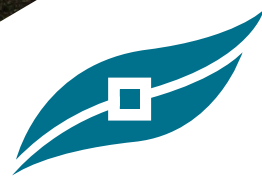


# DRAFT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

November 2020



MANNINGHAM



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## **Acknowledgement**

Manningham Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri people as the traditional custodians of the land now known as Manningham. We pay our respects to Wurundjeri Elders past and present, and value their ongoing contribution to our heritage and our community.



# INTRODUCTION

Manningham Council is committed to listening to and understanding our community. We consider community engagement to be an essential component of good governance and leadership.

Our mission is to be a financially sustainable Council that listens, consults and acts with integrity, value and transparency.

At Manningham we live our values in all aspects of our engagement work:

- ▶ Working Together
- ▶ Excellence
- ▶ Accountable
- ▶ Respectful
- ▶ Empowered.

Community engagement is an important element of the democratic process. An empowered community is one that actively participates to influence decisions that affect their lives. In particular, community engagement.

- ▶ offers opportunities for residents and key stakeholders to contribute to and influence decisions that directly affect their community;
- ▶ enhances accountability by creating direct links between Council and residents and key stakeholders;
- ▶ assists us to deliver better services and meet the principles of Best Value (as outlined in the *Local Government Act 2020*).
- ▶ assists us to deliver public value in all that we do
- ▶ helps form our advocacy agenda

We are committed to understanding the many different views, experiences and expertise of our diverse and rich community. Strengthening relationships and listening to our community ensures that we can make better, more informed decisions and therefore deliver value to the public in all aspects of our work.

This draft policy document provides the community engagement framework for engagement activities undertaken by Council.

This policy helps us to meet our legislative requirements and underpins sound planning and project development.

**Engagement:  
listen, consult,  
act and report**

## **What is community engagement?**

Community engagement is about having conversations with people who are potentially impacted by Council decisions. It can also involve discerning issues that are important to the community, or to groups within the community, in order to advocate to state and federal government and other bodies that have influence in our area. In our engagement we listen, we consult, we act and report back to our community.

Community engagement is a planned process with the specific purpose of working with identified groups of people, whether they are connected by geographic location, special interest, or affiliation, or connected through issues affecting their wellbeing. The scope is broad with the focus on the collective, rather than on the individual. Engagement must be inclusive and accessible, reflecting the diversity that exists within our community.

## Definitions



### **MANNINGHAM COUNCIL**

Manningham Council, including the Mayor, Councillors, Executive Officers and staff.



### **COMMUNITY**

All residents, interested groups, community organisations, business persons and workers, and those with a vested interest in the municipality.



### **BEST VALUE**

The Best Value approach enables councils to determine the most effective means of providing a service to the community. The *Local Government Act 2020* sets out the principles that councils must observe.



### **ENGAGEMENT**

Connections and conversations between governments, citizens and communities on a range of policy, program and service issues. Engagement using Council's framework ranges from the provision of information through to participation in decision making and empowerment of the community through deliberative engagement.



### **STAKEHOLDER**

An individual or a group who may be affected by or have a specific interest in a decision or issue under consideration.

# OUR APPROACH AND PRINCIPLES

Community engagement enables the public to participate in decisions that impact on their lives. Councillors will make decisions based on legislative requirements, the expert advice of Council officers and community inputs gathered through formal and informal engagement.

## Deliberative engagement

Council's approach to deliberative engagement is consistent with the *Local Government Act 2020*.

The key characteristics of deliberative engagement include authentic engagement with the community; good representation of the community in engagement activities; clear demonstration of how all views have been considered; accessible and relevant information available to the community to ensure the decision-making process and the community's level of influence is clear in each instance and that participants are fully informed. Transparency is key to an effective process.

At Manningham we define deliberative engagement as:

- ▶ A form of community engagement that requires participants to critically consider information, community needs and perspectives, and weigh-up competing demands in order to determine preferences for resolving public policy questions.
- ▶ Council will supply adequate information in a transparent way and the engagement participants will be broadly representative of the impacted community.
- ▶ Council will report back to the community on the outcome and influence of the deliberative processes.
- ▶ **The Mayor will lead the engagement** for Council's major strategic documents: The Council Plan, The Community Vision, The Asset Plan and the Financial Plan. This means that the Mayor will have a role in championing major engagement events, including participation in engagement forums and discussions, as appropriate.

## Our principles

The following are our community engagement principles as detailed in the *Local Government Act 2020*

- ▶ a community engagement process must have a clearly defined objective and scope
- ▶ participants in community engagement must have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation
- ▶ participants in community engagement must be representative of the persons and groups affected by the matter the subject of the community engagement
- ▶ participants in community engagement are entitled to support to enable meaningful and informed engagement
- ▶ participants in community engagement are informed of the ways in which the community engagement process will influence Council decision making.



