LEETON
SHIRE COUNCIL

Community Engagement Strategy 2022 - 2025

(Incorporating Land Use Community Participation Plan)

DOCUMENT CONTROL

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Communications Coordinator
REVIEWED BY:	Communications Coordinator Manager, Planning Building and Health
LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN:	A community that speaks up and gets involved 19b.01: Run an active community engagement program
DATE ADOPTED:	14 December 2022
ADOPTED BY:	Leeton Shire Council
RESOLUTION NO: (IF RELEVANT):	22/194
FOR PUBLICATION:	☐ INTRANET ☐ COUNCIL WEBSITE ☑ BOTH
REVIEW DUE DATE:	December 2024
REVISION NUMBER:	4

PREVIOUS VERSIONS	DATE	DESCRIPTION OF AMENDMENTS	AUTHOR/ EDITOR	REVIEW/ SIGN OFF	MINUTE NO (IF RELEVANT)
1	27 January 2010				10/004
2	26 June 2013				13/136
3	22 February 2017				17/018
4	December 2022	Changes in response to the release of the new IIP&R Guidelines and Handbook including: • Expansion of engagement principles to reference social justice principles • Sections added (stakeholder list, feedback, how personal information will be used, evaluation) • Inclusion of Community Participation Plan into single document • Reference to individual community engagement action plans for specific engagement projects	Communications Coordinator		22/194

REVIEW OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document will be reviewed by 31 December in the year of the Local Government elections or earlier if required in the event of legislative changes or operational requirements. Any major amendments to the document must be made by way of a Council Resolution. Minor amendments such as corrections to spelling, changes to wording for improved clarity, formatting and updates to the Appendixes may be made without approval from the Council.

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Introduction

This Community Engagement Strategy 2022-2025 has been developed in response to increasing community awareness of the importance of having a say in Council's decision making. Part 1 addresses engagement in general, and Part 2 specifically deals with the landuse and development approvals Community Participation Plan.

Effective and meaningful engagement is at the heart of local government. It helps communities shape their own future and play a part in informing the vision and direction of Council. Council has a vital role to play in providing opportunities for people to be involved in creating good public policy and ensuring relevant, quality services.

Leeton Shire Council is committed to actively seeking and considering the views of the community when planning or deliberating on important policies, plans, projects and services in a manner that is underpinned by key engagement principles.

What is Community Engagement?

Community engagement is about involving the community in making the decisions that shape the Shire. It's about enabling the community to have a say on matters that may impact or interest them. It is planned, two-way information sharing with the purpose of working with the community and other stakeholders to make better informed decisions.

Effective community engagement allows Council to tap into diverse perspectives and potential solutions to improve the quality of its decision making.

Council's community engagement practice is aligned with the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) and provides a framework to enable planning, implementation, and evaluation of community engagement activities.

About the Community Engagement Strategy (Part 1 of this Strategy)

The Community Engagement Strategy section of this document (Part 1) outlines Council's general approach to engagement. It has been developed to guide ongoing communication between Council and the community in planning for the future.

This Strategy strives to:
- Keep the Leeton Shire community well informed about issues, strategies or plans that affect them
- Be a key a resource for Council to ensure that its engagement processes are appropriate, accessible, well-planned and integrated, and adequately resourced
- Ensure that the views of a wide cross section of the community are incorporated into the process, by selecting engagement methods that are flexible, inclusive and appropriate to the people being consulted
- Provide a process for co-ordination of Community Strategic Plan and 'vision' for Leeton that takes account of the broad community desires, expectations and aspirations
- Enable and help guide subsequent Council strategic plans; and support ongoing opportunities for involvement in and shared "ownership" of Council's decision making and strategy development
- Provide staff with the support and training to conduct effective community engagement processes
- Improve Council's internal systems and procedures to ensure a coordinated and comprehensive approach to engagement
- Assist Council in meeting its legislative requirements regarding community engagement.

It is intended that this Community Engagement Strategy will give the community a clear understanding of:
- Council's commitment to community engagement
- When community engagement will occur
- What level of engagement will occur
- How the community engagement process will be managed.

Legislative requirements

The Community Engagement Strategy complies with the *Local Government Act 1993*, Section 8A and Section 402A, which state that: The council must establish and implement a strategy (its Community Engagement Strategy) based on social justice principles, for engagement with the local community when developing its plans, policies and programs and for the purpose of determining its activities (other than routine administrative matters).

The Community Engagement Strategy also complies with the *Children's Guardian Amendment (Child Safe Scheme) Bill 2021* Child Safe Standard 2 – Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously. Children are safer when organisations teach them about their rights to be heard, listened to and believed. A child safe organisation actively seeks the opinions of children and when doing so considers their age, development, maturity, understanding, abilities and how they communicate. Children are encouraged and supported to regularly contribute to decisions that affect them.

About the Landuse Community Participation Plan (Part 2 of this Strategy)

The Community Participation Plan section of this document (Part 2) has been created to outline how and when Council's Planning department engages with the community across their planning functions.

The Community Participation Plan applies to Council's exercise of its functions under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*, as well as when it exercises functions on behalf of the Independent Planning Commission.

This section of the Community Engagement Strategy seeks to:
- Provide opportunity for those potentially impacted by development to comment on possible impacts
- Provide clarity and consistency in the notification process
- Outline circumstances in which direct notification and/or advertising will be undertaken
- Specify developments considered to be 'advertised development' for the purposes of The *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

Legislative Requirements

The *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* includes mandatory community participation requirements for councils in their role as planning authorities. These requirements include:
- Setting out the mandatory requirements for community participation by planning authorities with respect to the exercise of relevant planning functions. The mandatory requirements include public exhibition for a minimum period, public notification requirements and the giving of reasons for decisions by planning authorities
- The requirement for community consultation by some applicants for consents or other approvals
- Information about how and when it will undertake community participation when exercising relevant planning functions.

