Draft Community Engagement Policy

Public Exhibition Outcomes Report January 2021

Overview

In December 2020, Council endorsed the Draft Community Engagement Policy (Draft Policy) for public consultation.

The Draft Policy was available for community feedback via an online survey during the public exhibition period of 21 December 2020 to 17 January 2021 (28 days). This report summarises the outcomes from the consultation undertaken during the public exhibition period.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions such as social distancing measures and facility access restrictions, consultation activities for the Draft Community Engagement Policy were predominantly of a digital nature. These included:

1. Broad municipal wide engagement through Council's online interactive engagement 'Your Say' web page. The engagement methods included:
   1.1. Survey
   1.2. Priority vote
   1.3. Quick poll

Consultation promotion

The Your Say engagement web page was promoted through Brimbank social media channels, media releases, targeted email distribution targeting various stakeholders such as sporting groups, community groups, business groups, service organisations and providers, Neighbourhood houses, community centres, libraries and leisure centres.

A total of 26 residents provided their feedback through the Your Say web page and one written submission was received.
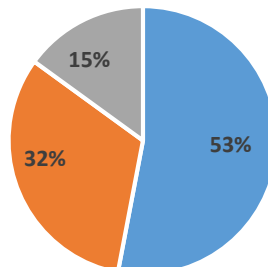
Consultation Outcomes
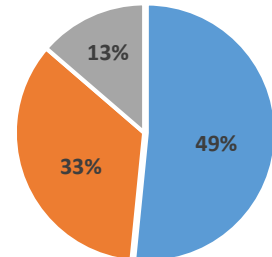
Overview of participant demographic

Participant Gender

4%
26%
70%

■ Female ■ Male ■ Prefer to not say
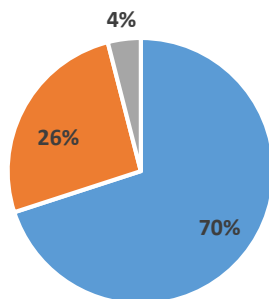
Participation Age

15%
32%
53%

■ 40 - 50yr ■ 30 - 40 yr ■ 50 +

Participants learnt about survey via

13%
33%
49%

■ Direct Email ■ Social Media ■ Council Website

Participant location

Location	Percentage
Sunshine	35%
Kealba	22%
Burnside	9%
Keilor Downs	9%
Altona East	4%
Ardeer	4%
Niddrie North	4%
Taylors Hill	4%
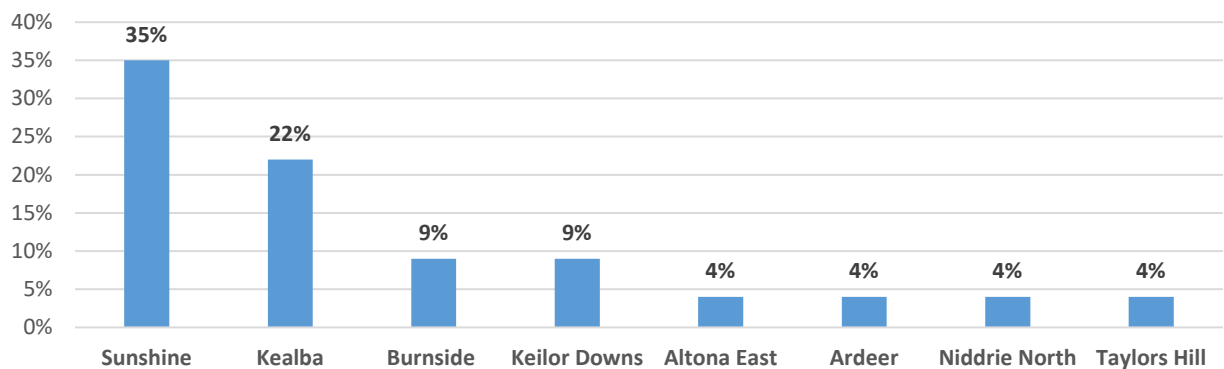
Online Survey

The questions in the online survey focused on:

1. Gaining an understanding of the community's experience in engagement.
2. Aspects of the community engagement process that are important to the community.
3. Identifying the community's priority principles in engagement.

