

Community Engagement Policy

Policy Owner	Chief Executive Officer
Version Number	1
Next Review Date	September 2030

1. Statement of Intent

Light Regional Council (Council) is committed to open, accountable and responsive decision-making, supported by effective communication and meaningful community engagement.

This Policy establishes Council's commitment to community engagement and outlines the legislative and governance framework for engagement activities undertaken by Council.

This Policy has been prepared in accordance with section 50A of the *Local Government Act 1999* and the *Community Engagement Charter*.

Council recognises that:

- Community engagement contributes to informed decision-making;
- Community participation supports transparency and accountability;
- Effective engagement strengthens trust and confidence in Council;
- Engagement should be meaningful, accessible and inclusive; and
- The Light Region is a diverse and growing community with varying needs, interests and preferred methods of participation.

This Policy replaces Council's previous Public Consultation Policy.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all decisions, activities and processes undertaken by:

- The Council
- Council staff
- Delegates or authorised persons acting on behalf of Council

where community engagement is:

- Required under legislation or the Community Engagement Charter; or
- Determined by Council to be appropriate

This policy does not apply where the Council is exercising powers and functions under any other Act. Where there are consultation requirements under other legislation, such as the *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016*, those specific processes take precedence over this policy.

3. Legislation and References

This Policy is to be read in conjunction with

- *Local Government Act 1999 (SA)*
- *Community Engagement Charter – 11 December 2025*
- *Disability Inclusion Act 2018 (SA)*
- Light Regional Council Strategic Plan 2024 -2028:
 - o Community, Leadership
- Light Regional Council Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP)
- Community Engagement Framework
- Community Engagement Procedure

This Policy should not be considered as the only document that may relate to Community Engagement, other tiers of government, agencies or organisations may have legislation or policies that also apply. Where Council partners with other councils or government agencies the lead agencies engagement policy and procedure may apply by informed decision.

4. Application

Position	Responsibilities
Elected Members	• Consider the outcomes of community engagement when making decisions. • Determine engagement approaches for matters reserved to Council by resolution. • Participate in engagement activities where appropriate.
Chief Executive Officer	• Ensure the implementation and administration of this policy. • Ensure Council meets legislative community engagement obligations. • Report engagement outcomes to Council as required. • Exercise delegated authority to determine appropriate engagement methods.
General Managers	• Ensure compliance with this policy within their areas of responsibility. • Oversee planning and delivery of engagement activities for relevant decisions and projects.
Managers	• Identify when community engagement is required. • Plan and undertake engagement activities consistent with this policy and delegations. • Ensure records of engagement are maintained.
Workers/Employees/ Volunteers	• Identify opportunities for engagement. • Support engagement activities in accordance with this policy and relevant procedures. • Act consistently with Council's values when interacting with the community.
Committees/Delegates (where applicable)	• Undertake engagement activities in accordance with delegated authority and this policy.
Communications Officer	• Comply with the policy , framework and procedure to deliver communications of engagement activities consistent with approved plans.

5. Definitions

Act	The <i>Local Government Act 1999 (SA)</i> .
Charter	The Community Engagement Charter adopted under section 50A of the Act.
Community	All individuals and groups who live, work, study, own land, conduct business, visit or use services or facilities within the Council area.
Community Engagement	A process of informing, consulting, involving, collaborating with or empowering the community to support Council decision-making.
Council	The Light Regional Council and includes its Elected Members, delegates and any person exercising a function or power on behalf of Council.
Delegate	A person or body authorised by Council or the CEO to exercise a delegated power or function.
Public Consultation	Community engagement undertaken to meet legislative requirements under the Act and the Charter.
Significant Decision	A decision, activity or process categorised as “Significant” under the Community Engagement Charter.
Stakeholder	Individual or group impacted by or interested in a decision.

6. Policy Principles

Council will ensure community engagement activities are:

- In line with IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum
- Reaching beyond the mandatory requirements of the Charter
- Fit-for-purpose and proportionate to the decision
- Accessible and inclusive, with barriers to participation minimised
- Transparent and clearly communicated
- Focused on meaningful participation
- Supported by reporting on how feedback influenced decisions
- Representative of diverse community perspectives where appropriate.
- Supported by communication methods that recognise the different needs and preferences of the community.

7. Engagement Approach

Council adopts a structured approach to community engagement supported by the:

- Community Engagement Framework (CEF); and
- Community Engagement Procedure.

The Community Engagement Framework communicates Council's commitment to the community and provides guidance on how engagement activities are planned, delivered, reviewed and continuously improved.

The Framework is informed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum, which assists Council in selecting appropriate levels of participation and engagement methods based on the significance, impact, complexity and opportunity for influence associated with a decision, project or activity.

Council recognises that different engagement methods suit different communities and circumstances and supports the use of both traditional and contemporary engagement approaches.

Community engagement assists Council to make informed decisions. While feedback received through engagement activities is important, final decisions remain the responsibility of Council or the relevant decision-maker and must also take into account legislative obligations, strategic priorities, technical advice, financial considerations and the broader interests of the community.

IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

Level	Purpose
Inform	To provide information that supports awareness and understanding.
Consult	To seek feedback on proposals, options or decisions.
Involve	To work directly with participants throughout a process and consider their views when developing options.
Collaborate	To work together with stakeholders and the community to explore issues and develop solutions.
Empower	To support community-led initiatives or processes where the community has a significant role in shaping outcomes, where appropriate.

The application of the IAP2 Spectrum does not replace the requirements of the Community Engagement Charter. The Charter establishes minimum engagement requirements that must be met for specified decisions and activities.

These documents provide:

- Workflow guidance (Define → Plan → Deliver → Review);
- Templates and checklists; and
- Operational practices for staff.