PART 1: THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Why Engage?

Council is committed to gathering the community's views, alongside other information – including technical, financial, legislative – to help us to make better decisions.

Our community and stakeholders live, work and choose to spend time in the local area and have a wealth of knowledge to contribute. In return, we want to ensure the decisions we make provide the best outcome for them.

Community participation in decision-making:
- Increases awareness of Council's services programs and planning
- Improves communication and understanding of the process and the outcome
- Leads to better decision making
- Enhances a sense of community pride and self-determination
- Builds community capacity to be involved in local government decision making
- Fosters trust and confidence in local government
- Strengthens communities to add value and deliver benefits.

Challenges of Engagement

Meeting expectations

Community engagement is a commitment by Council to use a number of forms of interaction to inform, consult and involve citizens. These forms of engagement will vary depending on the issues involved.

However, community engagement is NOT a process whereby
- every citizen is necessarily consulted on every issue,
- consensus will be achieved on every matter under consideration,
- feedback is viewed as a democratic vote, with majority rules.

Competing expectations and complexity need to be recognised and managed such that, when decisions are made, stakeholders are helped to understand the Council's reasons for decisions that might be different to their expectations.

Community Plans versus Council Plans

Empowerment of communities to achieve desired goals is frequently an outcome of community engagement. Councils may be able to provide assistance in some part of a community aspiration; however, one of the challenges is to balance desire with capacity, and clarity of understanding about the concept of communities building communities, as opposed to citizens identifying a 'problem' that Council needs to 'fix'.

Adequate Resourcing Levels

Effective community engagement requires a strong commitment to be successful. This commitment needs to be both a genuine desire by Council to engage and then listen to the views of the community; but it also requires a commensurate commitment of adequate resources (financial and people) to ensure that the engagement process can be properly conducted.

Broad Community Participation

One of the key challenges is in engaging the broader community, and not just the same interested community members all of the time. There is a need to ensure that a variety of engagement tools are utilised that appeal to a wide range of demographics, ages and abilities. There is also a need to ensure that strategies consider ways to engage a representative segment of the entire community (age, gender, geographic location, ethnicity, occupation and interest).

Considerations such as the time of the day (and the week) that engagement strategies are scheduled, physical access to venues, and the presentation of material in an understandable form are all important elements.

A Principles Based Approach to Engagement

Leeton Shire Council's Community Engagement Strategy is based on social justice principles and principles that are aligned with the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) core values. These principles will underpin all stages of the community engagement process, from planning to decision making and evaluation. Our key engagement principles are those of:
- Social Justice
- Integrity
- Accessibility and inclusivity
- Informative and timely
- Accountability
- Excellence
- Innovation.

Social Justice

Council's engagement will be fair and equitable and will provide opportunities for individuals, regardless of background or socio-economic status, to participate in decisions that can affect their quality of life.

Integrity

Council will be transparent and open about the process and the decision to be made.

Accessibility and Inclusivity

Community members should have equal opportunity to participate in community engagement processes. In this instance, access refers to any barriers that may impede a person's ability to participate. Specific areas to consider include:
- Understanding who the relevant stakeholders are and provide opportunities for a diverse range of perspectives to be heard
- Selecting a venue and engagement technique appropriate and caters to the people involved in the community engagement (e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds; people with disabilities; older and young people)
- Ensuring venues are accessible to wheelchairs and have appropriate facilities (e.g., disabled toilets)
- Providing clear, concise information that is easy to read and understood by a wide range of audiences.
- Being aware of and supporting any potential language, sight or hearing impairment
- Promoting the engagement in a manner that reaches a wide cross- section of the community (e.g. website, social media, online engagement portal 'Have Your Say', schools, local radio, etc.)
- Invite specific targeted community groups as identified in the project

Informative and Timely

Council will:
- Seek to engage stakeholders at the earliest stage possible and continue to keep them informed and involved throughout the process
- Provide adequate and timely information to enable informed participation
- Hold engagement activities are held at convenient times so that as many people as possible can participate
- Provide sufficient timeframes are critical to give participants time to provide feedback or attend consultation displays/meetings and to incorporate feedback into Council's processes. Time constraints should not compromise Council's engagement with the community.

Accountability

Council will consider feedback and inform community members and other stakeholders how the feedback influenced the outcome or decision.

Excellence

Council will evaluate its engagement and apply learnings to drive continuous improvement.

Innovation

Council will develop and apply new ideas that improve the way it engages.

With Whom Do We Engage?

Council is committed to undertaking meaningful engagement with community and stakeholders and understands that effective community engagement requires an informed and representative group of participants, time for deliberation, and recommendations on the decision or project.

Council undertakes a stakeholder identification process to identify who is impacted or interested in a decision and will then select the best methods of engagement to encourage participation and effective engagement. We work to identify and engage directly with the most impacted, including those who face barriers to participation. Some community members fall within multiple stakeholder groups, making them particularly relevant to certain engagement processes

Our Community Stakeholders

Following are some examples of Council's key stakeholders.

