

Draft - Significance and Engagement Policy

Introduction

The decisions local authorities make affect their communities on a daily basis. Some decisions have greater significance than others. This policy explains how the Council will determine significance of matters. We know that Central Hawke's Bay will be stronger when we work together, as part of this we know that effective community engagement builds trust in Council decision making, as well as increasing Council's awareness of issues and ideas in the community. Council engages with the community during its everyday business using a range of informal methods. However, some Council decisions require a more structured form of engagement due to the significance that a matter has within the wider community, or for groups within the community.

Purpose of Policy

The purpose of the policy is:

- To enable the local authority and its communities to identify the degree of significance attached to particular issues, proposals, assets, decisions and activities; and
- To provide clarity about how the community can expect to be engaged in decisions about different issues, assets, or other matters; and
- To inform the Council from the beginning of a decision-making process about-
- The extent of any public engagement that is expected before a particular decision is made; and
- The form or type of engagement required.

The extent of significance and engagement is determined on a case-by-case basis. This policy is intended to guide decision-making on these matters.

General Approach to Determining Significance and Level of Engagement

The Council will follow a three-step process to inform decision-making:

1. Determine significance – the Council will use agreed criteria to decide if a matter is of higher or lower significance.
2. Link level of significance to level of engagement – the level of significance will link to a corresponding level of engagement to be undertaken.
3. Consider methods of engagement – each level of engagement will have a range of methods that the Council is able to choose from to undertake the engagement required. As well as the views of communities and affected and interested parties, there is a wide range of information sources, considerations and perspectives that informs the Council's decisions, including the requirements of Government policy, technical matters and the financial implications.

The three steps

1. Determine Significance

The Council is responsible for judging for itself how it achieves compliance with the decision making requirements of the LGA. This must be largely in proportion to the significance of the matters affected by decisions to be made.

The Council will assess the importance of an issue, proposal or decision on the basis of its likely impact on the people expected to be most affected by or to have an interest in the matter, as well as the Council's capacity to perform its role, and the financial and other costs of doing so.

All of the following criteria will be considered when determining the level (low to high) of significance of an issue, proposal or decision. The greater the cumulative impact of the decision as assessed by these criteria, the more significant the issue, proposal or decision will be:

- Number of people affected and/or with an interest;
- Level of impact on those people affected;
- Level of community interest already apparent for the issue, proposal or decision; or the potential to generate community interest;
- Level of impact on Māori, Māori culture and traditions - Significant decisions in relation to land or a body of water must take into account the relationship of Maori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral land, water, sites, waahi tapu, valued flora and fauna, and other taonga.
- Possible environmental, social and cultural impacts;
- Possible costs/risks to the Council, ratepayers and wider community of carrying out the decision;
- Possible benefits/opportunities to the Council, ratepayers and wider community of carrying out the decision;
- Level of impact on the capacity of the Council to carry out its role and functions;
- Whether the impact of a decision can be easily reversed;
- Whether the ownership or function of a strategic asset(s) is affected.

2. Link level of significance to level of engagement

The significance of the issue, proposal or decision will influence how much time, money and effort the Council will invest in exploring and evaluating options and obtaining the views of affected and interested parties. In linking the level of significance to the level of engagement it is important to find the right balance between the costs of engagement and the value it can add to decision-making.

The Council will consider the extent of community engagement that is necessary to understand the community's view before a particular decision is made and the form of engagement that might be required. This also includes the degree to which engagement is able to influence the decision and therefore the value of investing in engagement (e.g. if there is only one or very limited viable options such as a specific change required by new legislation).

Using the International Association of Public Participation engagement spectrum as a basis (see Appendix 1), the method(s) of engagement adopted by the Council before it makes a decision may depend on whether or not:

- A. The matter is of low or no significance (e.g. technical and/or minor amendments to a Council policy) and there may be a very small group of people affected by or with an interest in the decision;
- B. The matter is significant only to a relatively small group of people or is of low impact to many. They should be **informed** about the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions and/or **consulted** so that any concerns, alternatives and aspirations they have are understood and considered;
- C. The matter is significant not only to a small group of people particularly affected but also to a wider community that may have an interest in the decision to be made. They may be **informed**, **consulted** and/or **involved** to seek public input and feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.
- D. For more significant matters the Council may elect to **collaborate**, or partner, with a community in any aspect of a decision including the development of alternatives and the

identification of preferred solutions. This is more likely to occur where there is a distinct group of affected or particularly interested people.