Out of the 26 survey respondents, 52% had previous experience with consultation and 48% had not.

The responses showed strong support for the Draft Policy demonstrating guidance towards genuine engagement and best practices to encourage community participation and involvement in the decision making processes.

When asked 'What was your experience like and what could we do differently,' the general sentiment was they liked seeing diverse and many stakeholders brought together. Some of the areas for improvement focused on demonstrating a genuine approach to engagement. These included:

-   Listening to community views.
-   Promoting projects broadly for greater awareness.
-   Allowing enough time for consultation.
-   Presenting expert data.
-   Providing online opportunities to participate.
-   Keeping community informed throughout the project stages.
-   Establishing a community panel.

Draft Policy reference: Brimbank has in its Draft Policy defined its commitment to genuine engagement and identified key approaches that list methods and activities as expressed by the community.

When asked *'What can we do to make it easier for you to participate,'* the general sentiment reflecting simple, short online feedback opportunities, notifications to residents via email, social media and community group channels as well as the opportunity for anonymity.

Draft Policy reference: This information will feed into the processes taken by Council staff when designing and delivering project engagement strategies that will be guided by the Draft Policy.

When asked *'Do you have any other comments,'* some of the feedback indicated the need for support so as engage, engaging in other languages, promoting project consultation periods through various channels, the need to involve children, respecting community, being transparent and Draft Policy co-design.

Draft Policy reference: The Draft Policy is a high level document with key principles that guide the design of the engagement approach, much of the comments made will be put into practice through the development of the individual project engagement strategies supported with internal engagement tools and resources also listed in the Draft Policy.

The survey results show strong support for the principles in the Draft Policy, the survey demonstrating the priorities as Transparency and Integrity, Accountability and Responsiveness as seen in the table below.
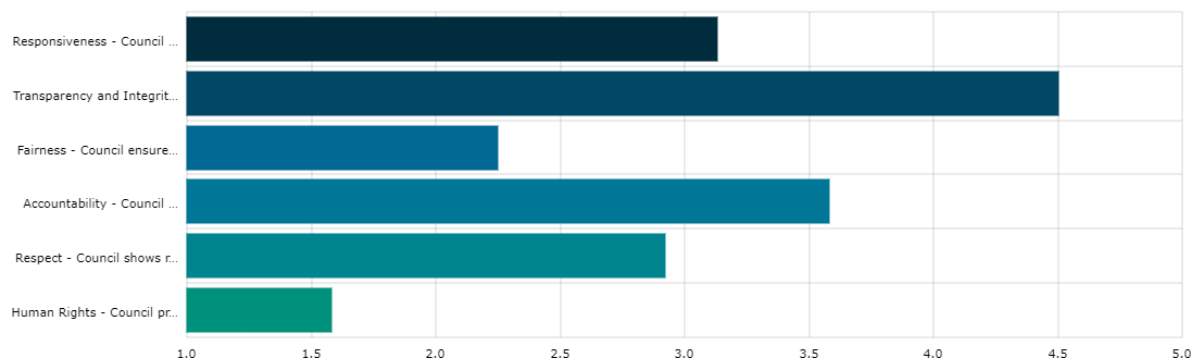
Refer to Appendix A for full survey responses and Council officer recommendations.

Quick Poll

The quick poll question aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of how the community would like to be advised regarding upcoming consultations. Not all 26 respondents provided feedback via this method, however results show;

- 71% would like to be advised by email.
- 14.5% via a Community leader.
- 14.5% via the post.

Preference Vote

The community voted for their preference in how they would like to be engaged for future projects. Of the responses in order of preference;

26% responded via webinar   26% responded survey
20% responded workshop   13% responded phone call
6% responded community meeting   6% responded community group

Appendix A   Full responses to survey questions

Question:
With regards to participation in a Community Consultation. What was your experience like? What could we do differently?