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	EXAMPLES
Residents and Ratepayers	Those who live and/or pay rates in the Leeton Shire Local Government Area
Leeton Shire Councillors, Staff	Elected members, employees, contractors and business entities and Committees of Council
Section 355 Committees	Committees with delegated authority to make decisions on behalf of Council. Committees are made up of Councillors, Council Staff and community representatives
Business and Industry	Individuals, associations or networks active in the business community. These include small businesses, industry, Leeton Business Chamber, investors, developers and individuals with business or relocation interests to the Leeton Shire

Service or facility users	Individuals or groups who use local services or facilities such as sports grounds, halls, libraries, community centre, pools
Population groups	Specific groups with demographic commonalities such as age, background, ability, gender, cultural heritage
Government agencies	Departments and representatives of state and federal government whom Council advises and seeks advice or funding for projects
Community	Community service groups and organisations that support provide community services and support. Examples are schools, sporting and recreational clubs, clubs, the aged, young people, the Aboriginal community, volunteers, charitable groups, church groups, multicultural groups, health services, support services etc
Visitors	Individuals or groups who chose to visit Leeton Shire and may have an interest in events, recreational, and visitor services or facilities
Media	Commercial and community media outlets locally and regionally

The Community Engagement Process

When We Will Engage

Council will engage the community for:

Strategic Planning

This refers to the development of strategic plans and projects that inform the Delivery Program, Annual Operational Plan and Resourcing Strategy.

Policy Development and Implementation, including Budgets

This includes any policy development that has a direct impact on the community.

Site Specific

This refers to any changes to a site that may have impact on the community.

Service Planning

This includes the development and/or improvement to a service.

Areas of Improvement

This refers to any improvement required to increase the quality of lifestyle for the community e.g. open spaces, etc.

Legislative Requirements, including planning issues

This refers to all prescribed plans and projects under the *Local Government Act (1993)* and other relevant Acts. See Part 2 for community engagement specific to land use planning.

How We Will Engage and For How Long

Our approach to engagement is guided by the International Association Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Engagement, which describes five levels of engagement, from 'inform' through to 'empower'.

There are many different methods to engage all relevant stakeholders on an issue, and council will generally use multiple techniques on single projects to ensure a broad cross section of the community has been consulted.

An important trend to embrace is people's ongoing preference for online information and engagement.

It should be noted that Council's main website which is an Open Cities platform complies with all W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 AA Standards ensuring people of all abilities can receive information and provide input.

Online engagement through Council's Have Your Say platform offers the potential to reach many more people quickly and efficiently to have their say in a way and at a time that suits them best.

Council has also established a presence in social media. However, for the foreseeable future, this will be limited to providing information as Council does not have sufficient staff to monitor social media. Council will not engage in debate, nor will it generally use social media as a formal means of seeking community views and feedback. However, Council will use social media to advise community where and how they can engage with Council.

Council also understands that large sections of the community still prefer written communication, printed documents and face-to-face engagement and will continue to provide these engagement options as much as possible, particularly for high impact and higher risk areas.

Generally, Council will engage for 28 days minimum. However, the period between 20 December and 10 January every year (inclusive) is excluded from the calculation of a period of public exhibition.

The Public Participation Spectrum

	Increasing level of public impact →				
	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 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 identification of the preferred solution	To place final decision making in the hands of the public

We Will	Keep you informed	Keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	Work with you to ensure your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	Look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations and decisions to the maximum extent possible	Implement what you decide
Example Engagement Activities	• Website • Social Media • Media Releases • Advertisement • Posters • Presentations • Letters • Emails • Phone	• Have Your Say survey • Online forums • Polls • Information sessions • Public hearing • Written and email submissions	• Focus groups • Workshops • Deliberative Polling • Reference Groups • Field Trips	• Stakeholder committees • Online deliberative community panel • Mediation • Community Summits • Participatory Budgeting • Referendum	• Deliberative citizens jury • Ballots • Delegated Decisions

Triggers for Engagement

Various factors influence the need to engage with the community on a specific issue. On an overall basis community engagement has two principal components for these purposes. The first is at an overarching Strategy Planning level. This is the process adopted by Council to support development of a Community Strategic Plan that will determine priorities and community vision for the future. This Plan will also consider the varying strategies that both the community, and the Council, may adopt to give effect to the vision.

The second component to community engagement surrounds the body of techniques and approaches that develop and sustain working relationships between Leeton Shire Council and the wider community. The triggers for the level and type of engagement will be determined by Council's assessment of the likely impact on the community, and on the complexity of the issue to be addressed. These levels of engagement will follow the stages outlined previously (viz: Inform; Consult; Involve; and/or Collaborate/Empower.

Note – Council will develop individual community engagement action plans for specific engagement projects. These action plans are to be developed with reference to this Community Engagement Strategy. The action plans will provide in-depth details of the engagement process, a timeframe in which the engagement process will be carried out, Identify how the outcomes of the process will be recorded and reported back to participants.

