

1.11 Community Consultation

Introduction This policy aims to give the community a clear view of the importance of consultation in democratic governance. It also aims to be a practical document that will assist Council to undertake effective consultation in the Shire of Trayning.

Every Council report includes a section on consultation to ensure that proper attention has been given to this area of decision making. This policy fosters a consultative culture and ensures that the consultation genuinely reaches people affected by a decision and they have every opportunity to have input on Council decision making.

Consultation Policy Consultation for this document is defined as a process of two way, informed communication between Council and the community on an issue prior to Council making a decision.

Democratic governance involves community participation and input into governance and decision making. Consultation is a vehicle for obtaining this input as it enhances the decision making process. It fulfils a need to ensure that views can be identified and communicated. Consultation does not over-ride Council's responsibility to make decisions and its accountability for its decision making. It does not imply government by referendum.

Objective The aim of the consultation policy is to create and foster a consultative culture in the Shire of Trayning.

Policy Statement

1.3 Key Principles

The following principles form the basis of the consultation policy.

Inclusiveness

- Consultation will encourage participation of people affected by or interested in a decision.
- Affected and interested parties will be given equal opportunity to participate in the consultation process.
- Affected groups and interested parties can select their own representative to work with Council.
- Consultation will be sensitive to the needs of particular groups to maximise their capacity to contribute.
- Council will actively seek out people for consultation.

Focus

- Consultation will be purpose driven.
- Consultation methods will be appropriate for the task.
- A clear statement on the consultation process will be provided.
- A clear statement will outline the role of Council and the role of participants in the consultation process.
- Internal coordination will ensure Council ownership of the consultation.

Responsiveness

- Council will understand, consider and respond to contributions from all participants.
- Consultation will be transparent and accountable. All people involved will have a clear understanding of how their feedback and comments are to be used.
- Council will maintain openness, consider advice and alter the course of actions if required.
- Council will respect the diverse range of interests that may be represented during consultation.
- Council will make reasonable attempts to resolve conflicts, if they arise, and reach a suitable solution.

Provision of Information

- Information relating to consultation will be readily available to allow participants to make informed and timely contributions.
- Information relating to consultation can be accessed easily by everyone involved before key decisions are made.
- Relevant information will be presented in an easily understood format.
- In some instances full details about an issue may not be fully disclosed to the public because of its commercially sensitive or personal nature.

Implementation and Evaluation

- All consultation will be evaluated after the decision making is complete.
- Participants will receive feedback about inputs received and how the final decision was reached.
- If a difference occurs between the input and the final decision the reasons for this will be clearly documented and communicated.
- As part of its commitment to the effectiveness of consultation, Council's decision making process will be evaluated once a final decision has been made.

1.4 Levels of Consultation

The principles are general to all consultation processes, but there are clearly different levels of consultation to meet different requirements.

Democratic local government, with its very broad charter, needs to consult across all levels. This may range from consultation on the future use of a specific site in the Shire of Trayning, to consultation on the community's view of a state-wide issue which impacts on the community and therefore requires a Council position.

The levels illustrated in Table One indicate different approaches to consultation. These general principles will be used to develop specific strategies.

1.5 Tools of Consultation

There are a number of ways to commence a dialogue with the community. These are outlined in Table Two.

1.6 Consultation Matrix

The Council and the community need to determine which tools are appropriate at different levels of consultation. The template for the matrix appears as Table Three.

Table One

Examples of the different levels of decision making requiring different approaches to consultation are:

Site Specific	Matters about a particular site, such as a change in use or sale of property. Excluding matters to be decided under the Planning and Development Act.
Area Improvement	Matters that effect people in a neighbourhood, or town, e.g. change in local service delivery, traffic management plans, town plans and significant planning initiatives.
Service Planning for the entire Shire of Trayning	To develop or improve a service that would see a significant change in the level of service. The service could have an impact on the whole Shire of Trayning.
Policy Development	To develop or improve policies for Council's position on particular matters. Policies may affect the whole of the Shire of Trayning. Does not include internal operation procedures.
Key Strategic Issues- Major Development Facilities	Projects of such a size that impact on the finances or future of the Shire of Trayning e.g. aquatic facility or other redevelopments
Strategic Plan for the Shire of Trayning	Establishing the decision making framework of Council.

Table Two

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertisements in the local media i.e. WA Newspapers, Ninghan News, Facebook, Merredin Phoenix 	<p>Advertisements in the local media are an important means of advising the community about the matter under consultation and how the community might have input.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web Sites • Online “Have your say” consultation 	<p>Information will be placed on the Internet at www.trayning.wa.gov.au</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a letter 	<p>This is a personally addressed letter to all affected households. It outlines issues and invites comment. It always indicates where the comment should be directed within Council.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media release 	<p>This involves issuing media releases and conducting interview with local journalists. If it is part of the consultative process, the Council spokesperson should always indicate to the media representative that feedback from the community is valued. The media release will be made available to local newspapers.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey • Deliberate Polling 	<p>This is a statistically correct survey of particular attitudes, beliefs or information. It may be done by phone, written survey or door knock of individual households.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letterbox drop • Fact Sheets 	<p>This is a non-addressed leaflet or flyer that summarises the issues and invites feedback to council. The flyer indicates how that feedback can be given. These will only be used in the affected area.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal briefings 	<p>These are held at the request of a member’s of the local community to discuss a particular issue with a responsible officer. Personal briefings may include the President and/or Councillors.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus Groups- Review Groups • Advisory Groups 	<p>These are discussion groups of around 15-20 people, usually led by a trained person (facilitator). The participants are invited because they are residents or because they have a particular interest, involvement or stake in the subject being discussed. The group may comprise professionals or residents with particular skills and competencies relevant to the issue. The purpose is to find out the range of opinions that exist on a particular topic. Focus groups cannot measure how widely those various opinions are held in the community.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information session • Public Meetings 	<p>This may be held at a community venue, on site of the matter under consultation, or at the Council offices. Invitations will be sent by one or more of the following methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advertising in local papers - Letterbox drop - media

Table Three

SHIRE OF TRAYNING

TABLE THREE – CONSUTLATION MATRIX

	Ninghan News	Shire Web Page	Write	Interest Groups	Media Release	Survey	Letter Drop	Personal Briefing	Focus Groups	Information Sessions
Site Specific (e.g. Shire or Private Property)	2	3	2	3	4	5	4	3	5	5
Area Improvement (e.g. Street Scape)	2	2	3	2	4	5	4	3	3	5
Service Planning (e.g. Change in bin collection)	1	1	4	2	3	4	4	3	2	4
Policy Development (e.g. Policy Manual)	1	1	4	1	2	3	3	3	3	4
Key Strategic Issues -Major Projects (e.g. Sporting Club)	1	1	4	1	2	3	3	3	2	3
Community Strategic Plan	1	1	4	1	2	2	3	3	2	3

1 = every time **2** = will in most circumstances **3** = may depend on the program **4** = on the odd occasion **5** = in the rarest of circumstances

- End of Policy

COMMENT

Nil