Participant response to survey question	Council Officer Recommendation
Response 1. Difficult to get to, rather an online format	Feedback noted. The Draft Policy will help guide Council on how to reach various groups. This is reflected under: Our framework – page 10 how to engage and engagement process – page 13 delivering the engagement.
Response 2. Don't have an issue so much with the process, but definitely with the timing of the consultation, and the way the two way communication remains a constant throughout the process. If you are consulting the community, there is an expectation that the feedback you get will be considered in a timely manner and with plenty of time for changes to be considered and implemented. And whether it is via the online engagement portal or by some other means, the community would like to keep track on any changes and considerations along the way until the project is funded and locked away for implementation.	No change required on the Policy. This point is reflected in the Policy's Principles, page 5 • Responsiveness 'Council will allow sufficient time for review of information and respond to the engagement and input from the community in a timely and constructive manner.' • Transparency and Integrity, Transparency and Integrity; 'Council is committed to sharing the engagement findings and clearly communicate decisions back to the public in a way they understand. Engagement process step 6 page 13, – sharing the feedback, 'Once a decision is made, Council will communicate details about the engagement process, its finding and any decisions made to participants and relevant stakeholders.'
Response 3. "Ensure that community consultation is more widely promoted so that people are able to participate. Running a zoom info session regarding the proposed project/change to introduce the change would be beneficial."	Feedback noted and has been used to inform the Community Engagement Toolkit as referenced on page 14 – engagement resources.
Response 4. Recommended that Council communicates clear project engagement timelines to ensure that the community is well informed. Where possible, create a specific consultation group made up of community members for a more detailed consultation.	Feedback noted. The Draft Policy's Principles will guide the way Council plans and delivers engagement opportunities and activities.

Question: With regards to participation in a Community Consultation. What was your experience like? What could we do differently?	
Participant response to survey question	**Council Officer Recommendation**
Response 5. It was interactive and face to face, discussions were held in groups with people from a vast backgrounds	Feedback noted. The Draft Policy will help guide Council on how to reach various groups. This information will be used in the development of an engagement strategy and guided by: Our framework – page 10 how to engage and engagement process – page 13 delivering the engagement.
Response 6. "Online information sessions and surveys. Present expert information clearly and highlight best cases above populist ideas."	
Response 7. The experience brought many community stakeholders together. Opportunity to influence the decision making process was provided.	
Response 8. Listen to the community ideas and take note	Feedback noted. This feedback will be used to inform the engagement resources content.
Response 9. Listen to residents and their genuine concerns, re privacy, parking etc.	
Response 10. Seek input before policy design	Response noted as part of the Draft Policy Principle Responsiveness and to be considered as part of the Community Engagement toolkit.
Response 11. Provide responses to submissions and or opportunities for the community to understand the project better.	
Response 12. Council to consider more co-designing of projects, strengthen relationships, build trust, simplify the language used in Council documents and deliver authentic engagement.	Feedback noted and to be considered when developing monitoring and evaluation of engagement projects and the adopted Policy to support innovation and drive continuous improvement.

Question: What can we do to make it easier for you to participate?	
Participant response to survey question	**Council Officer Recommendation**
Response 13. Email more often	Feedback noted. Information will be used in the development of engagement strategy and will be guided by the Draft Policy: Our framework – page 10 how to engage and engagement process – page 13 delivering the engagement.
Response 14. Make the survey anonymous	
Response 15. Perhaps hearing about case studies on previous consultations	
Response 16. Just talk to people from community groups and we can respond on different matters	
Response 17. Short (1-3 question) online app surveys (not long surveys)	
Response 18. Brief messages, options to make it easy to make comment.	
Response 19. Ensure that it is promoted to social media and FB groups related to Brimbank.	
Response 20. Online with basic questions and a variety of question types including tick box and some open text including an option to give an opinion if it isn't reflected in the questions but is relevant	
Response 21. Be informed. Happy to know about what's happening via email.	
Response 22. 2-way In-person engagement (including virtual like zoom) and not communicating solely thru emails or tweets or surveys.	
Response 23. "Give as much notice as possible Face to Face"	
Response 24. AUSLAN INTREPRATOR	
Response 25. Have a range of ways to contribute	
Response 26. Online sessions, emails	

Question:
What can we do to make it easier for you to participate?