Levels of Community Engagement

The purpose of assessing the levels of impact is to guide the variety of engagement methods that may be appropriate for particular engagement projects and the resources required. The examples provided below are indicative, not prescriptive: each issue should be considered on its merits.
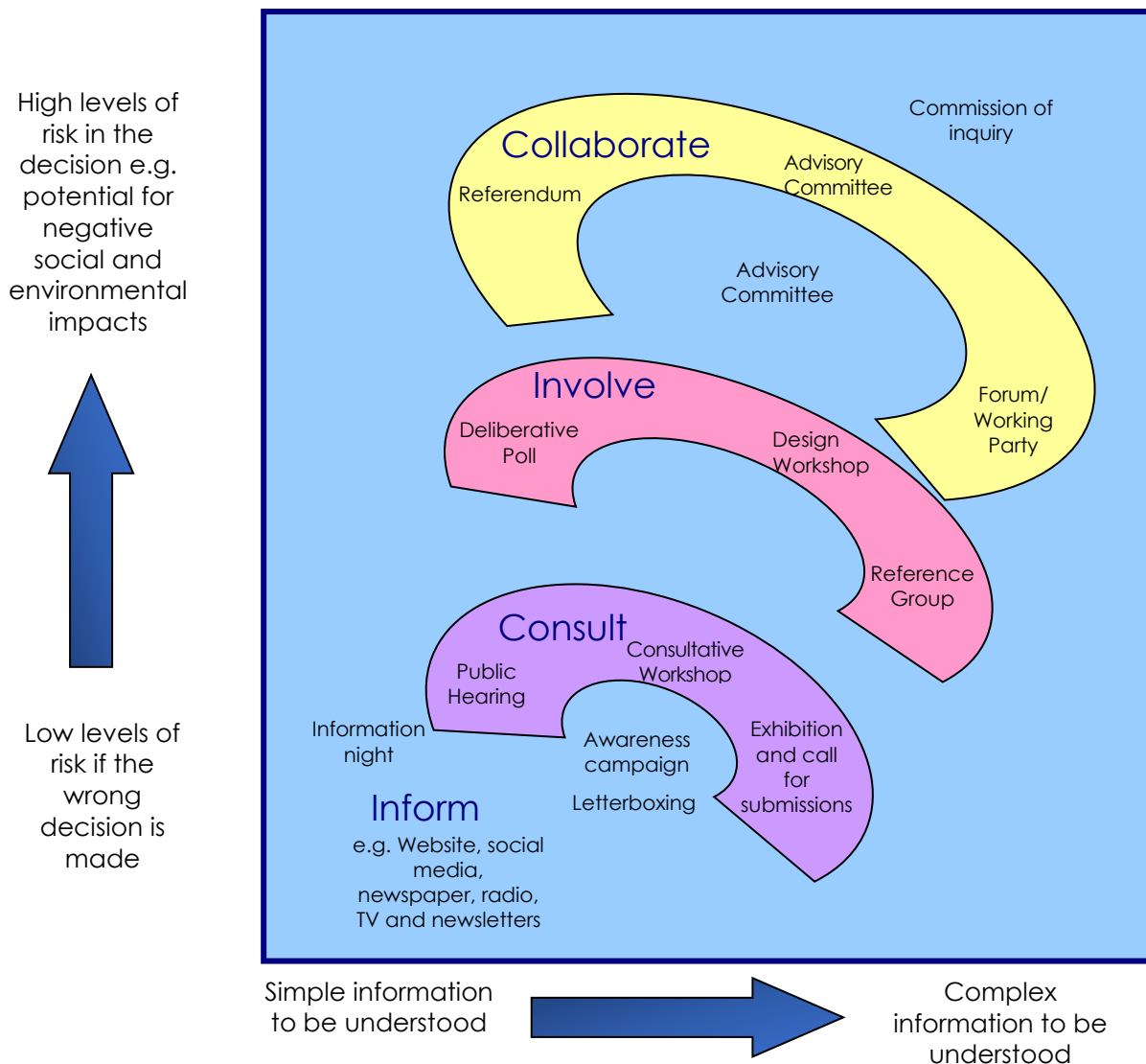
LEVEL OF IMPACT	CRITERIA (ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING)	EXAMPLES
Level A High Impact – Leeton Shire High level of impact or risk, perceived or real, on the whole or a large part of Leeton Shire	• Potential high impact on State or regional strategies or directions • High level of real or perceived impact or risk across Leeton Shire • Any significant impact on attributes that are considered to be of high value to the whole of Leeton Shire, such as the natural environment or heritage • Any impact on the health, safety or well-being of the Leeton Shire community • Potential high degree of controversy or conflict • Likely high-level interest across Leeton Shire	• Shire wide or regional plans • A change to land categorisation i.e. selling land • Disability action plan • Strategies, plans or policies, e.g. Culture, Youth, Aged • Removal of a facility or service catering across Leeton Shire e.g. Library Services • Provision of a district or regional facility e.g. skate park, indoor sports centre • Key changes to a Leeton Shire wide service e.g. waste management • Changes to or impact on natural bushland or waterway (where the natural values could be affected)
Level B High Impact – Local High level of impact or risk, perceived or real, of a local nature e.g. a local area, specific community or user group	• High level of real or perceived impact or risk on a local area, small community or user group(s) of a specific facility or service • The loss or significant change to any facility or service to a local community • Potential high degree of controversy or conflict at the local level	• Removal or relocation of a local playground • Change to or loss of valued activity or program e.g. local youth activity • Redevelopment of a sportsground • Major development or redevelopment of non-regional parks • Local street road closure • Increase or removal of car parking in local shopping centre
Level C Lower Impact – Leeton Shire Lower level of impact on the whole or a large part of Leeton Shire	• Lower, although still some real or perceived impact of risk across Leeton Shire • Potential for some controversy or conflict • Potential for some although not significant impact on State or regional strategies or directions	• Improvements to a Leeton Shire wide service e.g. Library Services • Upgrade of a district or regional facility • Changes to customer services processes, e.g., payment of rates • Most changes to fees and charges (unless contentious) • Provision of a community wide event • Review of community needs e.g. recreational needs assessment
Level D Lower Impact - Local	• Lower level of real or perceived impact or risk on a local area, small community or user group(s) of a specific facility or service • Only a small change or improvement to a facility/ service at the local level • Low or no risk of controversy or conflict at the local level	• Upgrade of a local playground • Local street or streetscape upgrade • Changes to a local activity program e.g. timing or venue/location

A four-tier level of community engagement is used to guide Council's approach to conducting consultation.

