

6.3.2 Updated Community Engagement Policy

Responsible GM: Nigel Higgins
Author: Mark Carter

Recommendation(s)

That Council review and endorse the Community Engagement Policy.

Attachments

1. DRAFT Community Engagement Policy 2021-2025 [6.3.2.1 - 14 pages]
2. Community Engagement Policy infographic [6.3.2.2 - 2 pages]
3. Your Community - Your Say Data Report - January 2021 [6.3.2.3 - 22 pages]

Executive Summary

The Victorian Local Government Act 2020 requires all Local Governments to have a Community Engagement Policy in place by 1 March 2021. The policy is to detail how community engagement is undertaken including specifically include how deliberative engagement practices will be applied.

As part of the policy review consultation has also taken place to gain an understanding of how Cardinia community members would like to be informed of, and included in, Council's decision making. This information has influenced the new policy and updates to Council's engagement processes.

The Draft Community Engagement Policy was placed on Creating Cardinia for the community to review and provide feedback from 16 November to 23 December 2020 and amendments to the policy have been made based on the feedback and is now presented to Council for endorsement.

Background

The Community Engagement Policy and accompanying handbook was updated in 2019 to include latest information based on a VAGO audit of Council's community engagement practice.

With the introduction of the Victorian Local Government Act 2020, it is a requirement that all Councils have an endorsed Community Engagement Policy by 1 March 2021 that outlines their approach to engagement including deliberative engagement practices. Deliberative engagement can take many forms (Forums, Focus Groups, Deliberative Polling, Citizens Juries) however has some common elements that must be met.

- The process of selecting participants is as closely representative of the community as possible
- A clear scope and remit is developed and communicated to participants
- Quality, balanced, information is provided to inform the process
- Appropriate time is provided for the group to consider and make a conclusion
- It is clear how their input has affected the decision-making process

Deliberative engagement practice is required to be applied to at a minimum for the development of the Community Vision, Council Plan, Financial Plan and Asset Plan (due June 2022). The Draft Policy has been developed to address the requirements within the Victorian Local Government Act 2020 and considered feedback from the community in relation to communication and delivery methods.

The requirements of the Local Government Act include;

- 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 that is the subject of the community engagement.
- Participants in community engagement are entitled to reasonable 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.

This policy will be applied to all community engagement activities including deliberative engagement utilised in the development of the Community Vision, Council Plan, Financial Plan and Asset Plan.

Policy Implications

This policy will replace the current *Community Engagement Policy 2019* and applies to all areas of Council operations, covering all community engagement activities undertaken by Councillors, staff, volunteers, and contractors/consultants acting as representatives of Council.

Relevance to Council Plan

1.1 Our People - Access to a variety of services for all

1.1.1 Continually review services to ensure those provided by Council meet community needs.

2.1 Our Community - Our diverse community requirements met

2.1.1 Monitor and research emerging community trends to help plan for the needs of residents.

2.1.5 Work with local communities to review and implement township strategies that contribute to meeting the needs of those communities.

2.2 Our Community - Engaged communities

2.2.1 Provide a range of opportunities that encourage community participation in Council policy and strategy development.

2.2.2 Communicate the activities and decisions of Council to the residents in a variety of ways.

2.2.3 Embrace and support community leadership.

2.3 Our Community - Increased levels of community participation

2.3.3 Strengthen Council's community engagement through the development, implementation and promotion of effective practices.

Climate Emergency Consideration

The use of this Community Engagement Policy will help Council with climate emergency considerations particularly through the effective use of online communication.

Consultation/Communication

It was a requirement of the Victorian Local Government Act 2020 that community engagement be undertaken to develop the Community Engagement Policy.

Due to COVID-19 all consultation occurred online with a Creating Cardinia page branded 'Your Community, Your Say'. The community was provided background to the policy and the opportunity to complete a survey to provide input. A child friendly sub-page was also created to encourage higher participation from children in the development of the policy. Two 'virtual drop-in' sessions were also offered as part of the engagement period however no registrations were received. Focus group discussions were undertaken with identified groups including: Access and Inclusion committee, Youth Council and Ageing Well Alliance.

Over 177 Community members contributed to Round 1 of the consultation (the web page was viewed 1396 times) with children being the largest single cohort. The attached data report outlines the results of round one of the consultations which will be utilised to inform future Engagement Plan development in relation to choice of communication and engagement methods. Other qualitative feedback received has been incorporated into addressing the local government act requirements.

Exhibition of the draft policy (Round 2) was undertaken between 16 November to 23 December 2020, the Creating Cardinia page had 259 views and only 2 community feedback contributions.

Promotion of the opportunity to contribute was undertaken via several internal departments to reach the community members they work with including children, young people families, seniors, people with disability and culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Social media advertising was utilised across the consultations. Advertisements were also placed in Connect magazine and three local papers in both rounds to assist in reaching those that do not use social media or visit the council website. The opportunity to provide feedback on the draft was promoted to all community members that registered for updates (22 individuals). Feedback has been considered and alterations have been made to create the final draft of the policy for endorsement.

Financial and Resource Implications

The inclusion of deliberative engagement practices for the development of the Community Vision, Council Plan, Financial Plan and Asset Plan will require appropriate resources to develop and deliver more in-depth processes.

There will be a requirement to allocate appropriate resourcing to undertake higher levels of engagement across other Council consultations. Resources will depend on the engagement scope and communication methods utilised for each project.

Conclusion

The Draft Community Engagement Policy meets the requirements of the Victorian Local Government Act 2020 and will provide a framework for Council's community engagement activities. The policy is required to be endorsed by Council before 1 March 2021, to meet the Victorian Local Government Act requirements.

Cardinia Shire Council



Community Engagement Policy 2021-24

Policy Owner	Community Strengthening Business Unit
Adopted by	(TBC)
Adoption date	(TBC) 2021
Review date	(TBC) 2024
Publication	Intranet and public website
Version number	DRAFT 1.2

Prepared by:

Cardinia Shire Council
Community Strengthening Unit

Published January 2021

© Cardinia Shire Council 2020
ABN: 32 210 906 807
20 Siding Avenue, Officer

PO Box 7, Pakenham Vic 3810
(DX 81006)

Phone: 1300 787 624
Email: mail@cardinia.vic.gov.au
Web: cardinia.vic.gov.au

Contents

1	Introduction	5
1.1	What is community engagement?	5
1.2	Purpose of the Community Engagement Policy	5
1.3	Scope of the Community Engagement Policy	5
2	Community engagement guiding principles and frameworks	6
2.1	Community engagement model	6
2.2	Engagement values	7
2.3	VAGO public participation principles	8
3	Community engagement planning and delivery	9
3.1	When will Council undertake community engagement?	9
3.2	Who will Council engage?	11
3.3	Ensuring inclusiveness	11
3.4	How will Council engage?	10
3.5	Local Government Act 2020	11
3.6	Deliberative engagement	13
4	Responsibilities	13
5	Legislative requirements	14
6	Evaluation and review	14
7	Related documents	14

Definitions

Community

Individuals who have a connection to Cardinia Shire through living, working or undertaking regularly recreation within the municipality.

Community engagement

Community engagement is the process Council undergoes using a variety of mediums to exchange information with the community with the aim of gathering data and ideas to make decisions or take action.

Engagement handbook

Council's Engagement Handbook is an operational document that contains further guidance, templates and tools for planning, delivering and evaluating community engagement activities to meet the requirements of this policy.

Community Engagement Plan

The Community Engagement Plan is utilised by Council to document the process of community engagement and it's outcomes to meet the requirements of this policy.

IAP2 (International Association for Public Participation Australasia)

IAP2 is an international member association which seeks to promote and improve the practice of public participation or community and stakeholder engagement, incorporating individuals, governments, institutions and other entities that affect the public interest.

Stakeholders

Groups, individuals or organisations that would be affected by or highly interested in a decision made by Council.

VAGO (Victorian Auditor General's Office)

VAGO regularly undertakes audits of functions of Council, including community engagement activities.

Deliberative Engagement

Deliberative engagement is the process of bringing together a group of individuals who are as closely representative population of the community as practically possible. This group considers relevant facts from multiple points of view over a period of time, identifying options, and coming to a group decision.

1 Introduction

1.1 What is community engagement?

Community engagement is a process whereby Council uses a variety of methods to proactively seek out information from the community, including their values, concerns, ideas and aspirations. Where possible Council will include the community in the development of solutions and work together with them on the delivery of identified initiatives. This establishes an ongoing partnership, ensuring that community members continue to shape Council's decision making and implementation process.

Engagement assists in establishing relationships that facilitate meaningful dialogue and outcomes in communities such as improved services, facilities, policy and infrastructure.

Council recognises that councillors, council staff and volunteers engage with the community continually and often informally this may be in the form of conversations where feedback is received.

Community engagement requires the involvement of those affected in the decision-making process. The level of involvement varies from providing information to delegating the responsibility of decision making to the community.

It is important to note that there are several legislative requirements that articulate when and how community engagement occurs. Where community engagement is mandated, Council will adhere to the requirements as set out in the relevant act but where possible, Council will aim to go above and beyond the minimum standard to achieve best practice.

1.2 Purpose of the Community Engagement Policy

Cardinia Shire Council Community Engagement Policy is an overarching document that provides guidance, structure and accountability to Council's community engagement practices.

The policy:

- has been prepared in line with the requirements outlined in the Victorian Local Government Act (2020).
- responds to the community feedback sought over August and September 2020 regarding Council's Community Engagement Policy and engagement processes.
- articulates Council's commitment to undertaking best-practice high quality community engagement activities to receive input, feedback and ideas from the community on Council projects, services, plans, policies, strategies, and other Council decisions that may affect them.
- establishes guiding principles to ensure the community has the opportunity to contribute to the conversation to assist Council in making more informed decisions that are responsive, representative and relevant to the Cardinia Shire community.
- informs Council staff in conjunction with the *Cardinia Shire Council Community Engagement Handbook* which includes tools to assist Council officers to identify who may require focussed engagement, including particular community demographics and key stakeholder groups.

