Livingstone Shire Council

Community Engagement Framework

The Livingstone community has seen significant change driven largely by customer interest and expectations. We need to align these changes with our own continuous focus on improving efficiency and productivity, and removing unnecessary cost to ratepayers. Livingstone Shire Council places customers and stakeholders at the centre of everything we do. Inevitably, some decisions require a trade-off so, more than ever, we want to ensure our stakeholders are kept informed of these decisions and where possible have a voice into the decision making process. Your ideas, feedback and opinions provide the building blocks for the future of our Shire. That's why we're introducing our Engagement Framework. It sets out a clear approach to creating and embedding a culture at Livingstone Shire Council that recognises and values working with stakeholders and where listening to and serving our customers is the central focus of everything we do.

We want to be an informed organisation that matches services with expectations. We recognise that engagement is only a first step. We want to make sure that the learnings, feedback, ideas and discussions our Engagement Framework generates are considered, tested and, where appropriate, acted upon. Our Engagement Framework is your opportunity to be involved. This document outlines our commitment to you, our engagement goals and our blueprint for developing stronger partnerships with our customers and future stakeholders.

I invite you to be part of the discussion, to engage in the change, and I welcome constructive community engagement that ensures we continue to deliver effectively and efficiently to future generations.

Chris Murdoch
CEO
Livingstone Shire Council
18 July 2017

About Livingstone Shire Council

The Livingstone Shire is a local government area located in Central Queensland, Australia. The Livingstone Shire Council was established after de-amalgamation on 1 January 2014 and looks after approximately 11,776 square kilometres and has a population of more than 37,000 residents.

Council's strategic direction is determined by the Mayor and Councillors who are elected by the community. The Mayor and each Councillor are responsible for different portfolios in the region, making executive decisions in consultation with the community.

Council is focussed on continual improvements in overall service delivery at an operational level to provide ratepayers with the best possible value for money as well as the implementation of long-term plans to reinvigorate the Shires' economy and reinforce business confidence.

Our Executive Leadership Team provides advice and support to the Mayor and Councillors and is responsible for the day to day management of the Council as an organisation.

Livingstone Shire Council's objective with this document is to create a great engagement framework that will:

» ensure a customised and coherent approach to stakeholder engagement across our organisation
» enable better planned and more informed policies, projects, programs and services
» position stakeholder engagement as core business
» facilitate effective collaboration; and
» clearly communicate Livingstone Shire Council's approach to stakeholder engagement.

1 What is community engagement?

Community engagement is the process of bringing the community into decisions that impact or interest them. It can be called a number of other terms including consultation or public participation but at its core are a small number of key criteria:

» Community engagement is conducted in relation to a problem, opportunity or outcome.
» Community engagement is a planned process with the specific purpose of working with organisations, stakeholders and communities to shape decisions and actions. At its core community engagement is about informed decision making.
» Community engagement involves a community. The word 'community' is a word for a collective. It can include groups of people, stakeholders, interest groups and citizen groups.

It is important to clearly differentiate that community engagement is not marketing or communications but rather a defined process to work with those who are impacted or interested to inform a decision making process.

1.1 The benefits of engagement

Community engagement is a way of acknowledging the skills, knowledge and passion contained within the citizens and stakeholders of our shire. Our community engagement processes seek to combine these community elements with the skills, knowledge and passion of our staff and elected members to make informed decisions that contribute to the social, cultural and economic wellbeing of the Livingstone community.

2 Our values and behaviours

Why are values important?

Livingstone Shire Council promotes a positive culture in the workplace with all staff demonstrating high standards of Accountability, Teamwork, Community, Potential and Positivity. These values and behaviours set the standard for Council and are embodied throughout the organisation.

ACCOUNTABILITY

- » We own our actions, successes and failures, and ensure we implement lessons learned.
- » We take personal responsibility for everyone's safety.
- » We manage and use Council's resources effectively and efficiently.
- » We make and communicate decisions and rationale in a timely and inclusive manner and act with transparency.
- » We are diligent in delivering on our commitments, and communicating issues early.

TEAMWORK

- » We are one Council, working seamlessly across the organisation to deliver the best outcomes for our community.
- » We involve others to design solutions and inform decisions.
- » We share knowledge and information.
- » We care about each other and ask for, and accept, support when needed.
- » We resolve issues and conflicting priorities in an open and constructive way.

COMMUNITY

- » We are one community and make decisions with our whole community in mind.
- » We engage with and listen to our community to understand their needs.
- » We support our community to develop resilience and sustainability.
- » We effectively and efficiently deliver high quality products and services.
- » We respond quickly and constructively.