TYPICAL LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT	DEFINITION	TYPICAL HIGHEST LEVEL OF IMPACT
1. INFORMING	• Advising the community of a situation or proposal • Informing on a decision or direction • Providing advice on an issue • No response is required, although people are free to seek a further level of participation	Level A Level B Level C Level D
2. CONSULTING	• Undertaking market research to identify needs or issues • Seeking comment on a proposal, action or issue • Seeking feedback on a service or facility • Requiring a response, but limited opportunity for dialogue • Option for people to seek a further level of participation	Level A Level B Level C Level D
3. INVOLVING	• Involving the community in discussion and debate • Ensuring informed input through briefings and information • Adopting a more personal and innovative approach through personal contact meetings/sessions that encourage participation • Involving at different times in the planning process i.e. keeping informed and enabling further comment	Level A Level B
4. COLLABORATING/ EMPOWERING	• Establishing a structure for involvement in decision-making e.g. committee • Enabling ongoing involvement and keeping informed • Allocating responsibility in achieving initiatives	Level A Level B

The engagement approach applied in each instance will be influenced by the assessed impact level. The impact and complexity level for any given matter will tend to reflect the engagement. The higher the impact, the greater the level of engagement.

The level of engagement that may be required is illustrated in the following diagram, giving an indication of the relationship between the degree of impact and the complexity of the information.

High levels of risk in the decision e.g. potential for negative social and environmental impacts

Low levels of risk if the wrong decision is made

Collaborate

Referendum

Commission of inquiry

Advisory Committee

Advisory Committee

Forum/ Working Party

Involve

Deliberative Poll

Design Workshop

Reference Group

Consult

Public Hearing

Consultative Workshop

Information night

Awareness campaign

Exhibition and call for submissions

Letterboxing

Inform

e.g. Website, social media, newspaper, radio, TV and newsletters

Simple information to be understood

Complex information to be understood

This decision diagram is based on:
- Likely risk
- Complexity of the information which needs to be understood for a sound decision.

The example methodologies are indicative only of some of the numerous types of community engagement tools that Council may utilise.

Selection methodologies will depend on the outcomes of research that will include demographic, technical, legal and financial data.

Recommendations and information provided by Council will, in all cases, be evidence based.

Management of the Engagement Process

Each community engagement activity will be the responsibility of the Manager within the lead unit, in collaboration with Council's Communications Coordinator.

When planning community engagement, Managers need to ensure that resources (staff and financial resources) for engagement activities across Council are effectively allocated and managed. Where possible, engagement activities will be combined with other activities that target similar communities.

How to provide Feedback

The community is encouraged to provide feedback to Council in any of the following ways by the specified closing date:

ELECTRONICALLY: Completion of a survey/submission on the project page on Council's 'Have Your Say' online engagement portal at haveyoursay.leeton.nsw.gov.au

BY EMAIL TO: council@leeton.nsw.gov.au

BY LETTER: Addressed to the General Manager, 23–25 Chelmsford Place, Leeton NSW 2705.

How Will Your Personal Information be Used?

Respondents personal information is protected under the *Privacy and Personal Information Act 1998* (PPIP Act). When you make a submission, Council will collect:
* Name
* Address
* Email (if provided)
* Any other personal information contained in a political donations' disclosure statement (if provided)

Council may publish:
* The submission made*
* The name of the respondent (unless they state they want their name withheld)
* The suburb of the respondent
* Any political donations disclosure statement
* Submissions in reports or other documents that are produced following the exhibition period
* Council may forward submissions to third parties including other public authorities and Government agencies or an applicant
* If a submission is made on behalf of multiple people or it contains a petition, only the designated contact person will be provided with any subsequent acknowledgement or correspondence. The first person with legible contact details will be used if no designated contact is assigned.

* Respondents will be asked to not provide any personal information in their submission that they do not want published.

Reporting Back to Participants and Community

Council will send an acknowledgement of all submissions received where an address (email or residential) is provided.

Upon completion of a community engagement activity, a report will be developed outlining the community engagement outcomes, considerations, and recommendations made to Council.

Respondents will be informed of the upcoming Council meeting where their views will be tabled and considered, with advice on how the information can be accessed on Council's website. They will also be invited to present their views verbally to Council (subject to time limits in place for the occasion) and will need to contact Council prior to the meeting to register to speak. Timeframes for registration and presentation will be advised in the relevant agenda.

In some circumstances, submitters may receive individual responses. In other circumstances, submitters will be provided with general responses. Each situation will be decided on merit and with consideration of Council resourcing at the time.

Evaluating the Engagement

Evaluating engagement is a continuous process, so plans and activities can be adjusted should an aspect not be working well. These lessons learnt will be shared across Council and inform improvements to the process. Evaluation considerations may include:

- Number of people involved in the process
- Community representation
- Type of communications publicity methods most suitable
- Methods utilised for engaging the community
- Timing i.e. promotion time and time of the actual activity
- Qualitative and quantitative information gained and gathered
- Quality and usefulness of the information obtained in the process

These assessment results will be used to improve future engagement plans and processes.

PART 2: THE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PLAN

Why Invite Community Participation in Land-Use Planning?

Community participation in land-use planning specifically aims to:
- Build community confidence in the planning system
- Ensure that the needs and concerns of the community are identified and addressed wherever possible
- Create a shared sense of purpose, direction and understanding of the need to manage growth and change while preserving local character
- Provide Council with access to community knowledge, ideas and expertise in the decision-making process
- Ensure Council's planning functions reflect the aspirations of the Leeton Shire community
- Ensure Council fulfils mandatory community participation requirements.