1.3 Scope of the Community Engagement Policy

This policy applies to all areas of Council and covers all community engagement activities undertaken by councillors, senior management, staff, volunteers and contractors or consultants acting as representatives of Council.

2 Community engagement guiding principles and frameworks

There are 3 main elements that form part of Council’s Community engagement model.

Element	Chosen model
1. Public participation influence	IAP2 Spectrum Public Participation
2. Engagement Values	IAP2 Spectrum Core Values
3. Public participation principles	VAGO Public Participation in Government Decision-making Better Practice Guide

The IAP2 spectrum, IAP2 values and the VAGO public participation principles underpin the development of engagement activities outlined in this policy.

2.1 Community engagement framework

Cardinia Shire Council uses the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation as the core model for its community engagement activities.

The spectrum depicts 5 levels of increasing influence that the public can have on an outcome or decision.

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decision.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public issues and concerns 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 issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advise and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
EXAMPLE TOOLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fact sheets • Websites • Open houses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public comment • Focus groups • Surveys • Public meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops • Deliberate polling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen Advisory committees • Consensus building • Participatory • Decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen juries • Ballots • Delegated • Decisions

Source: IAP2 Australasia

Council recognises that community engagement can occur at any or all of the levels contained in the spectrum and has adopted this method as part of this policy. Council will determine the most appropriate engagement level required.

2.2 Engagement values

IAP2 Spectrum core values underpin the way in which Council undertakes community engagement. These include:

Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.

Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.

Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.

Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.

Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.

Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

Source IAP2 Australasia

2.3 Public participation principles

The VAGO *Public Participation in Government Decision-making Better Practice Guide* also sets out key public participation principles which further inform the process of development and delivery of Council's community engagement practice, including:

Responsiveness

- Identified impacts of decisions on the community and stakeholders are identified
- Opportunities and challenges are identified to assist in creating higher participation
- Engagement input is utilised and responded to in a timely and constructive manner
- Continual improvement of engagement practice

Transparency and Integrity

- Ensure those affected by the decision understand the scope of the engagement activity and any constraints
- Address community and stakeholder concerns in an honest and forthright way and communicate results back to the community in a way they understand.

Openness

- Embed all decision-making processes an openness to appropriately understand and incorporate the views of those affected by decisions.
- Provide access to all relevant information about the decision in a manner that participants can understand, so that their contributions can be fully informed.

Accountability

- Be clear about the scope and objectives of the engagement process.
- Demonstrate that the results and outcomes are consistent with the commitment made at the outset
- Be clear about the contribution participants will be asked to make and their responsibilities.
- Provide appropriate time and resources to ensure those affected can participate in a meaningful way.

Inclusiveness

- Make every reasonable effort to include the stakeholder groups and community members affected by a pending decision.
- Make reasonable adjustments where necessary to remove barriers to participation and ensure an inclusive approach.
- Provide appropriate time and resources to ensure those who are affected can participate in a meaningful way.
- Be aware and take into account the needs of diverse communities to be able to participate in a meaningful way.

Awareness

- Being aware and taking into account any legislation that should shape the community engagement approach

Council has adopted The IAP2 spectrum, IAP2 values and the VAGO public participation principles to apply to the development and delivery of engagement activities.

3 Community engagement planning and delivery

Council undertakes community engagement on a regular basis both formally and informally. There are also several legislative requirements that articulate when, how and for how long community engagement occurs.

3.1 Community Engagement Plan

A community engagement plan provides a framework that is to be followed when resolving on the important elements of community engagement.

The exact nature and details of the community engagement plan will depend on:

- the issue or policy being considered,
- the objectives of the engagement,
- timeframes,
- resources
- levels of concern or interest in the topic under consideration.

As part of the early stages of development contact is to be made with Council’s community engagement staff to help identify the ‘target audiences’ for Council’s engagement activities, and to ensure there are opportunities for the broader community to contribute and have their voices heard.

Council will articulate how responses will be collated and considered, including acknowledgement of the privacy of the information collected.

Community engagement involves a variety of consultation and promotional methods suited to the individual or group involved. These can range from informal discussions to formal community meetings, focus groups, workshops, online feedback, deliberative processes and other creative approaches. In some circumstances, Council will also support community members advocating on issues themselves.

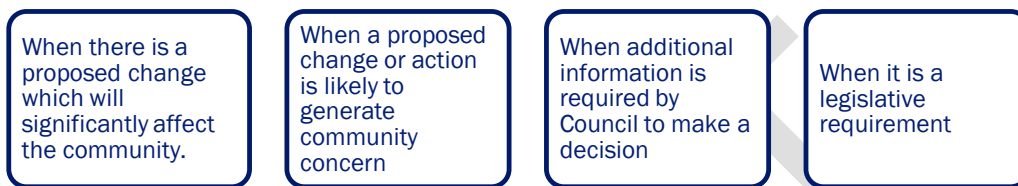
Careful consideration is undertaken as part of the engagement plan process to decide on the most appropriate level of engagement and methods based on the following:



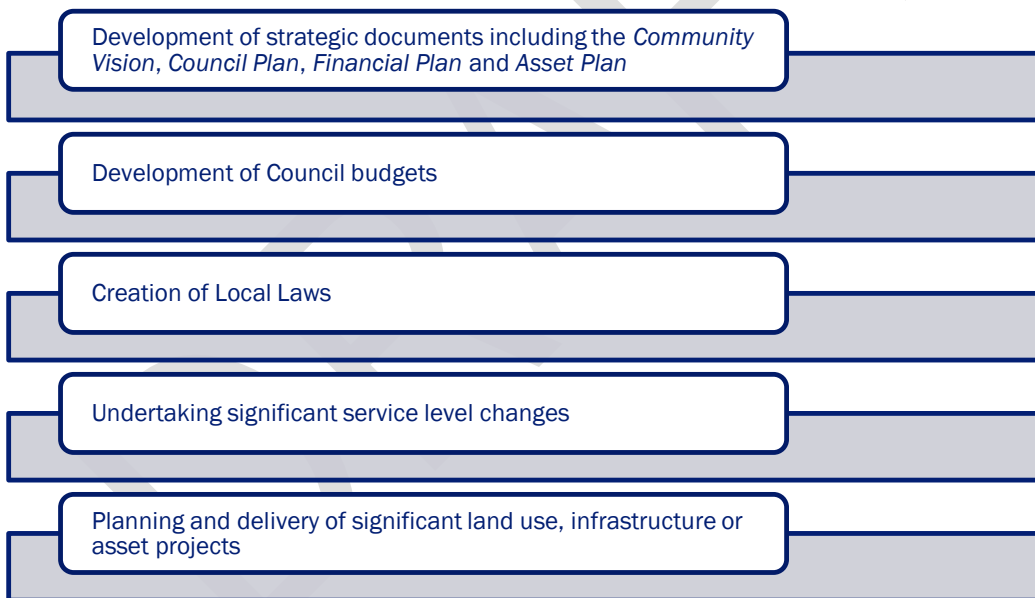
3.2 When is community engagement required?

While it is not practical to engage with the community on every issue, Council commits to ensuring that the community is as well informed as they can be on major issues, plans and projects. This can only be achieved if the community has access to the necessary information to form an opinion and provide input through a community engagement process. The direct input from the community enhances Council’s decision-making processes by making it more relevant and transparent.

To ensure Council engages consistently across all divisions, the following triggers have been identified for when community engagement should occur.

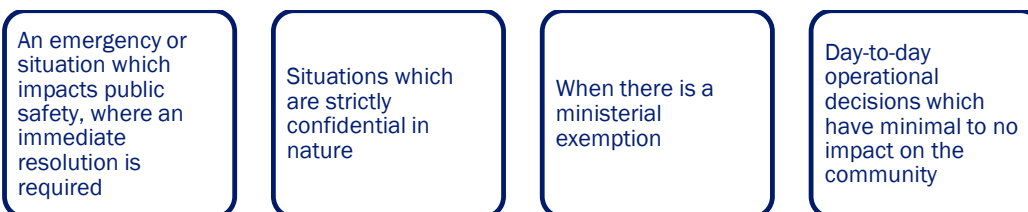


Specific examples where community engagement will occur include but are not limited to:



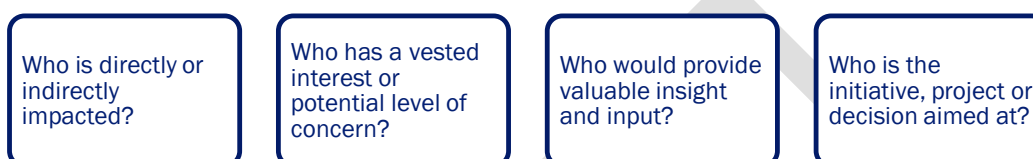
In addition, Council may elect to schedule a set number of general engagement activities throughout the year that are not project-specific, as a way of gathering community feedback that can be of use to the whole organisation.

The following are some circumstances where community engagement may not occur.



3.3 Who will Council engage?

Most community engagement opportunities will be open to the wider community to ensure transparency, accessibility and inclusivity. However, there may also be instances where there is a need to focus on a particular group or groups. Some considerations are:



Cardinia Shire Council Community Engagement Handbook includes tools to assist Council officers to identify who may require focussed engagement, including particular community demographics and key stakeholder groups.

Council's community engagement staff will assist project owners to identify the 'target audiences' for Council's engagement activities and promotional avenues to ensure project owners provide opportunities for the broader community to contribute and have their voices heard where appropriate.

A key to securing broad participation in engagement process is effective communication of the opportunity to contribute. Regular formal and informal consultation assists Council to identify how to promote more efficiently and effectively to all segments of the community.

3.4 Ensuring inclusiveness

Council will ensure that all reasonable measures are put in place to assist in securing participation from all sections of the community including but not limited to: children, young people, seniors, people with a disability, community members who identify as LGBTIQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, or those who belong to culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. In many instances, this will include adapting communication and engagement activities to better suit the needs of particular groups and increase participation.

3.5 Victorian Local Government Act 2020

The *Victorian Government Act 2020* sets out five key principles for councils to undertake community engagement activities. Council commits to undertaking actions to ensure these principles are met, including:

Community engagement process must have a clearly defined objective and scope

- Community engagement plans clearly define the purpose and outcomes sought from the engagement process.
- The scope of the engagement is well defined throughout the engagement plan, all engagement activities, and within appropriate communication material to articulate the level to which the community can contribute to and influence the decision making process.