## Our engagement vision

Manningham is a liveable and harmonious city because the community participates in decisions that impact on their quality of life. We respect diversity and engage in a variety of ways across the organisation. Our values are evident in all our public interactions. We listen, we consult, we act and report back to our community.

Our engagement is considered and coordinated and our Council officers have the tools they need to engage effectively.

We measure the outcomes and effectiveness of our public participation.

## Engagement context

Our community engagement activities can be categorised according to the following:

### 1. Legislative requirements

*The Victorian Local Government Act 2020* states the core roles of local government being:

- ▶ Acting as a representative government by taking into account the diverse needs of the local community in decision making
- ▶ Providing leadership by establishing strategic objectives and monitoring their achievement
- ▶ Maintaining the viability of the Council by ensuring that resources are managed in a responsible and accountable manner
- ▶ Advocating the interests of the local community to other communities and governments
- ▶ Acting as a responsible partner in government by taking into account the needs of other communities
- ▶ Fostering community cohesion and encouraging active participation in civic life.

The primary objective of a Council is to endeavour to achieve the best outcomes for the local community having regard to the long term and cumulative effects of decisions.

### 2. Engagement around major strategic and policy issues

Deliberative engagement is a legislated requirement for our major strategic documents including the Council Plan, Asset Plan, Ten Year Financial Plan, Community Vision and new or changing local laws.

### 3. Engagement concerning local issues

Local issues including site specific master plans, local area structure plans and policies, or specific issues such as emergency awareness may require specific engagement plans. We will be flexible according to the scale of the project, this may include community forums, working groups, surveys or other engagement tools.

### 4. Engagement linked to day to day council business

We will identify and manage community engagement activities associated with core business and projects approved in Council's budget. We will only consult on those aspects of core business that are negotiable and where the community can have meaningful input.

# OUR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

We commit to ensuring that those who are affected by a decision will be given the opportunity to inform that decision.

Our framework for determining the level of involvement in the decision and the methods we use is the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum.

The objectives of the Community Engagement Framework are to:

- ▶ Ensure Councillors and Council staff (including external contractors and consultants) engage with the community in a meaningful way about decisions that affect them
- ▶ Provide a consistent approach to community engagement
- ▶ Assist in selecting the method and level to engage the community in projects or the decision to be made
- ▶ Increase trust and community confidence by fostering positive relationships between Council and communities of interest.

The IAP2 Spectrum identifies and defines each of the five levels of engagement. It details our promise to the public for each level of engagement ensuring that both Council and the community have shared expectations. Decisions on the level of engagement will be made according to the scale and importance of projects.

Our framework is supported internally by the Community Engagement Guideline and a suite of tools available to Council officers for engaging with the public.

## IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum

(IAP2 International Association for Public Participation)

Increasing level of public participation					
	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 provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	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 look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decision to the maximum extent possible	We will implement what you decide
Example techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fact sheets</li> <li>• Websites</li> <li>• Open houses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public comment</li> <li>• Focus groups</li> <li>• Surveys</li> <li>• Public meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshops</li> <li>• Deliberative polling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen advisory committees</li> <li>• Consensus-building</li> <li>• Participatory decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen juries</li> <li>• Ballots</li> <li>• Delegated decision</li> </ul>

## Why we engage

Community engagement provides decision makers with better opportunities to make informed decisions. By engaging the expertise and experience of the community, Council is better able to understand local issues and needs.

Community engagement can help decision makers by:

- ▶ Gathering information, meaningful feedback and diverse points of view prior to making decisions
- ▶ Fostering community partnerships
- ▶ Increasing trust and community confidence
- ▶ Gathering inputs from stakeholders who are impacted by Council decisions
- ▶ Identifying risks and gathering workable inputs on mitigations
- ▶ Building understanding of, and commitment to, projects and strategic decisions
- ▶ Enhancing accountability and transparency through open and genuine consultation and feedback on public participation outcomes.

## Who we engage

We engage with a broad range of people, all with differing interests. For the purpose of this framework we identify the community as anyone affected by Council's decisions.

This includes individuals or groups identified but not limited to residents, ratepayers, business owners, customers, community groups, sporting groups, youth, agencies, funding bodies, developers, internal stakeholders and culturally and linguistically diverse groups.

## When we engage

If there is a decision to be made by Council that will impact and affect the community and other key stakeholders then community engagement is usually required.

We will plan for community engagement early in our project planning process.

We are committed to informing the community and key stakeholders during the early stages of project development to provide real opportunities for the community to influence decisions. Doing this gives the community the opportunity to participate in a meaningful way and allows us to discern opportunities and constraints early in the planning process.

We will provide the community with sufficient time to participate in any engagement activity. We will set the engagement at suitable times for stakeholders; for example not over significant holiday periods or at times of the day when participants will find it difficult to be involved.