Definitions

The following glossary of terms used in land-use planning is provided to assist community members in their understanding of the planning system:

TERM	DEFINITION
Community Participation Plan (CPP)	A plan setting out how and when interested persons can participate in the land-use planning system, including Council's planning functions and its planning proposals and policies.
Complying development	The proposed development complies with all development standards applicable, and (if relevant) complies to the Building Code of Australia.
Contributions plans	Plan/s developed by Council for the purpose of gaining financial contributions from new development towards the cost of new and upgraded public amenities and/or services required to accommodate the new development or to address community needs more broadly.
Delivery Program	A program detailing the principal activities to be undertaken by the Council over its term to implement the strategies established by the Community Strategic Plan.
Designated Development	Developments that are high-impact developments (e.g. likely to generate pollution) or are located in or near an environmentally sensitive area (e.g. a wetland area).
Development application	An application for consent (under Part 4 of the Act) to carry out development but excludes an application for a complying development certificate.
Development Control Plans (DCP)	A plan that provides detailed planning and design guidelines to support the planning controls in the Local Environment Plan (LEP).
Gateway determination	A gateway determination is issued by the Department of Planning following an assessment of the strategic merit of a proposal to amend or create an LEP and allows for the proposal to proceed to public exhibition.
Local Environmental Plan (LEP)	An environmental planning instrument developed by a local planning authority, i.e. the Council. An LEP establishes the legal planning framework for the local government area.
State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP)	An environmental planning instrument developed by the Department of Planning that relates to planning matters that are State-significant or are applicable across the State.

State-significant development	Some types of development are deemed to have State significance due to the size, economic value or potential impacts they may generate. Examples include new educational establishments, hospitals and energy-generating facilities.
State-significant infrastructure	Includes major transport and services developments that have a wider significance and impact than just the local area. Examples include road and rail infrastructure, and water storage and treatment plants.

Scope and Application

This Community Participation Plan applies to all of Council's land-use planning activities. The level and extent of community participation in planning decision-making will vary depending on the scope of the proposal under consideration and the potential impacts of the decision.

The land-use planning functions of Council that the Community Participation Plan applies to include:

Policies	Council develops policies that shape interaction with the planning system. These may include policies on developments that require developer contributions or repayment schemes.
Plan Making	Strategic land-use planning involves actions for communities which integrate social, environmental and economic factors with the Shire's special attributes. These include Planning Proposals such as rezoning of land, development control plans and growth plans.
Assessment	Council makes decisions on a range of developments and related applications. When making these decisions, Council considers whether the proposed development is in the public interest, aligns with community objectives, and complies with applicable legislation, policies and guidelines.
Contributions	Council levies contributions for public amenities and services required to support growth. Council's contribution plans outline when contributions will be levied, the amount of the levy and what public amenities and services the contributions are levied for.

Council's Approach

Council encourages open and inclusive opportunities for community participation in the land-use planning system, planning functions and individual proposals. Our approach is broadly described below:

WHAT	WHEN
STAGE 1: INFORM	
Review all development applications to determine whether they should be placed on public exhibition in a timely manner.	A decision as soon as practical after the application is lodged with Council to commence public exhibition and neighbour notification as appropriate.
STAGE 2: CONSULT	
Consult with the community and invite them to provide their views and concerns on a development application or other planning function.	During the public exhibition period, seek views and concerns.

STAGE 3: CONSIDER	
Respond to the community's views by addressing concerns raised. Request additional information if necessary	As soon as practical after the public submission period expires.
STAGE 4: DETERMINATION	
Notification to the community of decisions on proposals, plans and policies, and detail how community submissions were considered in reaching the decision.	As soon as practical after the decision has been made.

The Community Participation Process

Public Exhibition

During an exhibition period, relevant documents that Council is seeking community input on are made available electronically and via hard copy and an invitation for submissions to be made on the draft document/s.

In reaching decisions on proposals that have been exhibited, the Council, the General Manager, the Manager Planning, Building and Health, or an assessment officer balance a wide range of factors to ensure that decisions are in the public interest. This includes considering the objectives of the Act, the strategic priorities of Council and the community, the community's input, the land-use priorities identified in relevant strategic plans, and applicable policies and guidelines.

Minimum Notification Timeframes and Advertising Requirements

The *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* sets a minimum exhibition timeframe for most types of proposals. Council will always exhibit a proposal for this minimum timeframe and will consider an extended timeframe in some circumstances, based on the scale and nature of the proposal. The mandatory exhibition timeframes are set out below:

WHAT IS EXHIBITED	MANDATORY EXHIBITION TIMEFRAME	METHOD
Draft Community Participation Plan	28 days	• Council website • Have Your Say online engagement portal • Newspaper • Media Release
Draft Local Strategic Planning Statements	28 days	• Council website • Have Your Say online engagement portal • Newspaper • Community Information Sessions • Media Release
Planning Proposals for Local Environmental Plans subject to a gateway determination	28 days or as specified by the gateway determination which may find, due to the minor nature of the proposal, that no public exhibition is required	• Council website • Newspaper

Draft Development Control Plan	28 days	• Council website • Have Your Say online engagement portal • Newspaper • Community information meetings • Media Release
Draft Contribution Plans	28 days	• Council website • Newspaper
Application for development consent for designated development	28 days	• Council website • Newspaper • Neighbour notification • Site notice
Environmental impact statement obtained under Division 5.1	28 days	• Council website • Newspaper
Review of determination	14 days	• Council website • Newspaper

For other developments, as a matter of course Council will typically notify and/or advertise Development Applications as described in the table below:

TYPE OF DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION (DA)	ADVERTISING TIMEFRAMES FOR DAS	METHOD
Notification to all landowners considered by the Manager Planning, Building and Health to be impacted* by the Development Application. *Impacts may include: the views to and from the land; overshadowing; privacy; noise or odour; the visual quality of the development in relation to the streetscape; the scale or bulk of the proposed development; the siting of the proposed development in relation to site boundaries; the proposed hours of use for the development; light spillage or reflection; means of access to or provision of parking on the proposed development site; the amount of traffic likely to be generated by the proposed development; drainage; and the social and economic impacts of the proposal.	14 days	• Neighbour notification
Advertisement if deemed to be of public interest* by the Manager Planning, Building and Health. *A development application is generally deemed to be in the public interest if it may have environmental impacts that impact a broad section of the Leeton community.	14 days	• Council website • Newspaper • Letter mail outs • Emails