POTENTIAL

- » We focus on being the best we can be and in-turn inspire others.
- » We will be open to change and will pursue opportunities.
- » We will continually seek to improve how we do things and build upon each other's ideas.
- » We make time to seek and provide feedback to support each other.
- » We encourage and support innovation and initiative.

POSITIVITY

- » We inquire with curiosity, actively listen to others and are open to new perspectives.
- » We approach issues looking for solutions.
- » We remain calm and respectful when working through difficult situations.
- » We focus on being open and adaptable.
- » We invest in our physical and mental wellbeing.

IAP2 Core Values

As well as adhering to our values, Livingstone Shire Council seeks to adhere to the practice values of the International Association of Public Participation or IAP2. IAP2 is an international member association which seeks to promote and improve the practice of public participation or community engagement, incorporating individuals, governments, institutions and other entities that affect the public interest throughout the world. IAP2 Australasia is the leading public participation Association in Australasia.

As an international leader in public participation, IAP2 has developed the IAP2 Core Values for Public Participation for use in the development and implementation of public participation processes. These core values were developed over a two-year period with broad international input to identify those aspects of public participation which cross national, cultural, and religious boundaries. The purpose of these core values is to help make better decisions which reflect the interests and concerns of potentially affected people and entities. The core values are reflected in a number of key pieces of policy and legislation, locally, nationally and globally.

1. Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.

2. Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.

3. Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.

4. Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

5. Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.

6. Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.

3 Key principles of the engagement framework

Reflecting on our organisational values and practice values as outlined by IAP2, Livingstone Shire Council has five guiding principles to govern how we engage with our community, and how Council responds and provides feedback to the community. The development of the framework is based on four key principles:

All our engagement will be:
» Focussed
» Relevant
» Open and Honest
» Inclusive
» Responsive

3.1 Focussed

Engagement activities will be purposeful and communicated clearly with stakeholders and the community.

Livingstone Shire Council will do this by:
» Being aware of stakeholders' objectives, their environment and level of expertise and influence;
» Conducting focused and meaningful engagement; and
» Planning communications and managing the community's expectations.

3.2 Relevant

A range of engagement techniques can be used to ensure the approach is appropriate and relevant to Livingstone Shire Council's business.

Council will do this by:
» Select the most suitable engagement method;
» Streamlining processes to define and lead effective stakeholder engagement activities;
» Evaluating each activity to ensure Council

continues to improve its processes.

3.3 Open and Honest

Information shared regarding the engagement process will be open and honest, including results from engagement activities.

Council will do this by:
» Providing information to stakeholders to promote meaningful participation and ensure a culture of information sharing is built;
» Identifying and explaining the engagement process and the role of the stakeholders;
» Communicating clearly to stakeholders how their input will influence the decision making;
» Establishing processes to be transparent and open with feedback processes; and
» Being honest and willing to acknowledge mistakes, misunderstandings and what may not be known.

3.4 Inclusive

Engagement activities will be inclusive through acknowledging and respecting the expertise, perception and needs of stakeholders.

Council will do this by:
» Identifying and inviting stakeholders to participate in proactive engagement activities;
» Being open to alternative views and to listen as well as contribute to conversations; and
» Endeavouring to meet the different communication needs and preferences of stakeholders and the community wherever possible.

3.5 Responsive

Stakeholder participation will be acknowledged in a timely and responsive manner.

Council will do this by:
» Responding to stakeholders in a reasonable timeframe;
» Proactively acknowledging and addressing stakeholders' needs and concerns; and
» Keeping the promises made to stakeholders.

VALUE	
1. FOCUSSED	Engagement activities will be purposeful and communicated clearly with stakeholders.
2. RELEVANT	A range of engagement techniques can be used to ensure the approach is appropriate and relevant to Livingstone Shire Council business.
3. OPEN & HONEST	Information shared regarding the engagement process will be open and honest, including results from evaluation activities.
4. INCLUSIVE	Engagement activities will be inclusive through acknowledging and respecting the expertise, perspective and needs of stakeholders.
5. RESPONSIVE	Stakeholder participation will be acknowledged in a timely and responsive manner.