Participants in community engagement must have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation

- Council provides sufficient time for community members and stakeholders to receive information about the opportunity to contribute and provide their input.
- Community members receive clear, relevant and timely information about the decision being made to better inform their participation.
- Engagement processes use a variety of communication methods to better reach all target groups, stakeholders and general community.

Participants in community engagement must be representative of the persons and groups affected by the matter that is the subject of the community engagement.

- Undertake a process of identifying target cohorts and key stakeholders using Council's *Community Engagement Handbook* tools, supported by the community engagement officer.
- Support the inclusion of all affected groups in the community wherever possible including (but not limited to) children, young people, seniors, people with a disability, community members who identify as LGBTIQ+, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, or those who belong to culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. In many instances this may require providing targeted communication and engagement approaches for these groups, informed by consultation.
- Where appropriate Council will consult with representative groups and committees in the community to receive their input on a particular issue or decision.

Participants in community engagement are entitled to reasonable support to enable meaningful and informed engagement

- Formal and informal consultation with community members is undertaken to better understand preferred communication and engagement methods to improve levels of participation from all sectors of the community.
- Council identifies, considers and responds to potential barriers to participation in community by adapting communication materials and engagement methods or providing additional supports as required. Where possible, Council will remove any identified access, literacy, cultural or other barriers that could affect participation from community members.

Participants in community engagement are informed of the ways in which the community engagement process will influence Council decision making

- Council clearly explains the scope of the engagement to community members through promotional material and engagement activities, including the level to which they can influence the decision being made.

- A variety of communication methods are used to inform participants and the wider community of the final outcome and in which ways their input informed the final decision.

3.6 Deliberative engagement

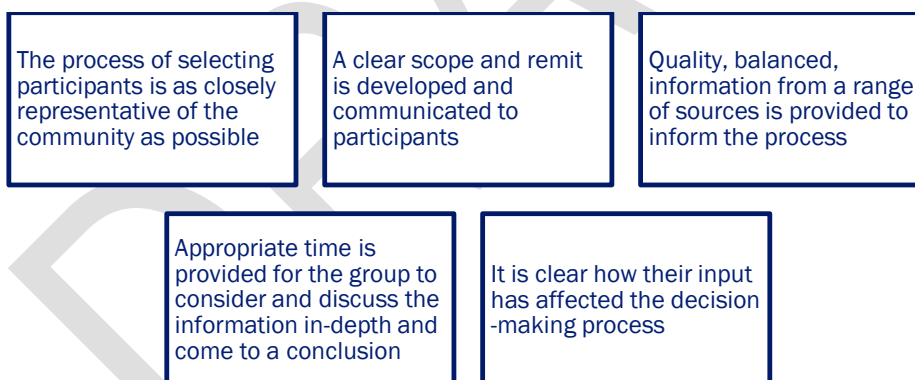
Deliberative engagement is the process of bringing together a group of individuals who are as closely representative population of the community as practically possible. This group considers relevant facts from multiple points of view over a period of time, identifying options, and coming to a group decision.

Deliberative engagement is a method used in the higher levels of the IAP2 spectrum (involve, collaborate and empower). Participants within a deliberative engagement process will be provided with a defined scope and remit for their activities and will be provided with a clear understanding of how their involvement shaped the decision-making process.

Deliberative engagement practices will be applied by Council as part of requirements under the *Victorian Local Government Act 2020*, including consultation on the *Community Vision*, *Council Plan*, *Financial Plan* and *Asset Plan*.

Deliberative engagement may also be identified by Council as an appropriate method to engage with the community on other decisions to be made.

A range of deliberative engagement methods are available to utilise and each process will be developed to meet the specific need, taking into consideration available resources, timing and applying the IAP2 spectrum to identify the level to which the community can influence the final decision. Any use of deliberative engagement activities will be outlined in the community engagement plan and will include the following elements:



4 Responsibilities

All Council staff, councillors, volunteers and contractors or consultants are required to undertake the development of a community engagement plan including consultation with the community engagement staff when an engagement is required.

The community engagement plan and any accompanying communication plan must be approved by the appropriate line manager before commencement of the activities.

The *Community Engagement Handbook* is made available to all councillors, senior management, staff, volunteers and contractors and consultants acting as representatives of Council. The handbook provides in-depth guidance on how to undertake community

engagement activities including templates, resources, tools and further information on when, how and who to engage.

5 Legislative requirements

There are several legislative requirements that articulate when and how community engagement occurs. These include, but are not limited to:

- *Victorian Local Government Act 2020*
- *Planning and Environment Act 1987*
- *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*
- *Road Management Act 2004*
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- *Child Safety Act 2015*
- *Public Administration Act 2004*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*
- *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2004*
- *The Commission for Children and Young People Child Safe Standards*
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*

Where community engagement is mandated, Council will adhere to the requirements as set out in the relevant act but where possible, Council aims to go beyond the minimum standard to achieve best practice.

6 Evaluation and review

Through the adoption of this policy, Council commits to undertaking regular and consistent evaluation and review of community engagement promotion, activities and processes through:

- ongoing implementation of the evaluation methodology and associated engagement planning, evaluation and reporting.
- continual monitoring of community engagement plans submitted for approval, their delivery and outcomes.
- undertaking informal and formal consultation to receive feedback from the community about the communication and engagement approaches undertaken by council to assist in implementing continual improvement.

7 Related documents

Type of document	Title
Guidelines / Procedure	Community engagement handbook

Your community, your say

Developing our *Community Engagement Policy*

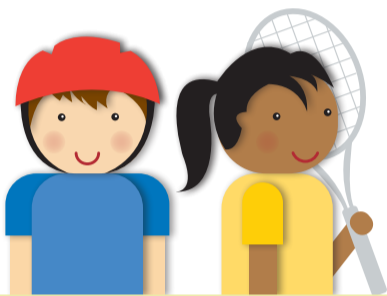
We heard from 175 community members over August and September 2020. Your feedback helped us develop Council's *Community Engagement Policy* and engagement processes.

Council's draft *Community Engagement Policy* highlights the importance of using a variety of communication and engagement methods to effectively reach community members who would be affected by or have an interest in the decision being made.

You told us your preferred ways to hear about opportunities to have input into Council's decisions and how you would like to contribute. Your top responses are represented in the infographic below.

Top 3 ways for us to communicate with you

Children (under 12)



1
School newsletters



2
Email



3
Online/
social media



Young people (12–25 years)



1
School communications



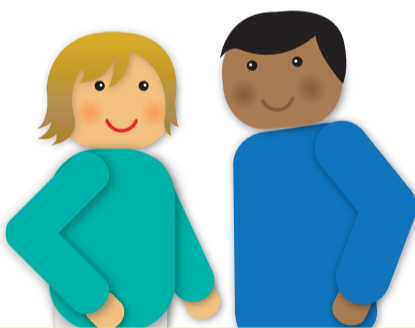
2
Connect magazine



3
Text messages



Adults



1
Social media



2
Email



3
Mail



Seniors (55+)



1
Email



2
Connect magazine

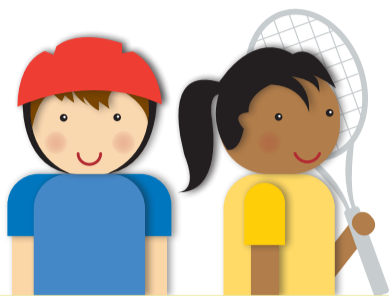


3
Website/online



Top 3 ways you want to provide input and feedback to us

Children (under 12)



1
Online surveys
and submissions



2
Drawing activities



3
Interactive
games



Young people (12–25 years)



1
Online surveys
and submissions



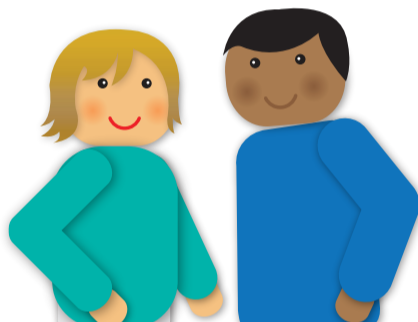
2
Face-to-face
discussion



3
Paper surveys



Adults



1
Online surveys
and submissions



2
Face-to-face
discussion



3
Paper surveys



Seniors (55+)



1
Face-to-face
discussion



2
Paper surveys



3
Online surveys
and submissions



Your top 3 themes for Council's engagement process

We also asked how we could make Council's engagement process more inclusive, transparent and accessible. Here are the top 3 themes we heard in priority order:



Closing the loop by sharing the result of engagement undertaken with the community and how it affected the decision



Consulting directly with community members and townships on decisions that impact them



Including the community in the early stages of the decision-making process

Council's draft *Community Engagement Policy* incorporates the above feedback by providing guidance on who to consult, when to consult, and the need to inform the community of consultation results and final outcomes.

Cardinia Shire Council
Civic Centre
20 Siding Avenue, Officer
PO Box 7
Pakenham 3810
(DX 81006 Pakenham)

Phone: 1300 787 624
Email: mail@cardinia.vic.gov.au
Web: www.cardinia.vic.gov.au



National Relay Service (NRS)
TTY: 133 677 (ask for 1300 787 624)
Speak and Listen (speech-to-speech relay):
1300 555 727 (ask for 1300 787 624)

Translator Interpretation Service
131 450 (ask for 1300 787 624)



Your Community, Your Say

Community Engagement Policy Consultation Data Report

Background

As part of the requirement of the Local Government Act 2020 community engagement was undertaken to develop an updated Community Engagement Policy. The current Community Engagement Policy was last updated and endorsed in July 2019, along with the Community Engagement Handbook to meet recommendations of a 2017 VAGO audit.

Due to COVID-19, all consultation occurred online with a Creating Cardinia page branded 'Your Community, Your Say' created to provide the opportunity for the community to complete a survey to input into the policy and handbook development.

A child friendly sub-page was created to encourage higher participation from children in the development of the policy.