Integrated and Advertised Development requiring approval under: – *Heritage Act 1977* – *Water Management Act 2000* – *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997*	28 days	• Council website • Newspaper • Letter mail outs • Emails
All other Integrated Development	14 days	• Council website • Newspaper • Letter mail outs • Emails
Amendments to Development Applications In the same manner as the original development application unless varied at the discretion of the Manager Planning, Building and Health.		• Advertisements in the local paper • Website • Letter mail outs • Emails
Voluntary Planning Agreements	28 days	• Council website • Newspaper • Letter mail outs • Emails

Key points to note about public exhibition

- A public authority is not required to make available for public inspection any part of an environmental impact statement whose publication would, in the opinion of the public authority, be contrary to the public interest because of its confidential nature or for any other reason
- Timeframes are in calendar days and include weekends
- If the exhibition period is due to close on a weekend or a public holiday, Council may extend the exhibition to finish on the next available workday
- The period between 20 December and 10 January every year (inclusive) is excluded from the calculation of a period of public exhibition

Complying developments and other occasions where exhibition will not occur

Council will not publicly exhibit the following development applications:

- Single storey residential outbuildings and single storey residential additions and alterations that comply with the relevant height, floor space ratio, setback, and cut and fill requirements
- Subdivision of existing buildings (i.e., the subdivision of an existing dual occupancy etc)
- Changes from one commercial use to another, excluding changes for licensed premises
- Internal alterations to dwellings, commercial premises and industrial buildings
- Strata or community title subdivision of an approved development
- A modified application which is substantially the same as an application which has been previously notified.

Council will not publicly exhibit the following proposed modifications of development consent:

- Modification fixing minor error (i.e., wrong plan numbers, error in approval details etc).
- Modification involving minor environmental impact only where no public submission/s was received to the original development application.

Council will not publicly exhibit a review of a planning decision, except where a public submission/s was received to the original development application.

Who is Notified?

Neighbour Notification

For Development Applications where the Manager Planning, Building and Health or their delegate determines that only Neighbour Notification is required, the following process applies:

- Potentially impacted neighbours are notified of the development application in writing, and submissions are invited for a period of not less than 14 days, including a minimum of 7 working days.
- The notification period may be increased at the discretion of the Manager Planning, Building and Health or their delegate having regard to the potential impacts of the proposed development.
- Potentially impacted neighbours may include those with shared boundaries and directly adjacent across roads and laneways, as described below:

Proposed Development Site

Adjoining owners and occupiers to be notified
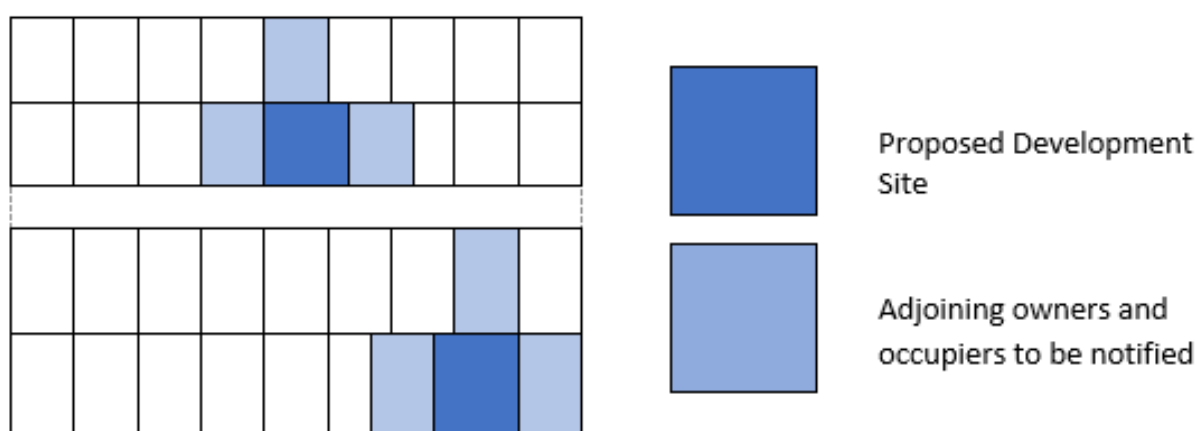
Written notice of development applications is sent as a mailed letter to applicable neighbouring property owners, as identified in Council's records. Please note:

- For a property with multiple owners, written notice to one owner is considered notice to all owners (as per clause 88(2)(c) of the Regulations). Council notifies all owners if aware of their address details in association with the property.
- If land is a lot within the meaning of the *Strata Schemes (Freehold Development) Act 1986*, written notice to the owners' corporation is considered written notice to the owners of each lot within that strata scheme.
- If land is a lot within the meaning of the *Strata Schemes (Leasehold Development) Act 1986*, written notice to the lessor under the Leasehold Strata Scheme concerned and to the owners' corporation is considered written notice to owners or occupiers of each lot within that Scheme.

Council reserves the right to give individual notice to owners within strata schemes.

For Other Planning Matters

For other planning matters, including policies, plans, strategies and other non-development related matters, Council will focus on advertising the matter through a variety of means as deemed appropriate rather than mailing out individual notification letters.

This is done for efficiency, reaching a wide audience and avoidance of waste (that occurs in sending out individual notification letters to large parts or all of the local government area each time a planning matter is placed on exhibition).