Council will apply a consistent engagement process supported by standardised templates, checklists and reporting tools.

8. Levels of Engagement

Council will apply different levels of community engagement depending on the nature of the decision, activity or project being considered.

Not every decision requires the same level of engagement. The level and method of engagement will be determined having regard to:

- Community Engagement Charter requirements;
- Community impact;
- Opportunity for community influence;
- Community interest;
- Complexity;
- Risk;
- Stakeholder interests; and
- Accessibility requirements.

Council will seek to ensure that engagement activities are proportionate to the significance of the issue and appropriate to the people and communities affected

Guidance on applying these considerations is provided in the Community Engagement Framework.

9. Inclusive Engagement

Council recognises that people engage in different ways and that barriers to participation may vary across the community.

Council recognises that accessibility extends beyond disability and includes access to information, communication channels, engagement opportunities and participation methods that reflect the diverse needs of the community. Engagement activities should seek to accommodate a range of participation preferences, including face-to-face, written and digital engagement methods where appropriate.

Council is committed to inclusive engagement in accordance with its Disability Access and Inclusion Plan and relevant legislation.

Council will:

- Provide multiple ways for the community to participate
- Use clear, plain language
- Provide accessible formats where practicable
- Select accessible venues and platforms
- Consider barriers such as mobility, digital access, literacy and timing
- Use a range of communication methods appropriate to the community, issue and level of engagement being undertaken.

Inclusive engagement requirements are embedded in the:

- Community Engagement Framework
- Community Engagement Procedure
- Engagement planning tools

10. Public Consultation Categories

The Community Engagement Charter establishes categories of engagement based on the significance and impact of Council decisions. These categories are:

- Significant – Annual Business Plan and Rating Policy
- Significant
- Standard
- Local
- Inform

Matters that fall within these categories are prescribed by the *Local Government Act 1999* and the Community Engagement Charter.

Council will undertake engagement in accordance with the requirements of the relevant category, as outlined in the Charter Engagement Requirements table below.

11. Charter Engagement Requirements

The Community Engagement Charter establishes minimum engagement requirements for certain Council decisions and activities.

Council will comply with these requirements and may undertake additional engagement activities where appropriate.

The following table summarises the Charter requirements and Council's approach to meeting them. Detailed guidance is provided in the Community Engagement Framework and Community Engagement Procedure.

Charter Requirement	Mandatory Minimum Actions	Significant ABP & Rating	Significant	Standard	Local	Inform	Council Engagement Approach
Website	Publish accessible information on Council website	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Information published on Council website and engagement platform
News Publication	Publish information in independent news media	✓	✓				Media release or notice in local publications
Whole of Council Area Notification	Consider appropriate notification methods	✓	✓	✓			Website, social media, newsletters and community locations
Invite Submissions	Provide submission details and timeframe	✓	✓				Online, written and in-person submission options
Explain Proposal & Decision-Making	Describe proposal, purpose and outcomes	✓	✓				Plain language information explaining proposal and influence
Seek & Consider Feedback (Significant)	Minimum 21 days engagement; report feedback	✓	✓				Engagement period minimum 21 days, feedback summarised for Council
Public Meeting	Hold a public meeting	✓					Public meeting held where required
Council Meeting Invitation	Invite submitters to speak to Council		✓				Submitters invited to present at Council meeting
Seek & Consider Feedback	Provide opportunity and timeframe for feedback			✓	✓		Feedback invited via appropriate channels, timeframe determined
Consult Local Community	Notify affected local area				✓		Targeted communication (e.g. letters, signage)
Information to Whole Area	Provide broad information					✓	Website, social media and public notices
Information to Local Area	Provide localised information					✓	Direct and localised communication

Community engagement activities will be planned and undertaken in accordance with this Policy, the Community Engagement Framework and the Community Engagement Procedure.

Engagement activities will incorporate inclusive practices that align with Council's Disability Access and Inclusion Plan.

12. Other decisions, activities and processes

Council recognises there may be decisions, activities and processes where the Act and Charter are silent in relation to community engagement, but for which community engagement may nevertheless be appropriate.

Council recognises that meaningful community engagement may be appropriate for decisions, activities and processes that are not specifically identified within the Community Engagement Charter.

Community engagement may be undertaken where Council considers that participation will:

- support informed decision-making;
- improve transparency and understanding;
- assist in identifying community priorities and concerns;
- contribute to improved community outcomes; or
- strengthen relationships between Council and the community.

Any such engagement will be undertaken in accordance with this Policy, the Community Engagement Framework and associated procedures

Such engagement will be scaled and delivered in accordance with this Policy, Framework and Procedure.

13. Delegations

Specific engagement activities to be undertaken in relation to any particular decision, activity or processes shall be determined on a case by case basis, by:

- Council, by resolution;
- the CEO;
- a delegate with the power to undertake community engagement under the Act, the Charter or this policy; or
- a delegate with power to make a decision or undertake an activity or process that requires community engagement under the Act, the Charter or this policy.

Council, the CEO or a delegate is not required by this policy to undertake, or to consider or determine whether to undertake, additional engagement activities or engagement methods. Such a decision is at the absolute discretion of the decision maker.

Review Schedule and History

This document will be reviewed by the Policy Owner:

- as determined below; or
- earlier in the event of changes to legislation or related Policies or Procedures; or
- if deemed necessary by the Policy Owner,

in consultation with identified stakeholders, to ensure that the Policy continues to meet legislative compliance and the requirements of Council needs.

Policy Owner	Chief Executive Officer
Version Number	1
Adopted By	Council
Adopted On	22 September 2026
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Legal Requirement	Local Government Act 1999, s50, s50A
Review Frequency	4 Years or as required by legislative updates
Next Review Date	September 2030

Version History

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1	22 September 2026	OCM-2026/173	Council