Two 'virtual drop-in' sessions were also offered as part of the engagement period, however no registrations were received.

Focus group discussions were undertaken with identified groups including, Access and Inclusion committee, Youth Council and Ageing Well Alliance.

Feedback was received from 175 participants via:

- Online community survey
- Child survey (online)
- Attendance at Age Friendly Alliance, Youth Council and Access and inclusion committee
- Phone calls

Alongside the community consultation, an internal survey was also undertaken to gain feedback from Council staff in relation to the current Community Engagement framework to assist in improving the process at the same time as creating the new policy.

The end of this report also details the feedback received from the exhibition of the draft policy from 16 November to 23 December 2020.

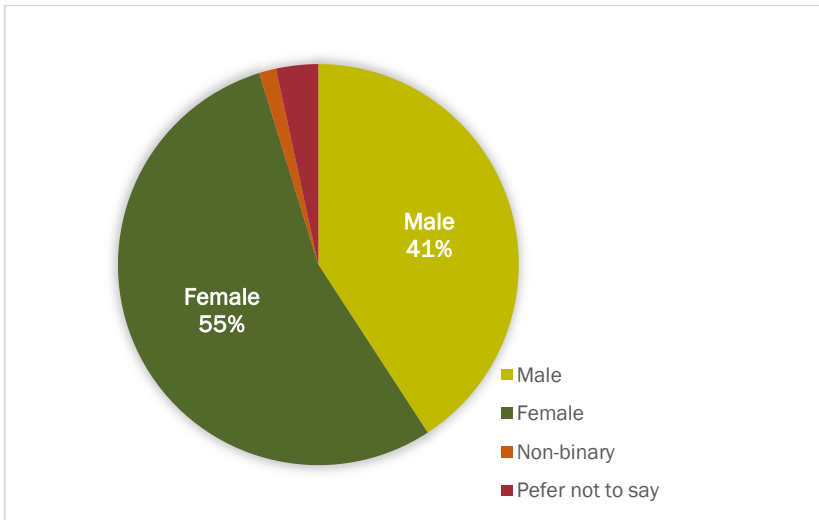
Data Breakdown

The data received has been broken down into the following groups so that it can be utilised to inform the policy and communication and engagement methods when the cohort is identified as a target audience.

- Children under 12
- Young People 13-24 years old
- Adults
- Seniors over 55 years old

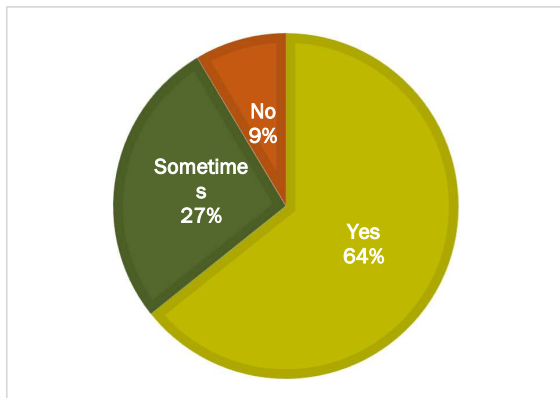
These sections display how each of these cohorts would like to have the opportunity to contribute and outcomes communicated to them, which engagement methods they would prefer and their main areas of interest. This data will assist in tailoring engagement plans to target audiences more effectively.

Overall participation by gender

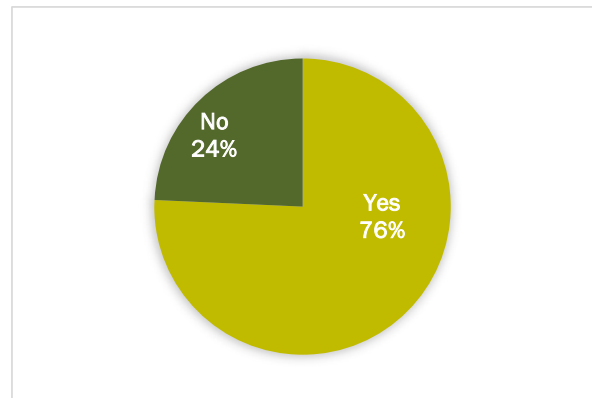


Data Analysis - Children 0-12 years

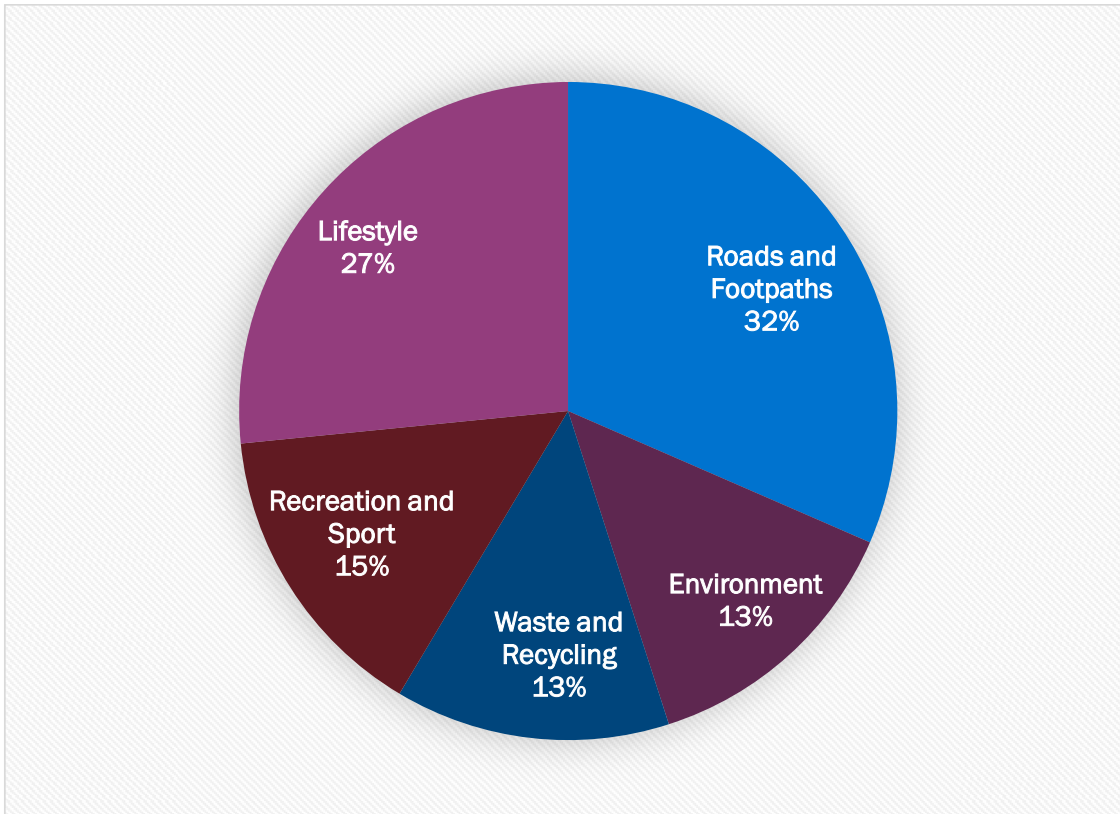
When there are decisions to be made in your community would you like to have a say?



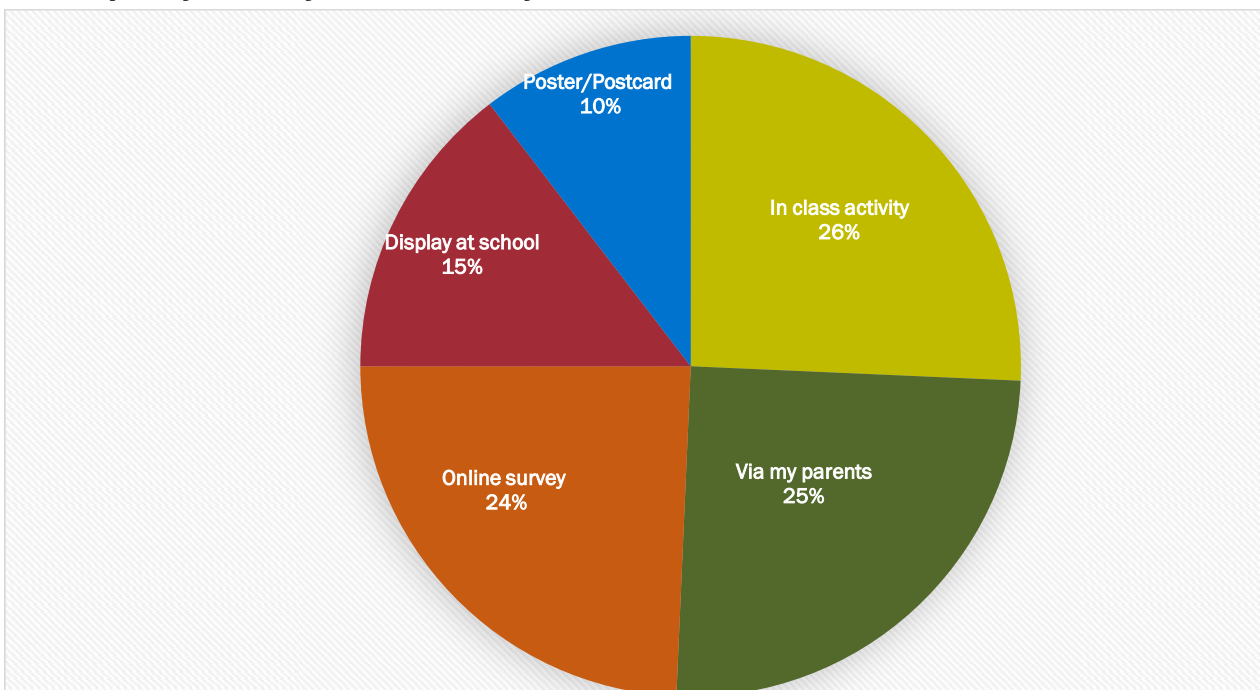
If you have shared your ideas and feedback with Cardinia Shire Council, would you like to be kept up to date with what happens next?



