Shire of Northam
Community Engagement Plan

Contents

Endorsed by Council 12 October 2011

Introduction

Community is made up of the people who live, work, visit or invest in the Shire of Northam Local Government Area. Community Engagement is the process through which the community are informed about and/or invited to contribute, through consultation or involvement, to proposals or policy changes relating to Shire services, events, strategic plans, issues and projects.

Purpose

The Shire of Northam Community Engagement Plan will ensure that:

- Council has the opportunity to consider the input of a wide range of community members before making decisions;
- Community members are given the opportunity to contribute to the planning and development process.

The plan will:

- Establish a standard process for community engagement;
- Ensure that the process is implemented by Shire staff and external consultants employed by the Shire;
- Ensure that inclusive and efficient consultation is undertaken at all times;
- Ensure that the community is kept informed of decisions emanating from community engagement.

The Plan contains three key strategies:

1. Inform
2. Consult
3. Involve

Each strategy has a specific goal, a commitment to the community and a set of methodologies.

Scope

This Community Engagement Plan relates to many activities undertaken by the Shire with the exception of notifications in relation to statutory notifications. Where legislative requirements exist which address specific information / consultation processes, the legislative requirements take precedence.

Benefits

There are a number of benefits from having a Community Engagement Plan, including:

- Commits the Shire and Council to being open and accountable;
- Assists the Shire and Council to plan services that better meet community needs;
- Enables the Shire and Council to prioritise services and make better use of resources
- Allows a broader range of views to be expressed and more information to be assembled prior to making decisions;
- Sees the Shire, Council and the community working together to achieve balanced decisions;
- Offers opportunities for the community to contribute to and influence outcomes which directly affect their lives;
- Ensures an open and familiar process which becomes easier for community members to participate in.

Please note: The community is consulted about a wide variety of issues by a range of people in many ways. The Shire recognises this and so as not to over consult (which can result in a feeling that time is being wasted and "we have already told you what we want, why are you asking us again?") existing timely research and findings of other consultations that the Shire or other agencies have recently conducted, may be utilised.

Community Engagement Strategy 1: Inform

Information dissemination is the primary form of community engagement. In order to be able to actively engage in their community and in the Shire's decision making processes, the community requires information in a variety of ways to reach all sections of the community.

Goal
To provide the community with appropriate information regarding Shire services, events, strategic plans, issues and projects.

Commitment to the Community
We will keep you informed, ensuring that information is easy to access, relevant to the issue and easy to understand using clear, jargon-free language.

Methodology: How
By making up-to-date information available on the Shire's processes, meeting agendas / minutes, services, projects and on how residents may feedback any issues, concerns and suggestions for service improvements and ensuring that all information is in a form that is accessible to all groups in the Community ie. people with disabilities, people with computer literacy difficulties, young people, the aged and, people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Methods can include;

- **Advertising - Newspapers** - both local and state. Other publications can be considered dependent on the target group.
- **Advertising - Newsletters** - including the Shire newsletter and school newsletters.
- **Advertising - Radio** - both local and regional.
- **Email Notification** - to Shire lists, including but not limited to; Progress Associations (for posting on locality notice boards), the Chamber of Commerce, Community Groups and identified Stakeholders.
- **Flyers (Brochures / Reports)** - available in person from Shire facilities or via mail upon request.
- **Posters** - at Shire facilities.
- **Public Meetings / Forums** - at various locations / localities, as appropriate.
- **Shire Newsletter** - available monthly in local newspapers, on the Shire website and via email subscription.
- **SMS -** subscribed list for emergency information.
- **Website** - www.northam.wa.gov.au, an up-to-date source of information on Shire services, events, strategic plans, issues and projects.
- *Consideration needs to be given to successfully informing the Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community members.*
- *Future consideration could be given to social networking.*

When
Ongoing, as Shire services, events, strategic plans, issues and projects are scheduled.

Who
Entire community, noting that community members need to be aware of the methods that are in use.

Evaluation
Through the Shire of Northam Information Checklist (page 10).

Community Engagement Strategy 2: Consult

Consultation takes place when feedback is required in relation to:
- *The development of new policies, strategies and plans;*
- *The review and evaluation of existing policies, strategies and plans;*
- *The planning and development of new services and infrastructure;*
- *The review and evaluation of existing services and infrastructure;*
- *Issues which impact on or are of concern to the community, including:*
  - *Broad community issues ie. Community Safety;*
  - *Specific community issues ie. Seniors and Youth; and*
  - *Area issues ie. traffic management and land use changes*

Goal
To capture community input on strategic plans, directions, issues, priorities and projects.

