:

- community preferences (indicated through survey results)
- capacity to reach a wide variety of citizens, including the 'hard to reach' groups
- opportunity for options to complement each other in extending Council's reach
- accessibility eg a regular spot / date of issue so that people know what to look out for
- capacity to attract people's attention and capture their interest
- capacity to maintain, ease of use by Council officers (efficiency)

Options to be considered include: regular Courier column, regular radio slots, regular news sheet, regular email/SMS alerts, electronic notice board (eg at Park 'n Ride), Council display points, community sponsored outlets /networks.

Proposed benefits

- enhances effectiveness of *all* Council communications – including community education programs and the dissemination of critical information (eg affecting health / safety)
- addresses community concerns about 'finding out what is going on'
- meets community priorities for cost effective communication avenues
- increases effectiveness of consultations through a well-informed community

Prerequisites / related strategies

This initiative is a prerequisite for most of the other initiatives to be effective.

Implementation

Action	Who	By When
Conduct cost benefits analysis of options	Communications	Nov 2009
Implement new avenues	Various	Feb - Mar 2010

Initiative 7: Council Report Templates

Action

Establish a template within Council reports to summarise the decision to be made, key factors to be considered, and the area of community influence. Establish further templates for reporting community input, and for providing community feedback on the reasons for decisions.

Background

Comments received during the 2008 community survey indicate that many citizens would like greater transparency in Council planning and decision-making. However, the survey also indicated a level of misunderstanding about Council's ultimate responsibility for decision-making and the purpose of consultations - some seeing it as a referendum of votes, some seeing it as community assuming Council's decision-making role, and others seeing it as an avenue to exert pressure on Council for a particular direction, and others as an avenue for protest.

The *Community Engagement Framework* clarifies the decision-making processes of Council and presents a model (page 12 of the Framework) for Council and citizens to work together to achieve outcomes for the common good.

For this model to succeed, the community needs to know:

- what factors are considered by Council when it deliberates on an issue, and
- how the community can best add value eg by providing local knowledge, ideas, experience in what works on the ground, information on potential impacts, competing objectives or priorities, and areas of acceptable trade-off or compromise.

The Framework identifies a way for Council reports to increase transparency by summarising:

- before consultation - the key factors in a decision and where the community has influence;
- following consultation - where and how the community has influenced Council's final decision.

This will help in the design of consultation processes, and in providing the community with clear feedback, particularly where an issue is complex or controversial. A hypothetical example is given overleaf to demonstrate how the template will be used. (Note that the template will be incorporated into the existing Council Report template and only for reports where a matter is going to consultation ie not for routine or 'information' reports)

Proposed benefits

- responds to community calls for greater transparency in planning and decision-making
- provides citizens with greater certainty in how their views are taken into account
- ensures decisions are based on clearly defined criteria and complete information
- helps Council administration to report community input in a structured, consistent manner
- community input is useful, used, and seen to be used
- community is confident that its views and input have been considered
- enhances community awareness of the reasons for a decision

Prerequisites / related strategies

This initiative supports initiatives for consistent consultation standards (transparency, communication, feedback), governance policy (initiative 4) and central data base (initiative 10).

Implementation

Action	Who	By When
Provide training / mentoring in the use of template (prior to going 'live') and trial with Councillors	Office of the CEO + Projects Sections	Dec 2009
Incorporate new sections into existing Council Report template	Office of the CEO	Feb 2010

Example: Consultation to facilitate community input into the development of a landscape design for a (hypothetical) District Park

(1) Initial Report to Council, recommending community consultation

Decision to be made	How can <i>District Park</i> be rehabilitated, improved and maintained to maximise its potential as a community meeting place, opportunity for passive recreation and enjoyment, local iconic site, regional tourism destination and place of social and environmental significance? What enhancements should be made to park facilities?
Key factors to be considered in decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • financial feasibility • restoration of <i>significant</i> environmental values • demonstrable benefits to <i>all</i> sectors of the community • capacity to maintain the park through community management • opportunity to promote historical / cultural significance of site • compliance with polices for animal management, ...
Sphere of Community Influence	<p>Aspects that are fixed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • public safety, security of park facilities • limits on public access to protect environmental values • removal of state government infrastructure • design of concept plan to be undertaken by XXX consultants <p>Key areas for community input</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agreed community values for the site – to guide the concept plan • contribution of local knowledge on significance of the area • ideas for building responsible behaviour / supervision of the park

