



WEDDIN SHIRE COUNCIL

POLICY NUMBER: 1.16.3

POLICY FOR COMMUNICATION & CONSULTATION

Adopted: 20 April 2017

POLICY FOR COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION (No. 1.16.3)

1. **TITLE:** Policy for Communication and Consultation
2. **NUMBER:** Policy Number 1.16.3
3. **PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this policy is to set out the framework for communication between Council and its stakeholders.

Successful communication will be achieved by:

- Providing regular and consistent communication on Council's projects and activities to all stakeholders
- Creating a positive and professional image for Weddin Shire Council through open communication and increased awareness of Council's activities and projects
- Fostering meaningful community consultation process in Council's activities
- Effectively managing negative issues
- Ensuring that internal communication is a key factor in all communication
- Developing a strong customer service focus within Weddin Shire Council

Weddin Shire Council's 'communication stakeholders' include:

- Ratepayers and residents
- Potential residents
- Councillors
- Employees
- Visitors
- Investors, developers and individuals with business interests within the Weddin Shire
- Customers who seek products or services or information from Council
- Community and Government organizations
- Local, regional and national media

4. **APPLICATION (Scope):**

The policy applies to all Councillors, Employees and Delegates of the Council.

5. **ASSOCIATED LEGISLATION AND OTHER REFERENCES**

Local Government Act
Local Government (General) Regulation
Environmental Planning & Assessment Act

6. POLICY:

a) Corporate Identity

Council's logo and corporate colours and consistent fonts and layouts should be utilised in all publications, promotional material and documents.

Councillors' email contact details will be placed on Council's website to facilitate communication with residents.

b) Community Consultation

In order for the community consultation process to be considered effective, the public must feel as though they have the opportunity to air an opinion or make a submission and must have the assurance that this will be properly considered.

This is achieved by Council in the following ways:

- Public invitation to make submissions regarding important documents (such as the Operational Plan and other strategies and policies)
- Community forums
- Conduct digital workshops
- Establishment of a Community Panel
- One to one consultation with the Mayor, Councillors and Staff
- Generally unrestricted access to the Mayor, Councillors and Staff
- Consideration of monthly consultation sessions by Councillors with the public at the Grenfell Community Hub

c) Crisis Communication Strategy

Advance preparation is critical when dealing with potential crises or controversies.

Appropriate communication methods may be the distribution of a media release, an interview with the media or communication directly with the effected parties – depending on the situation. All media and correspondence must be monitored to gauge public feeling and highlight any further issues.

The following steps may help management to deal with the issue in an effective way.

- Identify a single spokesperson, usually the Mayor or General Manager
- Be prepared and forthright.
- Develop a response that puts the public first, takes responsibility, is honest, shows genuine sympathy (if applicable) and states the who, when, what, where and why of the situation.
- Provide a constant flow of information to key stakeholders.
- Be accessible and familiar with media needs and deadlines.
- Monitor media coverage and correspondence.

d) Customer service

The way in which Council receives, answers and responds to phone calls, letters, faxes and emails combined with its face to face contact with customers, has the greatest impact on how Council is perceived in the community. It is vital that Council ensures that correct, effective, efficient and customer orientated responses are generated to develop and maintain a positive reputation and image for Council.

e) Employee Relations

Council's elected Councillors and Employees are its most effective public relations ambassadors. Effective internal communication encourages a participatory approach to change management, increases employees' morale and encourages more effective communication between employees across department and management levels.

Strategies utilized by Council to ensure adequate communication to its employees include:

- Development of employee induction manual to ensure a full understanding of the workings of Council
- Staff meetings
- Regular Senior Staff meetings
- Access to Council documents including policies and procedures and minutes
- Key messages posted on staff notice boards
- Utilisation of group emails to quickly distribute key messages
- End of year function
- Staff long service acknowledgement

f) Events

Council manages or supports a variety of Council and community events including:

- Australia Day Celebrations
- Local Government Week
- Clean Up Australia Day
- Seniors Week
- Anzac Day
- Henry Lawson Festival of Arts
- Goldfest

Council events are commonly staged to celebrate and recognize achievements within the community and/or to promote a specific key message or interest.

Council also provides financial or in-kind support to community events to establish mutually beneficial partnerships between Council and the community; to raise the profile of the Council within the community; to provide opportunities for project development and skill development of members involved in events; to engender pride in the local community; and to generate income and employment opportunities.

g) Media Relations

Council will endeavour to establish and maintain a good working relationship with local and regional media outlets.

Media activities carried out by Council are predominately undertaken by the Mayor, General Manager or staff approved by the General Manager.

Council issues media releases on occasions. Media releases must be authorised by the General Manager prior to distribution. All media releases are placed on Council's website.

The Mayor and the General Manager are Council's official spokespeople. Individual Councillors opinion contrary or not to Council determination or policy must be clearly identified as the responsibility of the individual when speaking publicly. Councillors should ensure that they clarify whether or not they are speaking on behalf of Council or as an individual Councillor.

Councillors need to act at all times in a way that does not bring disrepute to either themselves or Council and are obliged to follow the eight key principles under the Code of Conduct being integrity, leadership, selflessness, impartiality, accountability, openness, honesty and respect.

Staff should only speak to the media on behalf of the Council on matters of factual information. Councillors and staff must not discuss sensitive or confidential matters with the media, in particularly current court cases or confidential legal advice.

h) Publications

Councils Integrated Planning Reports and Annual Report are produced each year and made available to the public as required by the Local Government Act.

Council's weekly newsletter, advertisements and notices are placed in the Grenfell Record on Wednesdays of each week. The Council notices are predominately of a factual nature in order to advise of Council activities, up and coming events, positions vacant, approved development applications and community input sought on specific projects. The newsletter and notices are also placed on Council's website and in the village newsletters.

i) Website

Council will endeavour to ensure that an up to date, clear and concise website on Council and its activities is maintained as a convenient information source and valuable customer service tool for its stakeholders.

j) Monitoring and Evaluation

The effectiveness of Council's communication tools will be monitored to ensure that Council's stakeholders are adequately aware of and informed of Council's activities and services. Paper clippings will be collected to monitor the frequency of media coverage and analyse content.

Monitoring and evaluation will occur on a regular basis to ensure that Council is achieving its communication objectives and so that Council can modify, amend or continue communication programs as needs be.

7. NON-COMPLIANCE:

Non-compliance with this policy may render employees or Councillors liable for disciplinary action or some other measure.

8. REVIEW AND AMENDMENT:

- This policy shall be reviewed at 4 yearly intervals, to ensure it meets all statutory requirements and the needs of Council.
- This Policy may be amended or cancelled by Council at any time without prior notice or obligation.

9. ADOPTION:

- This policy commences as from the date of adoption by Council, being 20 April 2017 and replaces any previous policy.

10. HISTORY:

Version	Details
1.16.1	Adopted 19 August 2010
1.16.2	Adopted 21 March 2013
1.16.3	Adopted 20 April 2017