Commitment to the Community
We will listen to you, consider your ideas and keep you informed about what input was received, an analysis of this input and the final decision/s reached.

Methodology: How
Consultation mechanisms will be chosen that take account of the primary stakeholders and are accessible to the community. Community consultation techniques will vary depending on who is being consulted and the nature and complexity of the issue. Available resources will also determine the type of techniques that can be utilised ie. the timeframe, funds and staff available.

A range of consultation techniques will be utilised to ensure greater participation levels. These will include;

- **Consultative Workshops:** open to the community with the aim of briefing interested residents on specific projects and getting their feedback.
- **Focus Groups:** open by invitation to specific groups with relevant experience of the issue at hand.
- **Online Comment:** through the Shire web page, email and online surveys. *Future consideration could be given to social networking.*
- **Shop Fronts:** staffed informational display taken to the community at shopping centres, Shire facilities and / or markets / festival days. The community can drop in at their convenience to peruse information and have their questions answered by / provide feedback to Shire staff.
- **Surveys/Questionnaires:** a series of relevant questions regarding a subject, with the collated replies available for consideration and distribution. These may be conducted via mail, email / web or in person, for example venues could include but are not limited to homes / schools / businesses / community meetings to ensure the inclusion of community members who may not normally be able to participate in community engagement.

When
The Shire and Council will ensure that the community is consulted on issues which impact on or are of concern to the community in a timely manner to allow adequate community comment to occur and be analysed in order to inform decision making processes.

Who

All community members who are identified as being directly impacted will be consulted, with the whole community being informed. Stakeholders will vary according to the issue, but could include residents, ratepayers, businesses, volunteers, those who visit or work in the municipality, other service providers/agencies, community groups, other levels of government, peak bodies, etc. It could also include particular groups within the community, ie. older people, families, children, youth, different ethnic groups, business people, people with a disability, etc.

Evaluation

Through the Shire of Northam Consultation Checklist (page 11).

Community Engagement Strategy 3: Involve

Community involvement enables the community to provide ongoing and in-depth input into community planning and into the development of solutions and resources that are best able to meet the community's needs. It also enables the community and service users to have substantial input into the development of services. Community engagement has the potential to empower communities and to enable community members to gain skills in community participation. In turn they provide for ongoing dialogue with Shire and the potential for higher quality and specialist input into Shire's planning and decision making processes.

Goal
To work on an ongoing basis with the community to ensure that community ideas, concerns and aspirations are listened to and understood and that community knowledge is harnessed for the benefit of all.

Commitment to the Community
We will work with you on an ongoing basis to ensure that your ideas, concerns and aspirations are considered. We will provide feedback on Shire decisions.

Methodology: How
Community involvement techniques will vary depending on who is being involved and the nature and complexity of the issue. Available resources will also determine the type of techniques that can be utilised ie. the timeframe available, the funds available, the staffing resource capacity etc.

A range of involvement techniques will be utilised to ensure inclusive participation levels. These will include;

- **Annual Public Meetings:** held in March\April each year in each Progress Association area, in addition to public meetings called to address special issues.
- **Council Committees:** established by Council through invitation and expressions of interest (advertised). Composition as per legislative requirements. Currently established Committees of Shire include;
  - Art Collection Committee
  - Audit Committee
  - Building Review Committee
  - Bush Fire Advisory Committee
  - Cultural Precinct Committee
  - Local Emergency Management Committee
  - Recreation Facilities Committee
- **Working Groups:** established by the Shire to focus on particular issues. The composition of a Working Group would be determined by the Shire together with specific terms of reference and reporting mechanisms. The Group would cease to function once their work was complete. An example of a Working Group is the SuperTowns Community Reference Group.
- **User Groups:** may be facilitated by the Shire or self-forming and are supported by volunteers. An example of a User Group would be the Northam Heritage Forum (Inc).
- **Volunteer Groups:** are self-forming. They are encouraged and focus on the service for which they volunteer. Attendance is open to all relevant volunteers and interested residents.

When
The Shire will ensure that the community is involved on issues which impact on and / or are of concern to the community or to any group within the community in a timely manner to allow adequate community involvement to occur and be analysed in order to inform decision making processes.