Figure 1: Value representation of Livingstone Shire Council's principles based approach to Stakeholder Engagement

4 Better Practice in Engagement - putting our principles into action

Introduction:

To ensure that our engagement principles can be delivered, Council follows a detailed engagement process that is reflective of industry best practice. Effective community and stakeholder engagement practice is reliant upon a small number of elements that together form the basis of an engagement process. It does not matter what the purpose of the engagement is, or what the project is about these six elements of context, project scope, people, purpose of engagement, the level of influence and evaluation are all critical to the success of any engagement process. It is important to note that this is not a hierarchy and the interplay of all of these elements is equally critical. The six elements to successful engagement that make up the Livingstone Shire Council Engagement Design Platform are:

1. Context
2. Scope
3. People
4. Purpose
5. Influence
6. Evaluation

When developing any engagement strategy Council goes through a process to consider the interplay of these elements.

4.1 Context

Context is the environment that shapes the people and the proposition. Understanding the context that has led to this point is critical to designing a meaningful engagement process.

The Livingstone Shire Council Engagement Design Platform:
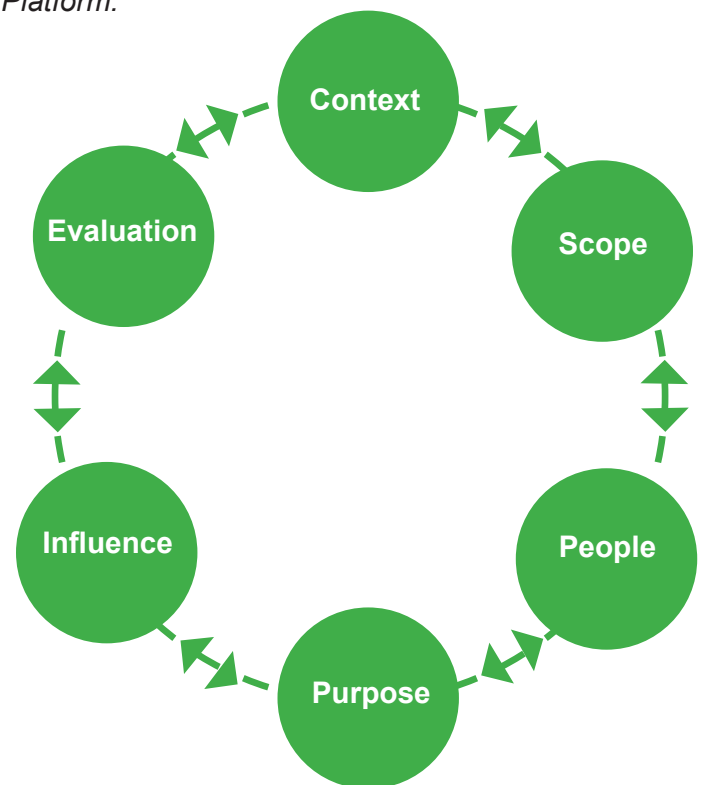
What do we look for?

In order to design a meaningful engagement process the first step is an exercise to seek to understand the background that has led to this point. This is set out in detail below:

» How have similar projects or communities with similar profiles responded to engagement?
» What has been the response when similar things have been done elsewhere?
» What else is happening in that community? Considering the political, social, economic, environmental and technological contexts.
» What is the relationship between the community and the organisation? Is there a history of engagement and a clear understanding of roles/ relationship between community and Council?
» How important is this to the community?
» What triggered this proposition? Why now?
» Are there legislative requirements that need to be addressed?

4.2 Scope

Scope is what the project or the decision is about. Clarity of scope is important because this is how we can transparently communicate to our community our intent. The clarity of scope of the project or decision including what is negotiable and what is not, also considers what resources and time are needed to attend to the matter.

Scoping a decision or project to clearly identify the negotiables and non-negotiables provides all stakeholders with certainty about their role in a process, it enables transparency of the process, is inclusive and assists in setting realistic expectations.

What do we look for?

» **Who**: Who is managing the project/or responsible for the decision?
» **What**: What needs to occur?
» **When**: When does it need to occur by?
» **Where**: Where will it happen?
» **Why**: Why is it happening?
» **How**: How will it occur?

What is negotiable? Of the elements described in the scope what can be negotiated upon?

What is not negotiable? Of the elements described in the scope what cannot be changed and why?

4.3 People

The Livingstone Shire community is not one homogenous group. The community has many individuals, organisations and groups with a stake in the outcome of any project, proposition or problem.

An effective community and stakeholder engagement process needs to identify and involve all of the relevant people, whether they are members of the public, consumers, employees or key stakeholders.

What do we look for?

When we are designing an engagement process we look to identify and involve all relevant people.