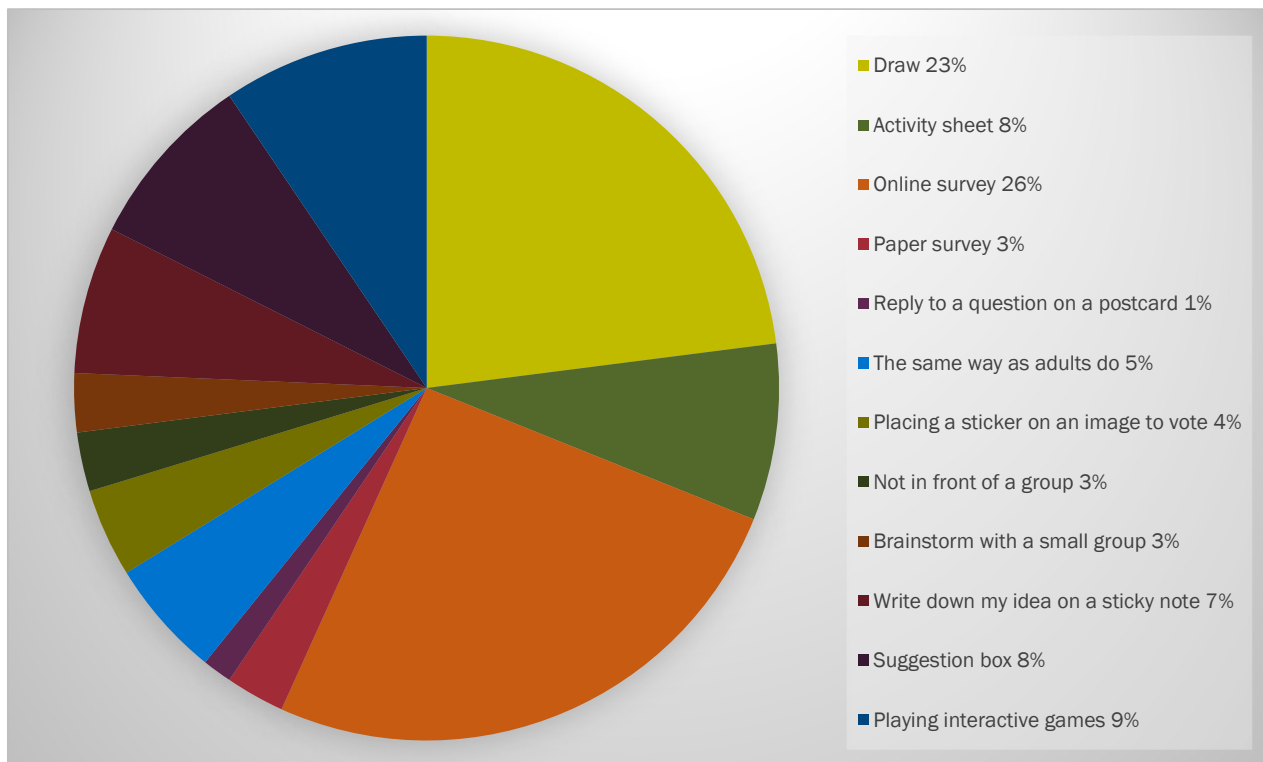
What type of things would you like adults to ask your thoughts and ideas on when making changes to your community?



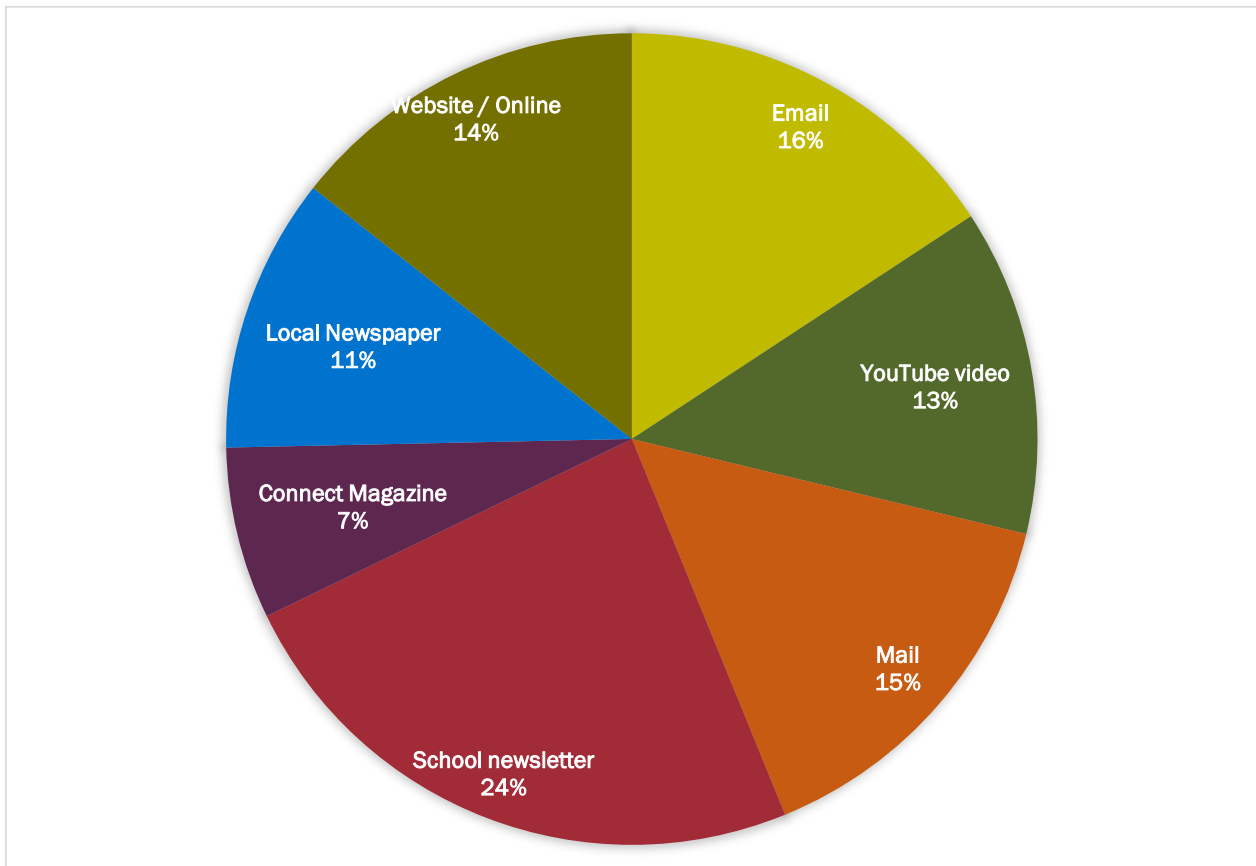
How could Cardinia Shire Council have better conversations with you about decisions that impact you and your community?



How do you like to share your feedback?

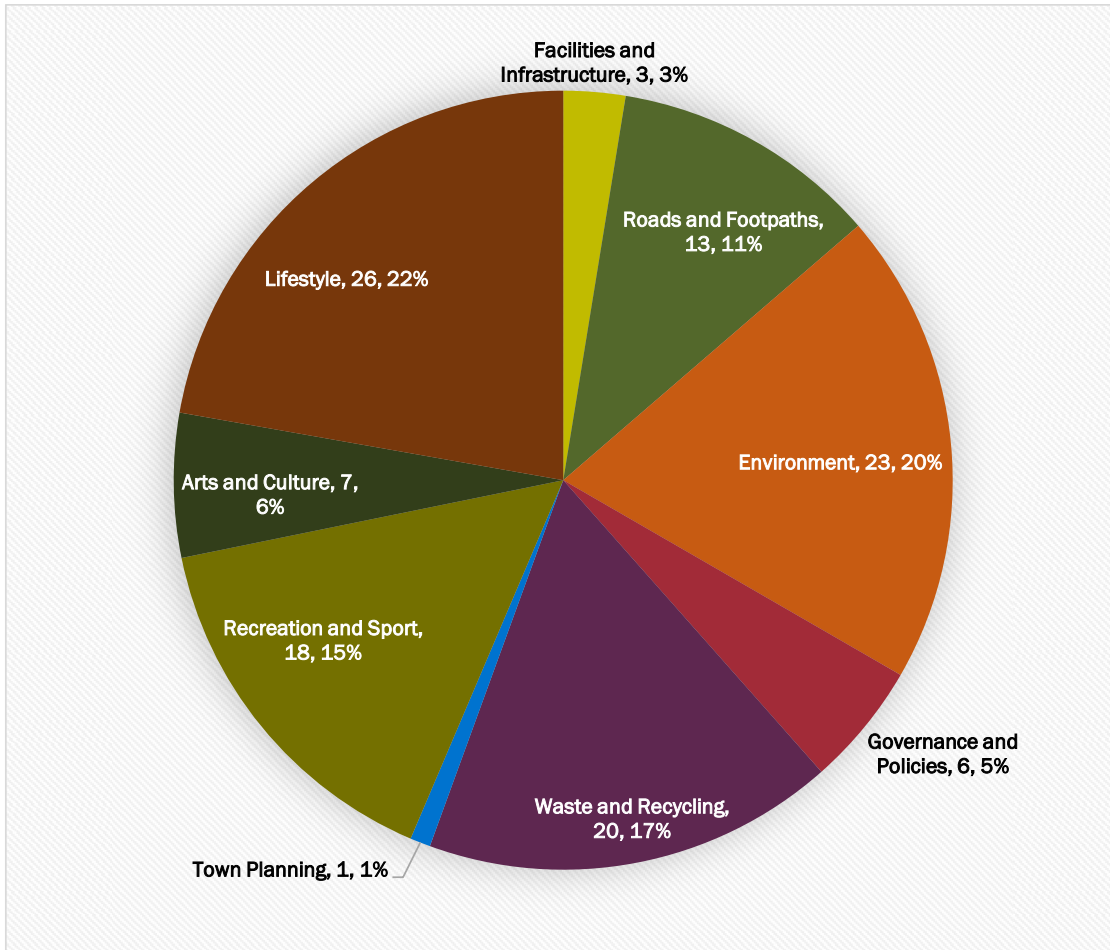


How would you like us to share the outcome?