(2) Report back to Council following consultation and development of concept plan

Key Decision Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • financial feasibility • restoration of <i>significant</i> environmental values • demonstrable benefits to <i>all</i> sectors of the community • capacity to maintain the park through community management • opportunity to promote historical / cultural significance of site • compliance with polices eg animal management ..
Area of community influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agreed community values for the site – to guide the concept plan • contribution of local knowledge on significance of area • ideas for building responsible behaviour / supervision of area
Community input	<p>Consultations identified the following community values in common:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maximization of natural views, screening of eyesores • communication of indigenous and European heritage • protection of remnant native vegetation • low impact use and a balance between local use / regional tourism • community safety, deterrence to vandalism through joint use with adjacent schools, and establishment of community garden
Recommendations	<p>The concept plan is recommended for approval as it has addressed all agreed community values, including the balance between active / passive uses, multiple uses, opportunities for the whole community, and ways to maximise the full potential of the site.</p> <p>It is recommended that approval also be given to the drafting of an implementation plan and identification of innovative funding options so that Council can assess the financial feasibility of the project, including the full costs of ongoing maintenance of the site.</p>

Initiative 8: Joint Projects with Residents Associations

Actions

Investigate the opportunity to undertake joint projects with residents associations and community groups for encouraging high levels of community participation.

Progress to date

Initial meetings have been held with local resident associations on their relationships with Council and how Council and associations can work together to improve engagement of local communities and the District as a whole.

Background

The Mount Barker District has nine residents' associations – covering the townships of Brukunga, Echunga, Hahndorf, Littlehampton, Prospect Hill, Macclesfield, Nairne, and Wistow – and the Mount Barker District Residents' Association which covers the whole District. The associations have widely differing charters and foci, but all are active and together have deep connections throughout the District community through the dissemination of community newsletters, management of community facilities, engagement in local activities, and through the exercise of a community 'watchdog' role often promoted through the Courier.

Initial discussions with the associations indicate a number of differences with Council, and a number of opportunities to build a more solid relationship through:

- improved communication flows, and joint promotions / communication efforts
- explicit recognition and promotion of the legitimate role of associations
- active part for associations in Council engagement exercises
- development of leadership /management skills of associations

There are also opportunities to explore joint projects in areas of common ground and mutual interest, for instance:

- projects to improve community access to information about their community;
- projects to increase social capital by building links between community networks;
- projects which encourage active citizenship and build community pride, eg community education programs encouraging civic behaviours and sustainable practices;
- projects to build registers for protecting places of social, cultural, environmental and historical significance, as the area grows;
- integration of new residents into the community eg through projects in new release areas.

A few, simple, clear projects which are mutually beneficial and adequately resourced would provide a basis for building relationships and improving communication flows eg the involvement of associations in development of a website page to promote their role, an email alert system for ease of communication, representation on a consultation reference group, or other project to gather community views and ideas. Initiatives such as social mapping, sustainability street projects, community panels/reference groups, social impact /expert groups are examples of participatory techniques that could be explored with the associations in the longer term.

Proposed benefit

- good relationships by focussing on common ground
- economies of effort by 'joining forces' on community building initiatives
- more efficient use of Council resources – a reduction in reactive efforts
- harnessing of community expertise and energy
- better outcomes for the community from partnership approach
- avoid divisions within the community as pressures of growth increase.

Prerequisites / related strategies

This is a stand alone initiative but good communication flows to ensure that associations are kept informed of (and where appropriate involved in) the implementation of Council's Framework is essential in building good relationships.

Implementation

Action	Who	By When
Organise meeting with interested associations to identify projects of mutual benefit	to be decided	Nov 2009
Ensure communication flows with associations on the Engagement Framework are maintained	Projects Section in first instance	Ongoing

Initiative 9: Enhancements to Engagement Program

Action

Investigate *future* initiatives and steps for enhancing the engagement program by assessing the relative benefits of:

- o a representative community panel of citizens who agree to be surveyed by post or email;
- o enhancements to Council's community development program targeting the involvement of young people, new residents and local workers;
- o a reference group of interested long term residents, who have knowledge of the history, heritage and development of the local area;
- o avenues for feedback on satisfaction with Council services, facilities and programs;
- o longitudinal research into community needs and lifestyle as a basis for planning; and
- o quarterly strategic planning summits.