Participant response to survey question	Council Officer Recommendation
Response 27. Webinars	Feedback noted. Information will be used in the development of engagement strategy and will be guided by the Draft Policy: Our framework – page 10 how to engage and engagement process – page 13 delivering the engagement.
Response 28. Create local area based community consultation groups and involve Council staff. These groups will provide an opportunity for Council and the community to identify local based needs and solutions.	Comment noted and to be incorporated in the engagement resources content.
Response 29. Ensure council has the resident's interest at heart, and residents' concerns do not go unnoticed. Response 30. Input and participation needs to be realistic and pertinent. Responding to a wordy policy is not an easy task and limits the involvement of many.	Feedback noted. This feedback will be used to inform the engagement resources - page 14 of the Policy.
Response 31. Co-design the strategy. Use plain language and images rather than long winded text and jargon. Make your engagement accessible. Give more power to the community voice. Community engagement is some of the most difficult to reach engagement and you need to do it right as trust is paramount and takes a long time to build but can be quickly lost.	Feedback noted and additional text applied to page 10 of the Policy, section – how we engage.

Question: Do you have any other comments?	
Participant response to survey question	**Council Officer Recommendation**
Response 32. I would like to be supported to do community engagement work.	Comment noted.
Response 33. I'm not sure how much bcc engages with community in community languages	Comment noted and will be used to inform how we engage – page 10 of the Policy.
Response 34. Trying different ways to contact community. E.g. - sunshine pool sends text messages. This could apply Rate payers - sending links to the consultation page. Always with an option to opt out.	Comment noted and will be used to inform how we engage – page 10 of the Policy.
Response 35. It is important to enable all to be involved in community engagement this includes children as they have a lot to offer and are valuable members of the community who are often overlooked or not considered in Community Engagement.	
Response 36. Yes, Council needs to increase its community transparency – help the community understand decision making processes and the timelines required.	Comment noted. This feedback applies to the Draft policy Principles.
Response 37. To show respect to residents and not put down residents interest in their community.	Feedback noted. This feedback will be used to inform the engagement resources - page 14 of the Policy.
Response 38. Values are important - but ensuring they are upheld is more important. Respect should be maintained in the community. With regards the policy overall, there doesn't appear to be any mention of community volunteers. A very important stakeholder group who put a lot of time into the community, so should always be engaged with when appropriate contextually.	Additional comment noted. The role of various groups such as volunteers will be defined in the engagement strategy as guided by the Draft Policy Framework – who and how we engage.
Response 39. Increased Councillors including the Mayor correspondences with the community.	Comment noted.
Response 40. A lot of overlap in those principles and community trust should be strengthened. Co-designing of this strategy and others is crucial as this creates community ownerships.	Feedback noted and to be applied in the ongoing monitoring, evaluation and review of the adopted Policy.

Written Submission from a community member	Council Officer Recommendation
- Policy does not significantly reference engagement by the Community with Ward Councillors (individually or as a group) nor the role of the Mayor; - does not make provision for a responsive engagement process with existing/ongoing Community representative groups; - does not recognise the role or relevance of local non-profit, volunteer-based independent Community groups; - For Council standing-advisory or reference groups. Does not outline any Grievance procedures. The Draft Policy should establish the Mayor and Councillors as the most important 'community engagement' mechanism, rather than Council public relations online surveys and suchlike. Recommended that Council demonstrates good customer service skills at all times.	Feedback Noted. This relates to the Councillor Code of Conduct 2020 that defines how Councillors will behave and work with the Brimbank community, Councillor colleagues, and Council officers. https://www.brimbank.vic.gov.au/plans-policies-and-strategies/policies/councillor-code-conduct-2020 Defining stakeholders and their role to be considered/addressed when designing engagement projects. Grievance procedures to be defined as part of any reference group's terms of reference.