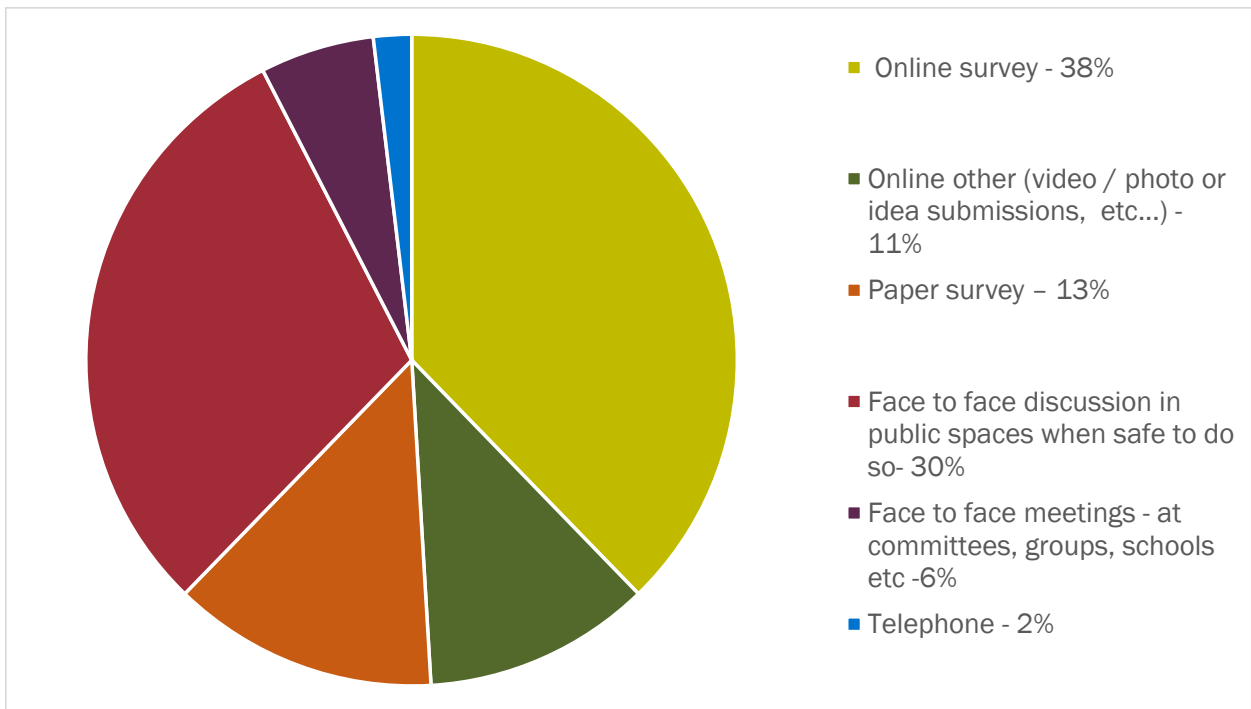


Data Analysis – Young People 13-24 years

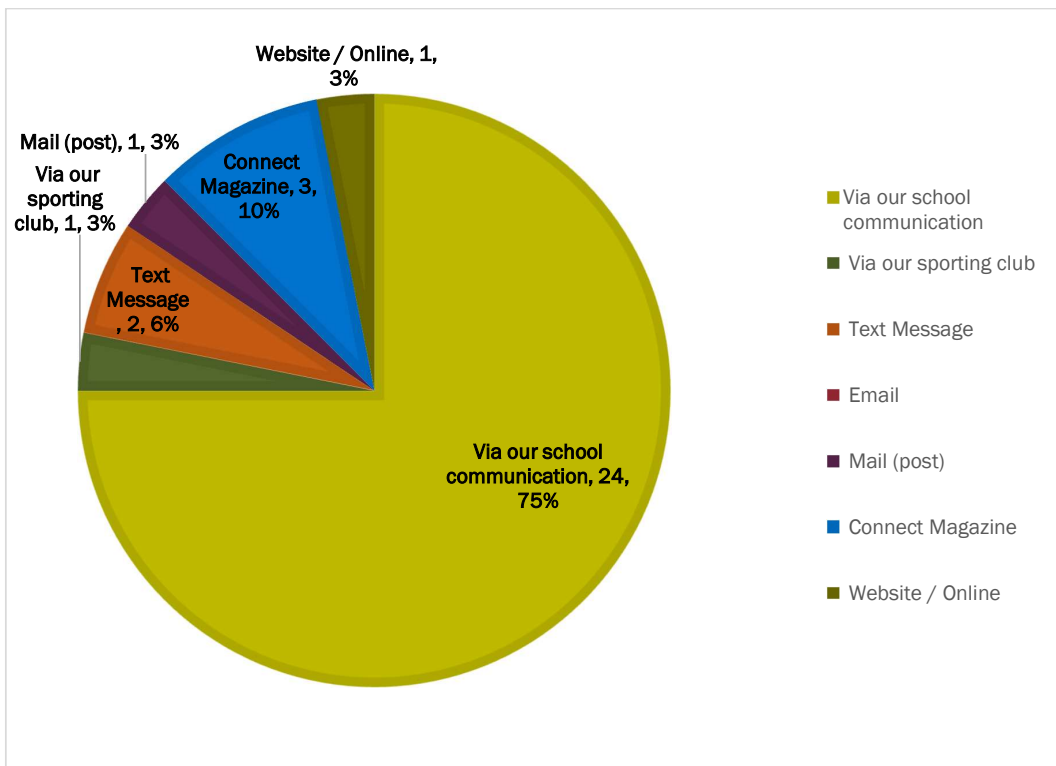
What are your main areas of interest?



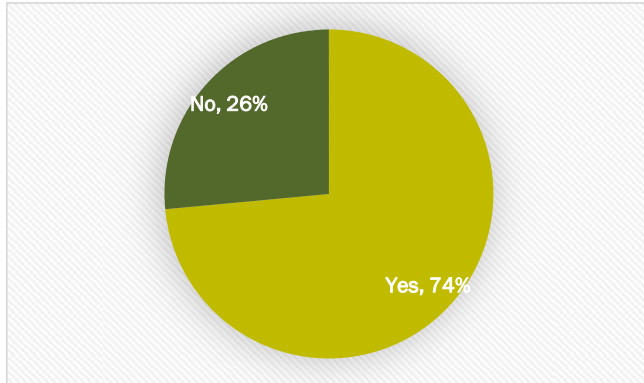
From the list of ways you can provide your ideas and feedback, which would be most relevant to you?



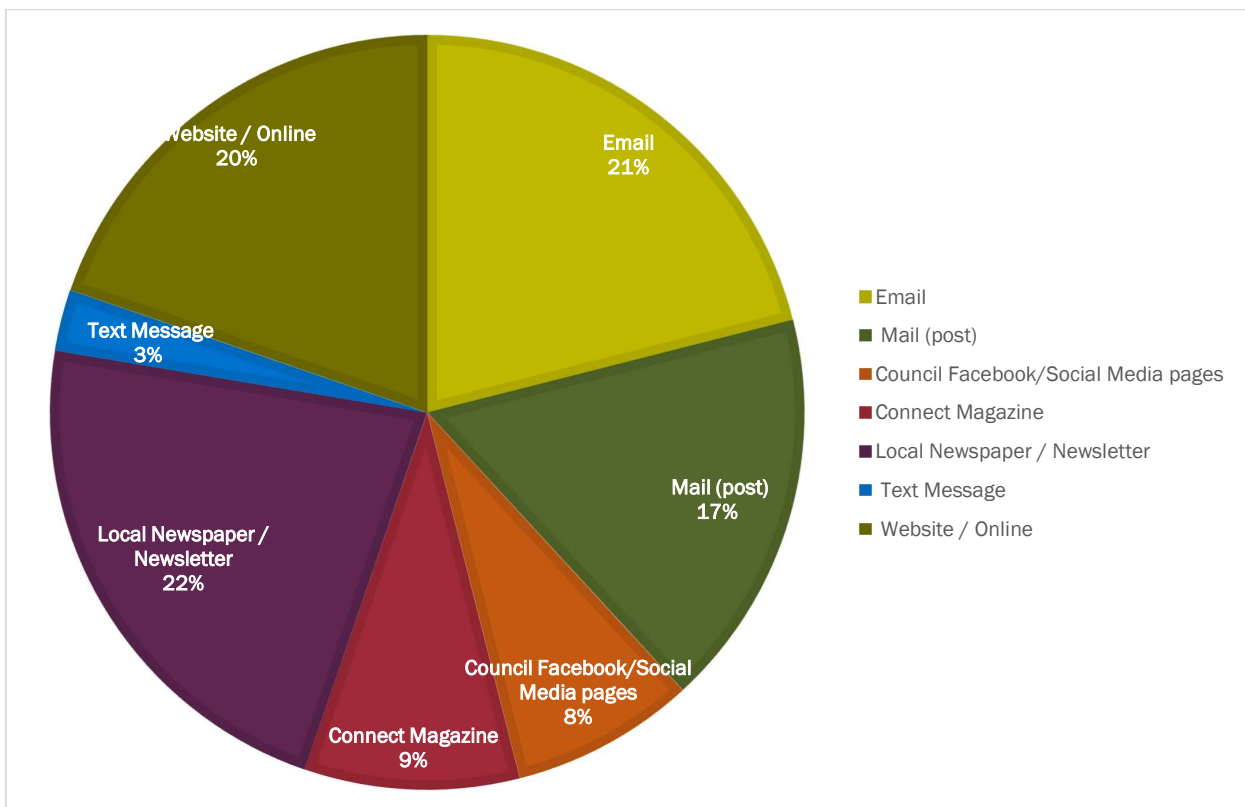
Where are the best places to promote the opportunity for YOU to share your ideas and feedback?



If you have provided your Ideas and feedback would you like to be Informed once the project has completed or a decision has been made?