What constitutes sufficient time will depend on the scale and/or complexity of the project and the number of people who will participate in the engagement activity. As a general rule, two to four weeks should be allowed from the time of notification until the close of time for comment by any stakeholder group. For some projects there are legislative requirements that will need to be considered.

## How we engage

When planning engagement methods we reference our framework, the IAP2 Spectrum, and the internal Community Engagement Guideline that supports this policy. We are also careful to adhere to our engagement principles, set clear engagement objectives, and to consider statutory processes, community interest, political sensitivity, time, resources and budget constraints.

Successful community engagement is well planned, inclusive and accessible to those people that may be affected by the decision. Effective engagement relies on Council being clear about the purpose of the engagement, key stages and timelines and the respective roles, responsibilities and expectations throughout the engagement process.

To ensure the engagement is well planned, we have a robust engagement process featuring a three stage approach:

- ▶ Plan (developing the engagement plan)
- ▶ Do (implementing engagement activities and receiving input)
- ▶ Report (providing feedback on level of engagement and participation outcomes).

Our engagement will respect the rich diversity of our local community. We will recognise the long Indigenous heritage of our area and respect the insights of the original owners across all engagement areas. We will make sure that, where possible, our engagement is community driven and responsive to the hopes and needs of our community.

We will value accessibility and engage in a manner that is inclusive of the cultures and language groups that make up our municipality as well as being aware of the diversity in ages, gender, abilities and the range of socio-economic perspectives and aspirations. We will take special care with the young and the vulnerable, including their voice and engaging in safe and respectful ways. We will adhere to the Victorian Government's policy on conducting research in schools.

## Engagement evaluation

We measure our engagement performance in order to test that we are delivering public value to our community.

We measure the level of engagement or number of interactions, submissions made, surveys completed, participants in a workshop, letters distributed, calls taken and more.

We also measure participation outcomes. How were the decisions that we made influenced by community inputs? When we listened and consulted, did we act on what we heard and understood?

Effective evaluation of community engagement activities can provide considerable benefits including:

- ▶ Improving community engagement practice by identifying achievements and providing evidence of how effective engagement works
- ▶ Identifying and articulating lessons learned and improving current practices
- ▶ Assisting in developing an evidence base for community vision, concerns and aspirations
- ▶ Meeting our requirements for the Victorian Auditor-General's Office.

# RESOURCES AND TOOLS

## Resources and tools to support our Community Engagement Framework

### 1. Independent research

Community satisfaction and preferred methods of engagement are captured in regular independent research. This is based on a randomly selected sample of citizens and delivers statistically reliable results that can be compared across years and in some years across Councils. Our two benchmark research projects are:

- ▶ The Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey facilitated by the Local Government Performance Reporting, Analysis and Support Team, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP). We are able to compare our customer satisfaction ratings with other Victorian councils and benchmark our performance from year to year.
- ▶ The Citizen Connect Research Survey measures our performance with customers who have contacted Council. We gather reliable data on satisfaction, preferred channels and the general customer engagement experience. We are able to benchmark our performance across years.

### 2. Our communication channels

To encourage and invite our community and stakeholders to participate in community engagement activities, we may promote the opportunities in a range of different ways. All communications will be in line with the Manningham brand guide and interpreter and translations services are also available.

Some of the communications channels and tools that can be used to support our engagement activities include:

- ▶ Your Say Manningham website, [yoursaymanningham.com.au](http://yoursaymanningham.com.au)
- ▶ Manningham Council website, [manningham.vic.gov.au](http://manningham.vic.gov.au)
- ▶ Manningham Matters
- ▶ eNewsletters
- ▶ Social media including Facebook and Twitter
- ▶ Print promotions such as letters, posters or flyers
- ▶ Drop in sessions, site visits and open days
- ▶ Focus groups, workshops and stakeholder briefing sessions
- ▶ Media promotion including media releases and/or advertising

### **3. Training**

Training will be provided to staff to increase understanding of our Community Engagement Framework, processes and tools, and to build capacity in order for staff to deliver sound engagement activities across the organisation.

### **4. Integrated community engagement**

Council has several legislative requirements to engage. Council is committed to being respectful of the community's time in our engagement activities. We will coordinate and integrate our large scale community engagement where possible in the interests of efficiency.

### **Related legislation**

*The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*

*The Local Government Act 1989*

*The Subordinate Legislation Act 1994*

*The Public Administration Act 2004*

*The Equal Opportunity Act 2010*



## Manningham Council

🏠 699 Doncaster Road, Doncaster

☎ 03 9840 9333

📄 03 9848 3110

✉ [manningham@manningham.vic.gov.au](mailto:manningham@manningham.vic.gov.au)

🌐 [manningham.vic.gov.au](http://manningham.vic.gov.au)

🌐 [yoursaymanningham.com.au](http://yoursaymanningham.com.au)