



Council Policy Manual

WEST WIMMERA SHIRE COUNCIL

COUNCIL POLICY	
COMMUNICATIONS POLICY	Policy No:
	Adopted by Council: 19 May 2021
	Next review date: May 2026
Senior Manager:	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Responsible Officer:	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Functional Area:	Chief Executive Officer & Governance
Introduction & Background	<p>The Council will reinforce its commitment to enhancing communications and work with residents to foster increased community involvement in Council decision making.</p> <p>It is clear residents want to be more involved in the community and decisions which affect them; they want to have more influence on their future, and they are looking to the Shire to work with them to achieve this. This policy reinforces and continues to develop our partnership with our residents through communication pathways and deliberative community engagement as a way of improving Council's accountability to its community.</p>
Purpose & Objectives	<p>Council must adopt and maintain a community engagement policy and follow the community engagement principles as outlined in Section 56 of the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i>. Through Council adopting deliberative engagement practices with the community, Council will seek to consult with the community in developing the Community Vision, Council Plan, Financial Plan and Asset Plan, and continue to demonstrate a willingness to work closely with residents to identify a common vision for the Shire and to put that vision into action.</p>
Policy Details	
1.	<p>Definitions</p> <p>'CEO' means West Wimmera Shire Council Chief Executive Officer.</p> <p>'Communication' in the context of this policy includes all written, verbal, electronic and personal interactions by all staff and elected members with any member of our community, visitors, all levels of government and other agencies.</p> <p>'Considered' means thoughtful, respectful and with regard to the receiver of the information.</p> <p>'Timely' means occurring within a suitable amount of time or occurring at a suitable time, particularly from the perspective of the receiver of the communication.</p>



Council Policy Manual

WEST WIMMERA SHIRE COUNCIL

2.	<p>Timely, considered, open and honest communications</p> <hr/> <p>West Wimmera Shire Council is committed to timely, considered, open and honest communications.</p> <p>This commitment means we:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share knowledge and information (wherever legally possible). • Work to develop trust and positive relationships in our community. • Are proactive, innovative and creative communicators. • Will engage with our community using community engagement principles as outlined in Section 56 of the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i>. <p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate a transparent willingness to work in partnership with people and organisations. • Encourage local knowledge and input. • Build community ownership in Council projects. • Involve the community in our plans for improvement and share successes. • Continue professional development in community engagement and communication processes.
3.	<p>Principles</p> <hr/> <p>This policy is underpinned by the following principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good communication driving cultural change and improving performance. • All communication will consider and value community perspectives. • All communication will be in plain English. • Good communication is both a duty and an opportunity and is everyone's responsibility. • All communication matters – equally.
4.	<p>Purpose</p> <hr/> <p>The purpose of this policy and guidelines is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote an easy flow of communication between Council and community members. • Raise awareness of community issues and Council's role in them. • Boost public confidence in the Council. • Provide a mechanism for seeking and acting on feedback.



Council Policy Manual

WEST WIMMERA SHIRE COUNCIL

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness of Council’s procedures and responsibilities. • Tailor communication processes for targeted groups and projects.
5.	<p>Roles and Responsibility</p> <p>In accordance with Section 18(1b) of the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i>, the Mayor is the principal spokesperson for the Council. In addition to this, under Section 46 of the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i>, the CEO is responsible for supporting the Mayor and Councillors in the performance of their role and this will occasionally involve the Chief Executive Officer speaking on Council issues. Senior Managers may speak on operational matters relating to their specific department, with prior approval.</p> <p>The Mayor may delegate to Councillors to comment on specific areas of interest or committees that they are representing Council on. Councillors are reminded that when making statements on behalf of Council, that they are required to state the position of Council on a particular item or issue. If the statements that they make are their own and not necessarily the collective view of the Council, they must make that clear via a disclaimer.</p> <p>Media inquiries may require a degree of research and this will dictate the response time. Where possible, media inquiries will be responded to as soon as possible.</p> <p>The CEO will ensure that appropriate processes are in place and adhered to by staff communicating with the media.</p> <p>It is the responsibility of senior management to ensure that appropriate and targeted consultation on community issues begins as early as possible to allow for community engagement before decisions are made.</p>
6.	<p>Implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council will commit to timely, considered, transparent and honest communication. • Council will continue to generate media releases, where appropriate. • Council will continue to conduct community forums at Council meetings held three times per year at small town locations. • Council will encourage community groups to include senior members of staff and Councillors in their meetings and planning, where appropriate.
7.	<p>Methods</p> <p>Consultation and communication are the key means of understanding what our community wants and the actions that we may need to undertake.</p> <p>Communication with the community can be via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Media releases ○ Advertisements



Council Policy Manual

WEST WIMMERA SHIRE COUNCIL

- Brochures
- Fact sheets
- Annual report
- Photographs
- Council plan
- Public notice boards
- Signs
- Letter box drops
- Community/ service club newsletters
- Council forms/ applications
- Written material in plain English
- Letters via direct mail
- Invitations to attend council meetings.
- Electronic:
 - Media interviews, press, radio and television
 - Website
 - Surveys
 - Email mailing lists
 - Information and help lines
 - Telephone communication
 - Records management
 - Customer Requests system
 - Social Media platforms
 - Livestreamed or recorded Council meetings.
- Face to face:
 - Council meetings
 - Community forums
 - Councillors Forums
 - Advisory committees to Council
 - Greater accessibility to senior staff and Councillors
 - Events
 - Public forums
 - Workshops
 - Partnerships with other organisations



Council Policy Manual

WEST WIMMERA SHIRE COUNCIL

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Opportunities to make submissions ○ Presentations ○ Public displays ○ Onsite inspections.
8.	<p>Monitoring and Evaluation</p> <p>This policy will be monitored against the Council Plan throughout the year and will be reviewed at a time period to be determined by Council. Evaluation will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Attendance at community forums. ● Number of people involved in working groups. ● <i>Annual Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey</i> results.
9.	<p>Supporting documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Councillor Code of Conduct Policy ● Staff Code of Conduct ● Community Engagement Policy ● Media Relations Policy ● Council Election Period Policy ● Customer Service Charter ● <i>Local Government Act (2020)</i> ● <i>Gender Equality Act (2020)</i>
10.	<p>Gender Equality</p> <p>A Gender Impact Assessment (as defined in the Gender Equality Act 2020) has been conducted on this policy, and where appropriate, changes have been made to the policy to address the principles of the Gender Equality Act 2020.</p>

Policy Adopted:	19/05/2021		
Policy Reviewed:	Review Date: May 2026		
Policy Reviewed:			
Policy Reviewed:			