Depending on the level of significance and the nature of the issue, proposal or decision being made, by using a range of engagement methods communities may be **empowered** to participate in the decision-making process.

3. Consider Methods of Engagement

There is a variety of ways in which the Council engages with the community.

- Once the level of significance of an issue, proposal or decision has been determined, the Council will consider the level and form of community engagement. Depending on the matter being considered and the stakeholders involved, the preferred method(s) or combination of engagement tools will be identified and applied to meet the goals of the specific engagement.
- The Council will build on existing relationships and networks with individuals and communities, and look to extend the range of parties involved in the community engagement as appropriate.
- The Council will consider engagement methods and tools relative to the level of significance. These will support communities' participation through an engagement spectrum approach, as set out in the following table.
- Differing levels and forms of engagement may be required during the varying phases of consideration and decision-making on an issue or proposal, and for different community groups or stakeholders. The Council will review the appropriateness and effectiveness of the engagement strategy and methods as the process proceeds.
- There may be occasions in which the Council chooses to carry out engagement at a level higher than that indicated by the significance of the decision as part of its commitment to promote participatory democracy.
- The Council will work to ensure the community is sufficiently informed to understand the issue(s) or proposal, options and impacts and has time to respond, so they are able to participate in engagement processes with confidence.

The type of community engagement undertaken will be proportionate to the significance of the matter and the number of affected residents. This is a judgement to be made on a case by case basis by the Council. Appendix 2 provides an overview of how significance and engagement link together and the types of engagement the community can expect.

Strategic Assets

An important objective of the Council is to achieve or promote outcomes that it believes are important to the current or future well-being of the community. Achieving these outcomes may require the provision of roads, water, wastewater and stormwater collection as well as libraries, reserves and other recreational facilities and community amenities.

Council-owned assets that provide these services are considered to be of strategic value and the Council has determined they need to be retained if its objective is to be met. These assets must be listed in the Council's Significance and Engagement policy. A decision to transfer the ownership or control of a strategic asset cannot be made unless it is explicitly provided for in the

Council's Long Term Plan (LTP) and the public is consulted through the Special Consultative Procedure (SCP).

The Central Hawke's Bay District Council owns a number of assets and assets managed "as a whole" that it considers to be strategic, however not all trading decisions made regarding these assets are regarded as significant nor do they affect the assets strategic nature.

The following assets (asset groups) are considered strategic and therefore significant:

- Infrastructural assets relating to roads, water, stormwater, and wastewater
- The network of parks, sports grounds and other recreational facilities
- The districts aquatic facilities, including the Waipawa Memorial Pool
- Solid waste facilities, including transfer stations and the Farm Road Landfill
- Retirement Housing, as a whole
- CHB District Libraries, as a whole
- Cemeteries
- Cultural facilities