Background

The South Australian Community Engagement Handbook recognises that good engagement is more about good planning than adoption of a particular technique. The timing of this initiative would avoid a headlong rush into immediately implementing new systems that require dedicated resources and ongoing management.

This initiative recognises the need (in the first instance) to build staff capabilities in consultation planning, communication, execution and follow through so as to deliver a consistent level of engagement across Council. By adopting a process of continuous improvement, Council and the community will get better value when the next steps are taken to enhance the engagement program with new methods of community participation.

The list of 'next steps' initiatives reflect community priorities for more regular interaction with citizens (to supplement consultation on specific issues and projects), more interesting engagement forums, and for ways to attract more representative input from diverse sections of the community. The initiatives would be assessed for their ability to capture community energy, knowledge, ideas and aspirations so that Council can govern effectively, and the community can play a key role in shaping the directions for their District.

One example is establishment of a representative community panel (see over) where members agree to participate regularly in surveys and/or focus groups. This was one of the preferred engagement methods of survey respondents. Panels can increase the reach to citizens who don't (or can't) participate in public meetings, and hence increase representativeness, efficiency and effectiveness, and facilitate longitudinal research. They do, however, require a dedicated resource to manage, coordinate their use by different sections of Council and ensure the Panel continues to be representative of community demographics.

Proposed benefits

- builds on Council's engagement program over time to attract a broader cross section of the community to have their say, thus generating more representative input;
- ensures Council keeps pace with other councils who are introducing new and innovative ways for citizens to participate beyond formal public meetings.

Prerequisites / related strategies

Enhancement of the engagement program should take place after other initiatives are in place.

Implementation

Action	Who	By When
Flesh out proposals to enhance Council's engagement program, for the consideration of Council	to be decided	Sept 2010

Parramatta City Council - Windows Internet Explorer

http://www.parramatta.nsw.gov.au/residents/residents_panel

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Parramatta City Council

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RESIDENTS PANEL

Parramatta City Council's Residents' Panel

Parramatta City Council's Panel is a group of people from all walks of life who have volunteered to represent all sectors of our community in ongoing public consultations. The original target was to have enough persons equivalent to one per cent of the area's population (1500 residents) and that the panel to be statistically valid and representative demographically and geographically of the population of the Parramatta Local Government Area. We have achieved this and would like to increase engagement to 3000 residents in due course.

The panel will be actively involved in providing information and advice to Council decisions. Panel members will receive feedback on how their input has been received and what were the outcomes. Updates to all consultations will be made via this website.

Development Consultation 2008

UP COMING IN PROGRESS ANALYSIS RESULTS

The Residents' Panel team is working with the Parramatta City Council development team to further explore development applicant satisfaction. Over the past three years development management has utilised this information to modify the service provision focusing on providing better servicing.

Join us

RESIDENTS PANEL

If you would like to join, please use this link or click on an image above.

panel members

2175 members have joined the Residents' Panel so far. To increase engagement with the Community we would now like to aim for our target to 3000 Confirmed Panel

Done

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(08) 8397 7444

Community Panel

Council is establishing a Community Panel as a way of enhancing the engagement of the local community in the decision-making process of Council. Your feedback and input will ensure your voice is heard and will help Council understand the community's views on particular issues.

These issues may be related to:

- The environment
- Council services

- Proposed changes to Council assets and facilities, such as the Library, Aquatic and Recreation Centres, Parks and Reserves.
- Future directions for the City of Tea Tree Gully
- Other topical and important issues

Members of the Community Panel will be randomly invited to participate in consultations and surveys (less than 10 per year). As well as helping Council make important decisions about the City's future, you'll also go into a regular draw with the chance to win some great prizes.

Council is aiming to collect a statistically valid group of people that is geographically and demographically representative of the population of the City of Tea Tree Gully.

Done

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Initiative 10: Integrated Data Base

Action

Investigate the establishment of an integrated data base of consultation results and qualitative information to maximise use of community feedback and input.

Background

Council now consults the community on a wide range of issues and plans. The implementation of engagement standards (initiative 11) through staff guidelines and training (initiative 1) will improve the way that these consultations are undertaken by facilitating:

- consistent levels of service and consultation practice across Council
- efficient use of resources by through templates, toolkits, central stakeholder lists etc.

The establishment of an integrated data base would facilitate *continuous improvement* through:

- knowledge management – capturing consultation findings to make them available for related / future consultations (like companies build client data bases); and
- learning culture – sharing experiences and learning from both successes and failures in consultation practice (by evaluating each consultation and documenting 'lessons learned').