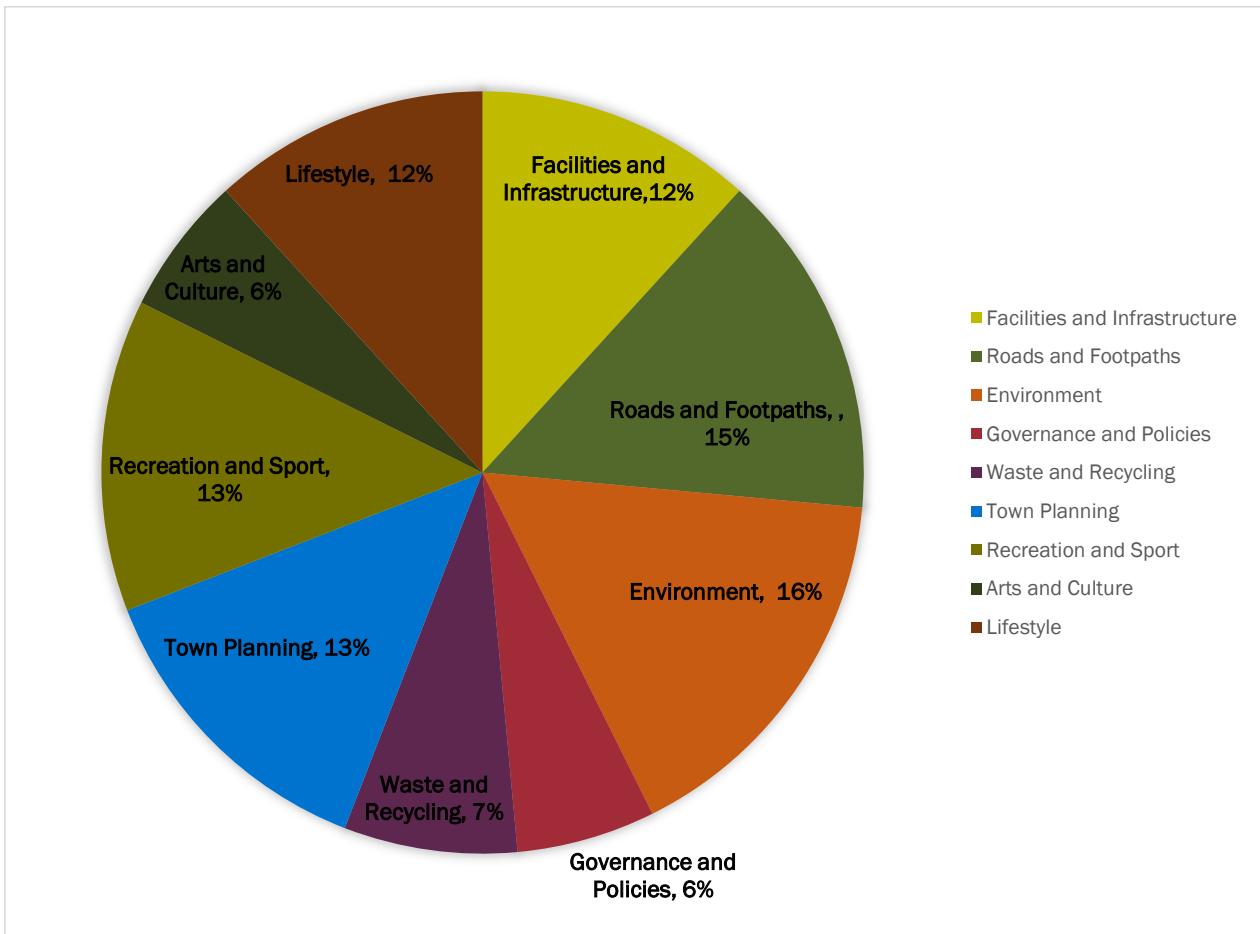


How would you like us to share the outcome?

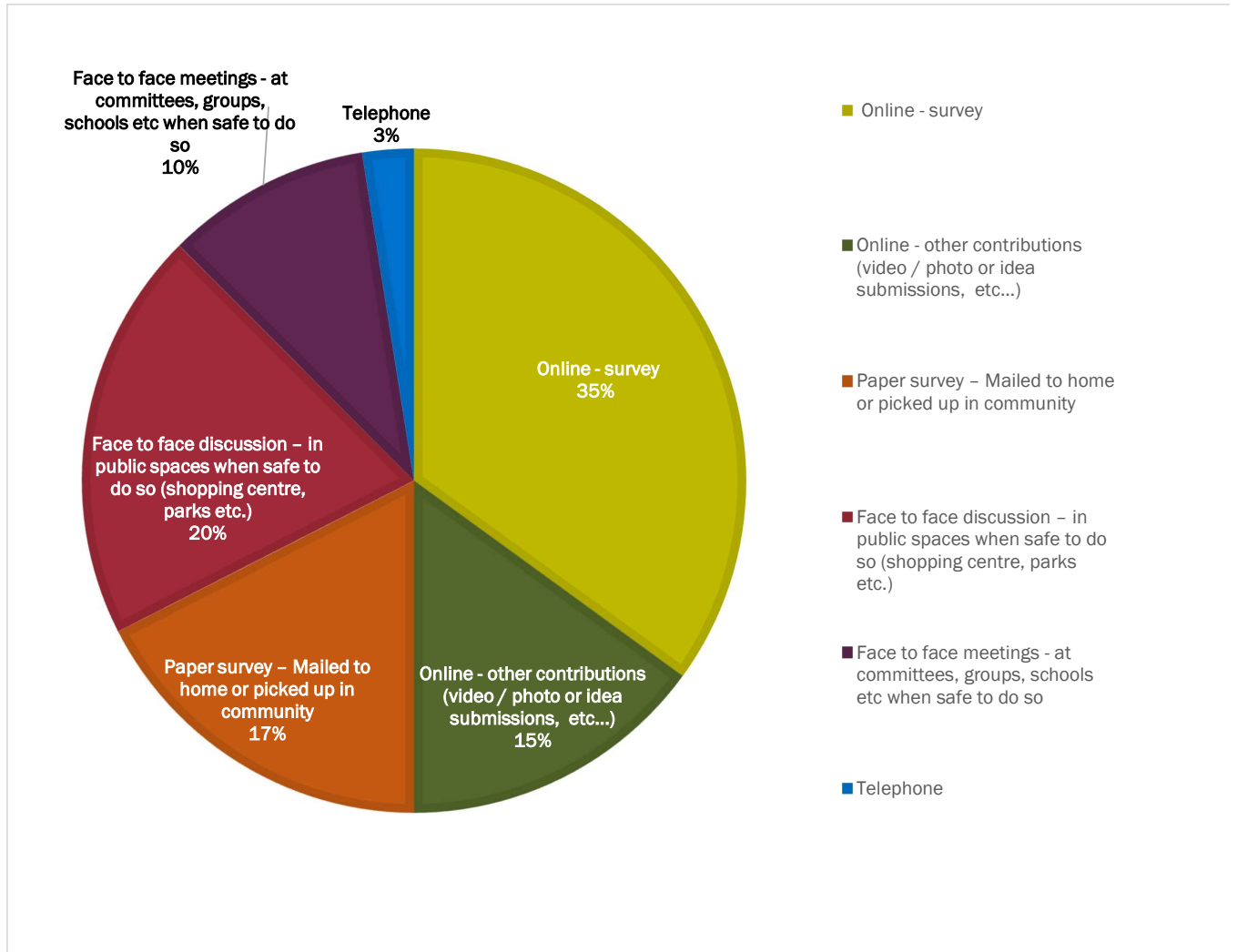


Data Analysis – Adults 25-55years

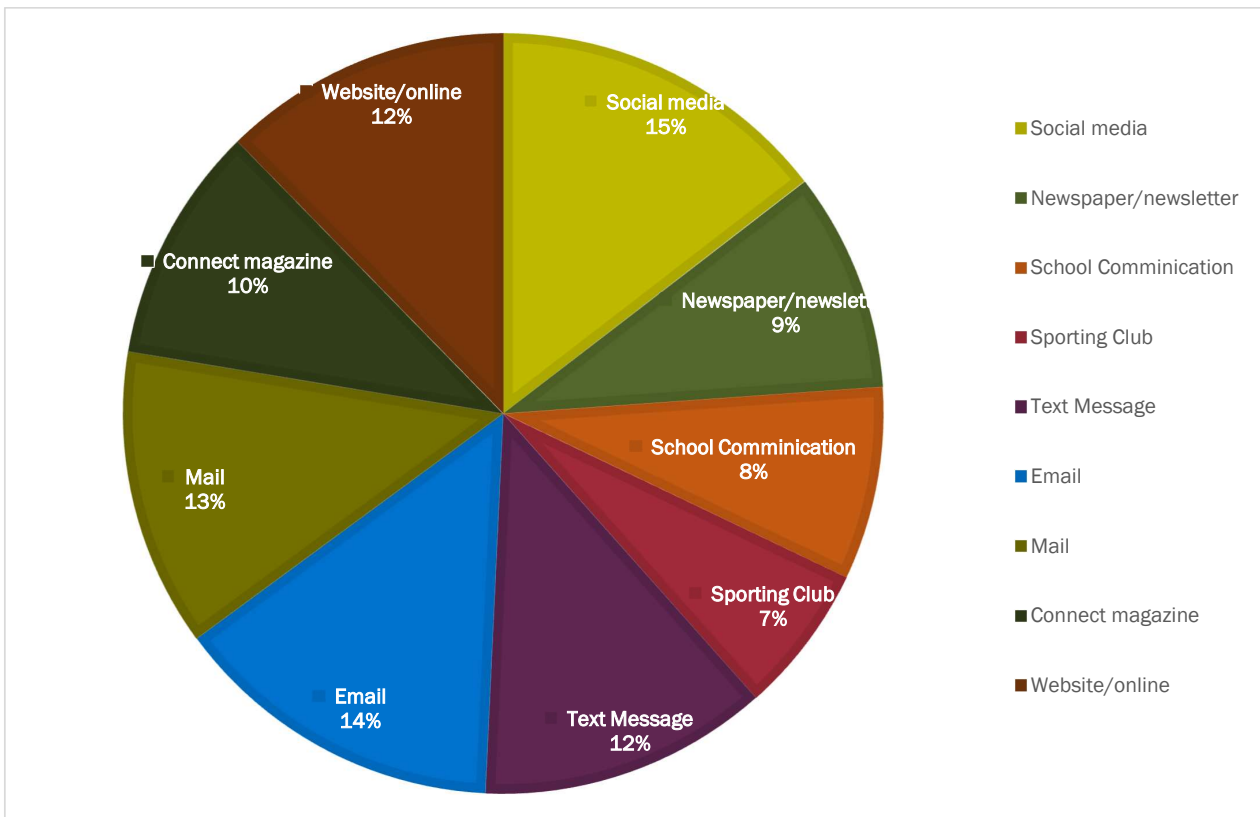
What are your main areas of interest?