Who
Community members who are impacted will be invited to be involved. Stakeholders will vary according to the issue, but could include residents, ratepayers, businesses, volunteers, those who visit or work in the municipality, other service providers/agencies, community groups, other levels of government, peak bodies, etc. It could also include particular groups within the community, ie. older people, families, children, youth, different ethnic groups, business people, people with a disability, etc.

Evaluation
Through the Shire of Northam Involvement Checklist (page 12).

Levels of Engagement

The level of engagement undertaken should relate to the extent of community impact or interest associated with the proposed Shire services, events, strategic plans, issues and projects.

Level 0 – No Engagement
No specific action is required when:
- No impact on the community or locality is likely;
- Consultation is precluded under relevant legislation;
- Consultation has previously occurred.

Level 1 – Inform
The Shire of Northam Information Checklist will be utilised where:
- Community members are not likely to be detrimentally impacted by the proposed Shire and Council services, events, strategic plans, issues and projects;
- Statutory requirements for notification exist;
- Consultation has previously occurred and minor modifications to address previous concerns raised are proposed.

This level of engagement will:
- Raise awareness about proposed Shire services, events, strategic plans, issues and projects;
- Establish communication links with the community;
- Encourage active participation;
- Build trust and confidence between the Shire and the community;
- Foster community pride.

Level 2 – Consult
The Shire of Northam Consultation Checklist will be utilised where:
- Community members are likely to be impacted by the proposed Shire services, events, strategic plans, issues and projects;
- Statutory requirements for consultation exist.

In addition to Level 1 this level of engagement will:
- Collect views, opinions and ideas;
- Foster community support.

Level 3 – Involve
The Shire of Northam Involvement Checklist will be utilised where:
- Community members are likely to be majorly / detrimentally impacted by the proposed Shire services, events, strategic plans, issues and projects;
- Statutory requirements for involvement exist.

In addition to Levels 1 and 2 this level of engagement will:
- Encourage active participation;
- Foster community ownership.

Acknowledgement of Feedback
General feedback will be summarised as part of the evaluation process.

Where written submissions are called for the submitter will receive acknowledgement of their submission and advice as to when all submissions will be considered. All submissions received will be summarised and when a decision has been made the submission summary will be made available directly to all submitters and via the previously detailed communication channels to the community.
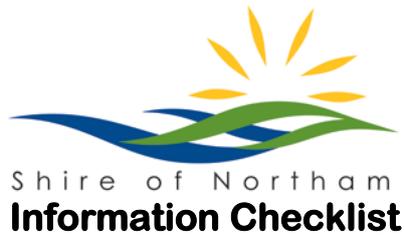
Guide to Levels of Engagement

COMMUNITY SERVICES		
Community Consultation Plan	3	
Burning Restrictions and Harvest Bans	1	*~
Shire service provision changes *(ie library opening times)*	1	
Events - both to participate and / or attend	1	
Firebreak Notification	1	
Grant Opportunities	1	
Shire Newsletter	1	~
CORPORATE SERVICES		
Annual Electors Meeting	2	
Asset Management Planning	3	
Budget Consultation	3	
Community Strategic Plan Consultation	3	
Local Law Development	2	*
Long Term Financial Planning	3	
Policy Development – Administration procedures	0	
Policy Development – Shire procedures	1	
Policy Development – involves specific user groups	2	^
Policy Development – major Shire / Regional / State impact	3	
Rates - new structure or format	3	*
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES		
Building Applications *(engagement is during planning process)*	0	
Development Plans & Structure Plans	3	
Food Business Education & Training	1	^
Local Planning Scheme Review	3	
Planning Application (including demolition of a building)	1	^
Planning Application (including demolition) *building is on the Municipal Inventory*	3	#
Planning Application (including demolition) *building is on the State Heritage List*	3	#
Planning Application for a Building Envelope Variation	1	
Planning Application for a Setback Variation	1	
Planning Application for Development - A uses, not in zoning table, extension to non-conforming use	2	
Planning Application for Development - D uses	1	
Planning Application for Development - P or X uses	0	
Planning Application for Signage *Note: only applicable if non-conforming*	1	
Scheme Amendment	3	*
Subdivision Referrals	1	
Swimming Pool Inspections - 4 year, statutory	1	^
ENGINEERING SERVICES		
Footpath - Construction	1	^
Forward Infrastructure Management Programs	3	
Road - Maintenance	1	^
Road - Upgrading	1	^
Road Closure – Festivals and Events	1	
Road Closure – Permanent	3	*
Road Closure – Temporary	2	*
Street Tree - Removal / Planting	1	^