The establishment of a central consultation database could be an integral part of Council's project management / records management systems as it is based on the same principles eg the need for project review, documentation and filing at the completion of every project. Alternatively, a simple review checklist and 'learning' template could be developed for completion and filing at a central 'location' at the end of each consultation.

Proposed benefits

- the availability of consultation findings to inform multiple projects
- record of the history of community input on an issue
- less 'reinventing the wheel' and increased staff confidence / skills by leaning from others
- potential for sharing information with eg other service providers, helping to avoid consultation fatigue amongst peak community groups
- continuously evolving practice and fostering of community networks.

Prerequisites / related strategies

The development of integrated data bases can proceed along with the development of staff guidelines.

Implementation

Action	Who	By When
Work with project officer developing consultation guidelines to implement good documentation and knowledge management practices.	Corporate Services Projects	Feb 2010
Investigate the establishment of a central database for survey results.	To be decided	

Initiative 11: Engagement Standards

Action

Ensure staff guidelines, training and corporate systems support staff in implementing consistent engagement standards, as set out in the Community Engagement Framework for:

- transparency
- feedback
- communication
- timeframes
- inclusiveness
- projects with long time frames
- controversial issues
- complex issues
- networks
- planning and continuous improvement

Background

Comments received during the community survey on engagement indicated that the need for principles of good engagement to be clearly incorporated into consultation practices across Council. The literature has many examples of how local government has adopted / refined these principles to suit local circumstances.

The engagement standards in Council's Framework have similarly adopted best practice engagement principles and *adapted* them to respond to the specific concerns raised by citizens in the Mount Barker District. The standards are thus directed at addressing the areas where consultations practices are currently falling short, the areas that are often the most challenging ones for a council – for instance, in managing consultations on projects with long timeframes or on issues that are controversial, complex or both.

The standards have thus moved away from consultation 'protocols' that use simple formula, recognising instead that no two consultations will ever be the same, and the circumstances surrounding each need to be carefully thought through and planned .

Proposed benefits

- clearly responds to community priorities for the level / quality of engagement;
- helps to ensure that consultations are more accessible, equitable and effective
- gives consultations the best chance of success
- provides accountability to the community, as the community knows what to expect
- recognises the importance of the consultation 'experience' as well as its outcomes

Prerequisites / related strategies

This initiative underpins all other initiatives.

Implementation

Develop staff guidelines / training and trial in Projects Section <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure guidelines / training clearly directed at achieving Engagement Standards, and provide background on the intent of those standards to address existing gaps in consultation processes; • ensure guidelines / training meet intent of SA Local Government Association Guidelines eg emphasis on planning and follow through; • ensure guidelines / training result in quality assurance (minimum standards are met consistently). 	Projects Section + Organisational Development Section	end Feb 2010
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	Oct '09	Nov '09	Dec '09	Jan '10	Feb '10	Mar '10	Apr '10	May '10	Jun '10	Jul '10	Aug '10	Sep '10
Framework and Guidelines	Disseminate		Finalise training			Public launch						
Online Status Board	On new Council website		Use extended									
Governance Policy	Release Policy											
Informal Councillor Forums	Council decides on trials		Ward trial		Ward trial	Wars trial	Council decides			Forum		
New commun'n avenues	Council reviews options		New avenue(s)									
Council report templates	Training starts		Templates live									
Joint projects - res.assocs	First meeting											
Enhanced program	Commence research					Council report						
Integrated data base	Data base processes in place											
Engage't standards	Include in staff guidelines				Finalise training							

Appendix A: References Consulted in the Development of Draft Community Engagement Framework

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SA

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- Alexandrina Council Public Consultation Policy May 2003
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- Mount Barker District Council Community Consultation Policy 2004 and related Governance and communication policies
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Queensland

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- Griffith University URP Toolbox (website of engagement techniques), replacing citizen science online toolbox
- Deliberation in the Wilderness. The Far North Queensland Citizen Jury

ACT and Territories

- Your Guide to Engaging with the Community ACT Government Community Engagement Manual 2005
- ACT Planning and Land Authority Community Engagement Guide
- Territories and Municipal Services . Community Engagement Policy
- Shaping Opportunities, Creating Public Value: Government and Community Collaboration in the ACT 2005

Other

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