We do this by considering the following elements:
» Documenting who is directly and indirectly affected by, or interested in the decision being made
» Considering stakeholder diversity— for example, including people of different/diverse cultures, people with disabilities, older/ younger stakeholders, and those with real life experience relevant to the decision being made
» Barriers—whether there are barriers to participant involvement that need to be addressed and how LSC may manage those considerations. Is targeted consultation in the beginning, during or at the end of the process – or all three?

4.4 Purpose

When we are designing an engagement process we look to identify who we are engaging with in our community and how this links to the desired project outcome. This enables us to design an engagement process that clearly defines the decision to be made and how our community can get involved.
Some examples of the purposes of engagement may include:

» To build relationships
» To make better decisions
» For reasons of legislative compliance and Council policy
» For idea generation
» To better understand our community.

4.5 Influence

The level of participation that a community can have over a decision is critical to designing a meaningful engagement process. By ensuring the level of influence on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation is understood (at the beginning of the planning process), participants will be clear about the expectations. This will also help to determine the most appropriate engagement methods.

What do we look for?

To determine the level of participation Council will consider if the community will be informed, consulted, involved, empowered or collaborated with on a matter (Figure X). The IAP2 Spectrum is designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any community engagement program. The Spectrum show that differing levels of participation are legitimate depending on the goals, time frames, resources and levels of concern in the decision to be made. However, and most importantly, the Spectrum sets out the promise being made to the public at each participation level. The Spectrum is widely used and is quoted in most community engagement manuals.

4.6 Evaluation

Engagement evaluation and review enables Council to make recommendations and decisions based on the outcomes of the engagement. It is also a critical learning point to assure quality engagement and provide meaningful data to contribute to the decision to be reached.

What do we look for?

Evaluation involves reviewing the engagement project to determine:

a. The extent to which engagement project requirements were identified

b. Successful stakeholder identification and engagement

c. Achievement of engagement goals and objectives

d. Satisfaction levels amongst all stakeholders from power brokers to minority groups that the engagement project delivered what it said it would

e. Cultural awareness of and ongoing commitment to community and stakeholder engagement

f. Degree of stakeholder involvement in decision making and comparison of this against initial project positioning on the IAP2 Spectrum

g. The need for further analysis of outcomes or additional engagement activities.

Evaluation measures should be linked to objectives and can be categorised into 3 types of criteria "outcome criteria", which relate to the decisions reached, "acceptance criteria", which align with IAP2's Core Values, and "process criteria", which measures whether or not the process was successful in meeting its designed purpose.

Figure X

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

Increasing impact on decision

	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 that 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 the identification of the preferred solution	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the Public	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. We will seek your feedback on drafts and proposals.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide

5 Developing the framework and the guide

The creation of the engagement framework was completed by Council and external consultants with significant industry expertise. The process involved a detailed review of industry best practice frameworks (incorporating IAP2 and academic literature) and internal documents such as existing policies or guidelines (provided by Council), a series of interviews with stakeholders and detailed testing. This document is intended to be reviewed every 2 years to reflect changing industry practices.

6 Relevant Legislation

Whilst there is no underlying piece of legislation that engagement must adhere to in full, LSC operates within the legislative framework of local council's in Queensland and accordingly must work within the guidelines of the following pieces of relevant legislation:

» *QLD Local Government Act 2009*
» *Local Government Regulation 2012*
» *Sustainable Planning Act 2009 soon to be updated to the QLD Planning Act (3 July 2017)*
» *Land Protection Act 2002*
» *Water Act 2000*
» *The Disability Discrimination Act 1999*
» *The Native Title and Heritage Act.*

7 Supporting materials

When developing this framework, we referred to the IAP2 Quality Assurance Standard, known as the IAP2 Standards. In May 2015, the IAP2 Federation (the international body for the public participation sector) endorsed the Quality Assurance Standard for Community and Stakeholder Engagement as the International Standard for the Public Participation Practice.

The Standards incorporate the Spectrum, Core Values, the Code of Ethics and the Contemporary Model of Engagement, which identifies a process where engagement can be led by either the organisation or the community, and where actions arising from the engagement can be taken by either the organisation or the community, or be managed and implemented through a shared process.

Other reference materials include:

» City of Melbourne Civic engagement standards – IAP2 Australasia Core Value Awards engaging organisation winner 2014

» Public Participation in Government Decision making – Victorian Auditor General's office

» Better Together SA

» Engaging Queenslanders: ◊ Evaluating community engagement (2004) ◊

» An introduction to community engagement (2005)

» Community engagement in Queensland Local Government – A guide.

"Every successful individual knows that his or her achievement depends on a community or persons working together."

Paul Ryan