Council will typically employ the following engagement/ communication techniques depending on the nature of the development:

- Council website (Note - a prominent section of Council's website is dedicated solely to planning and development. This section of the site is populated and maintained by Council's staff to ensure residents receive accurate and up to date information. The site also allows for the display of DAs, and links to Council's online engagement portal 'Have Your Say' for submissions on any document that is on public display. It should also be noted that the website complies with all W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 AA Standards ensuring people of all abilities can provide input on planning matters.
- Council's 'Have your Say' online engagement portal
- Advertising in the local newspaper *The Irrigator*
- Council's social media platforms
- Media releases
- Community information sessions.

Notwithstanding the above, Council will also proactively notify key stakeholders if they represent a group of people that are likely to be significantly impacted by the proposal. Some key stakeholder groups that may be contacted include:

- Leeton Business Chamber
- Leeton and District Local Aboriginal Land Council
- Leeton Local and Family History Society and other historical societies
- Local planning consultants
- Developers
- Individuals affected by a planning proposal (where the planning proposal is not a broader review of the Local Environmental Plan).

How to Make a Submission for Planning Matters

Development Applications

Any person may review the information provided and make a written submission during the exhibition period.

Submissions are generally made via email to council@leeton.nsw.gov.au or by post to the Council.

Generally, for other plans and projects, the community is encouraged to provide feedback to Council in any of the following ways:

ELECTRONICALLY: Completion of a survey/submission on the project page on Council's 'Have Your Say' online engagement portal at **haveyoursay.leeton.nsw.gov.au**

BY EMAIL TO: council@leeton.nsw.gov.au

BY LETTER: Addressed to the General Manager, 23–25 Chelmsford Place, Leeton NSW 2705.

The following points provide guidance to those making planning submissions that will ensure Council able to process the feedback it receives and expedite our response. Each point should be considered carefully before submitting feedback to Council.

- Ensure that your submission includes the reference number or title of the proposal you are lodging your submission about. If you are lodging a submission in relation to a development application, you should include the development application number (e.g., DA 26-2019) and the property address.
- Make sure that your submission is lodged by the closing date for public exhibition. The closing date will be on the public exhibition notice, website or notification letter.
- Clearly state and detail the reasons or grounds for your support or objection to the proposal in order that they may be taken into consideration during Council's decision-making. Only include information relevant to the development or planning proposal.

- Section 10.4 of the Act requires you to disclose reportable political donations and gifts if you are making a related public submission to Council. Failure to disclose relevant information is an offence under the Act. Council is required to make publicly available on its website any disclosure made under this section of the Act. Persons lodging submissions must declare reportable political donations (including donations of $1,000 or more) made in the previous two years.
- Submissions, including personal information included within the submission, may be made available to the public and the applicant/proponent, as well as used in Councils reports. For a copy of the disclosure form please contact Council.
- If submitting in response to a development application, Council may forward your submission to the applicant for a response in addition to any government agency that is a referral authority for the development application.
- Making a submission is entirely voluntary and you are under no obligation to provide us with any of your personal information, except as otherwise required by law.
- Submissions, including personal information included within the submission, may be made available to the public and the applicant/proponent, as well as used in Councils reports unless requested that details are withheld.
- Council will send you an acknowledgement of your submission. However, Council generally does not make individual and personalised responses to submissions. If your submission relates to a development application, Council will also notify you of the outcome of the determination or the likely date of any Council meeting determination (whichever is applicable).

If you wish to make a presentation at a Council meeting to discuss a matter listed in the meeting agenda, submitters contact Council prior to the meeting and register to speak. However, note that most development application planning matters are not determined at Council meetings. Council's Development Application Policy identifies when development applications will be determined at a Council meeting rather than being determined by Council staff.

Extensions

If you cannot provide a submission by the advertised closing date, contact Council to request an extension. Extensions are considered on a case-by-case basis and are decided on a discretionary basis. If no extension is granted, Council may also decide to consider or disregard late submissions on a discretionary basis.

What Happens to Submissions?

Council officers will collate and consider issues identified in submissions made as part of their assessment of a planning application or proposal.

Issues such as a moral objection, commercial competition or the personal circumstances of an applicant or objector cannot be given weight in Council's assessment of the matter. Matters that can be considered as part of the assessment include:
- Compliance with the Local Environmental Plan or Development Control Plan
- Neighbourhood amenity, including noise, odour, privacy and overshadowing
- Scale and design
- Ecological impact
- Parking, traffic and pedestrian access
- Drainage and engineering matters
- Cultural, economic or social impacts
- Any other matter as identified in the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*, State Environmental Planning Policies or other relevant legislation or planning policy

Notification of Outcomes

Council will notify the community of a planning decision depending on the nature of the planning function it relates to.

Decisions associated with the Strategic Planning, Plan Making and Contribution planning functions will be made by the elected Council at Council meetings. These meetings are generally open to the public. Minutes of the monthly Council meeting are recorded and made available on Council's website after each meeting.

Decisions associated with the Assessment planning functions are advertised on Council's DA Tracker, on its website. Copies of the assessment reports, including how the views of the community were considered, will be available on Council's DA Tracker. Community members who have made submissions will receive notification of the outcome of the decision. Where appropriate the assessing officer may directly contact the author of the submission as part of the assessment process.

In some instances, development applications are reported to the elected Council for formal endorsement as part of their monthly meetings. These meetings are generally open to the public. Copies of the Business reports are also available on Council's website. The Business reports will contain information regarding submissions and how the views of the community were taking into consideration. Minutes of the Council meeting are also published on Council's website.

Community members who have made individual submissions will be notified of the date of the Council meeting and will be provided with an opportunity to address the public access meeting. Community members who have made submissions will also receive notification of the outcome of the Council meeting.