* *Consultation Procedures are already set out by Local Law, existing legislation (Local Government Act 1995, Land Administration Act, Town Planning Scheme, Residential Planning Codes, Road Traffic Code, etc).*

\# *Includes consultation with Shire's Heritage Advisor or the State Heritage Council*

^ *Mailed letter to affected resident/s, ratepayer/s, business/es and / or group/s*

~ *Subscribed list*

Information Checklist

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Project Name

Purpose:				
Timeline:	**Start Date:**		**Outcomes By:**	
Stakeholders to be considered, note those to be targeted / engaged:	Aged		Ratepayers	
	Businesses		Residents	
	Children		Service Providers	
	Community Groups		Visitors	
	Disabled People		Volunteers	
	Families		Workers	
	Govt. Bodies		Youth	
	Indigenous		Other	
Staff to be notified:	Community Serv.		Councillors	
	Corporate Serv.		Libraries	
	Development Serv.		Killara	
	Engineering Serv.		Recreation Centre	
	Consultant/s		Visitor Centre	

Community Engagement Plan			
	Responsible Officer / Person	Date Due By / On	Complete _(information filed)_
Flyer			
Poster			
Web			
Email			
Media Release			
Advertising			
Public Meeting			
Other			

Evaluation	
Feedback Summary	

Outcomes			
	Responsible Officer / Person	Date Due By / On	Complete _(information filed)_
Web			
Email			
Media Release			
Advertising			
Other			

Shire of Northam
Consultation Checklist

Project Name

Purpose:				
Timeline:	**Start Date:**		**Outcomes By:**	
Stakeholders to be considered, note those to be targeted / engaged:	Aged		Ratepayers	
	Businesses		Residents	
	Children		Service Providers	
	Community Groups		Visitors	
	Disabled People		Volunteers	
	Families		Workers	
	Govt. Bodies		Youth	
	Indigenous		Other	
Staff to be notified:	Community Serv.		Councillors	
	Corporate Serv.		Libraries	
	Development Serv.		Killara	
	Engineering Serv.		Recreation Centre	
	Consultant/s		Visitor Centre	

Community Engagement Plan			
	Responsible Officer / Person	Date Due By / On	Complete *(information filed)*
Flyer			
Poster			
Web			
Email			
Media Release			
Advertising			
Public Meeting			
Workshop			
Focus Group			
Shop Front			
Questionnaire			
Evaluation			
Feedback Summary			
Workshop Outcomes			
Shop Front Outcomes			
Questionnaire Results			
Other			

Outcomes			
	Responsible Officer / Person	Date Due By / On	Complete *(information filed)*
Web			
Email			
Media Release			
Advertising			
Other			

Shire of Northam
Involvement Checklist

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Project Name

Purpose:				
Timeline:	**Start Date:**		**Outcomes By:**	
Stakeholders to be considered, note those to be targeted / engaged:	Aged		Ratepayers	
	Businesses		Residents	
	Children		Service Providers	
	Comm. Groups		Visitors	
	Disabled People		Volunteers	
	Families		Workers	
	Govt. Bodies		Youth	
	Indigenous		Other	
Staff to be notified:	Community Serv.		Councillors	
	Corporate Serv.		Libraries	
	Development Serv.		Killara	
	Engineering Serv.		Recreation Centre	
	Consultant/s		Visitor Centre	

Community Engagement Plan			
	Responsible Officer / Person	Date Due By / On	Complete *(information filed)*
Flyer			
Poster			
Web			
Email			
Media Release			
Advertising			
Public Meeting			
Workshop			
Focus Group			
Shop Front			
Questionnaire			
Annual Public Meeting			
Council Committee (CC)			
Working Group (WG)			
User Group (UG)			

Evaluation	
Feedback Summary	
Workshop Outcomes	
Shop Front Outcomes	
Questionnaire Results	
Meeting Feedback	
CC / WG / UG Rec.	

Outcomes			
	Responsible	Date Due By / On	Complete
Web			
Email			
Media Release			
Advertising			