Monitoring implementation

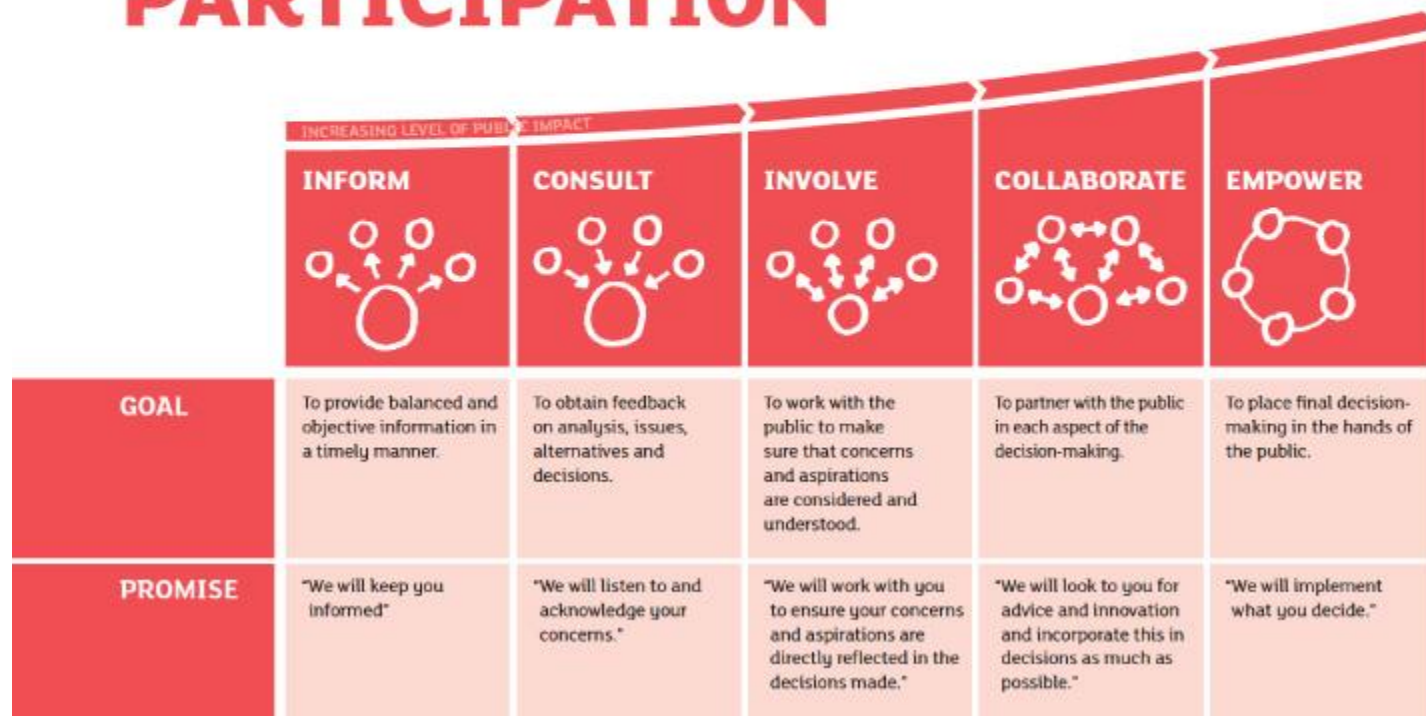
All reports by officers to Council seeking a decision will include a statement addressing the issue of significance. The report is to include a statement about how the relevant sections of the Local Government Act 2002 and the Significance and Engagement policy will be observed,

Notes:

- *This policy will not apply where, in the opinion of the Council, failure to make a decision urgently would result in unreasonable or significant damage to property, or risk to people's health and safety, or the loss of a substantial opportunity to achieve the Council's strategic objectives. Other policy and legislative requirements will still apply.*
- *In cases where legislation requires the Council to use the Special Consultative Procedure as set out in the Local Government Act 2002, that process will be used as a minimum requirement.*

Appendix 1 – IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

IAP2 SPECTRUM OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION



Appendix 2 – Examples of Engagement Activities (Adapted from IAP2 spectrum of engagement)

Engagement Level	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
What does it involve	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.
Examples of tools the Council might use <i>(Note: these tools may be applicable across many levels of engagement)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email newsletter to local communities and networks Information flyers to neighbourhoods Public notices/info in community newspapers, website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal submissions and hearings or the Special Consultative Procedure Focus groups Community meetings Online opportunities to submit ideas/feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshops Focus/stakeholder groups' meetings Public meetings, drop-in sessions Online surveys/forums 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External working groups (involving community experts) Community Advisory Groups (involving community representatives) Forums 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Binding referendum Local body elections Delegation of some decision-making to a community
When the community is likely to be involved	Once a decision is made and is being implemented.	Once the Council has determined an initial preferred position it would endeavour to provide the community with sufficient time to participate and respond.	The community or specific communities could be engaged throughout the process, or at specific stages of the process as appropriate.	The community or specific communities will be engaged from the outset, including the development of alternatives to the identification of the preferred solution.	The community or communities will be engaged throughout the process to ensure ownership of the development of alternatives, identification of the preferred solution(s) and delegated decision-making on the preferred solution.