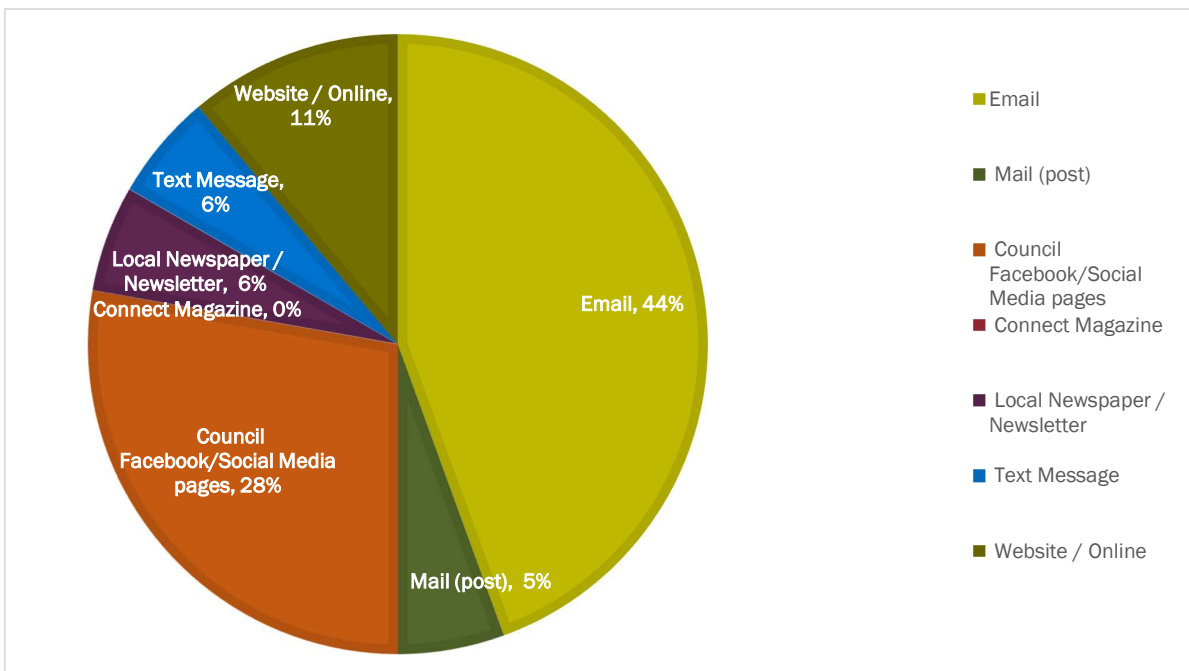
From the list of ways you can provide your ideas and feedback, which would be most relevant to you?



Where are the best places to promote the opportunity for YOU to share your ideas and feedback?

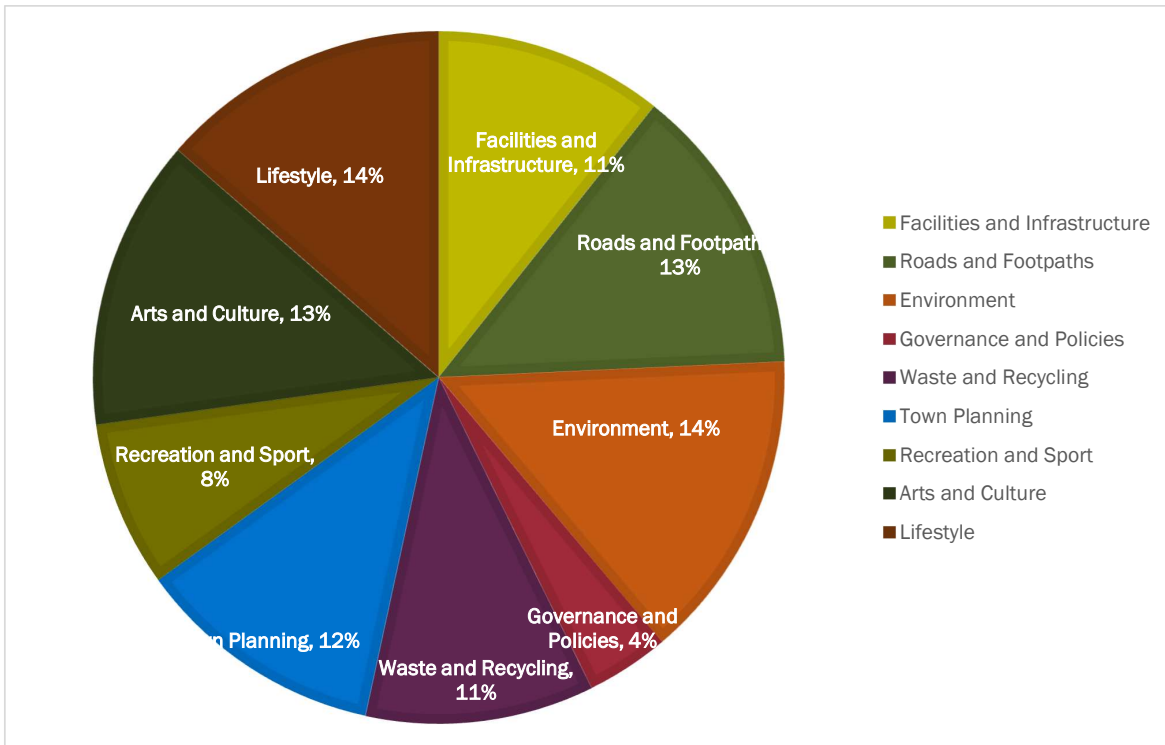


How would you like us to share the outcome?

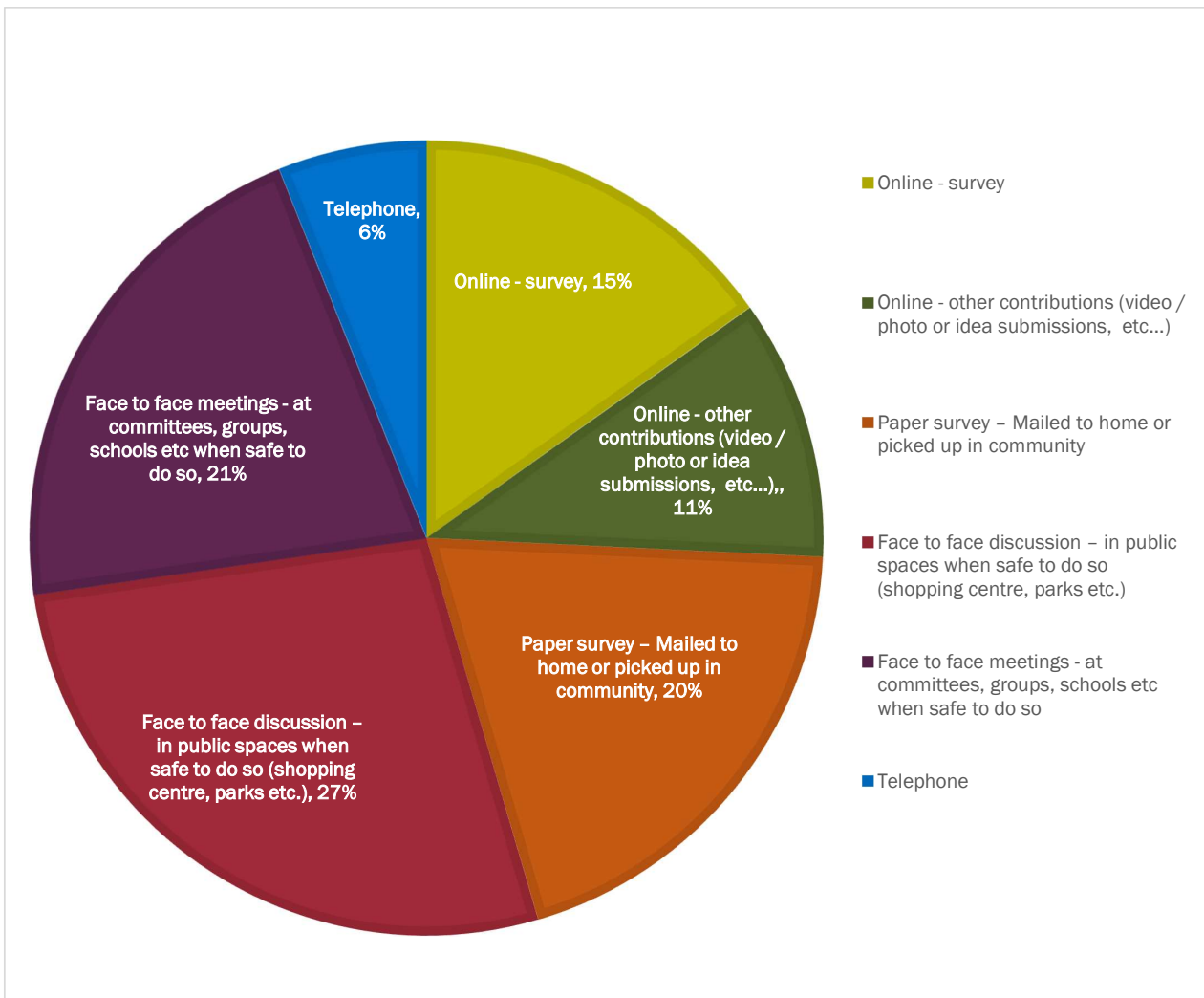


Data Analysis – Older Adults 55 years +

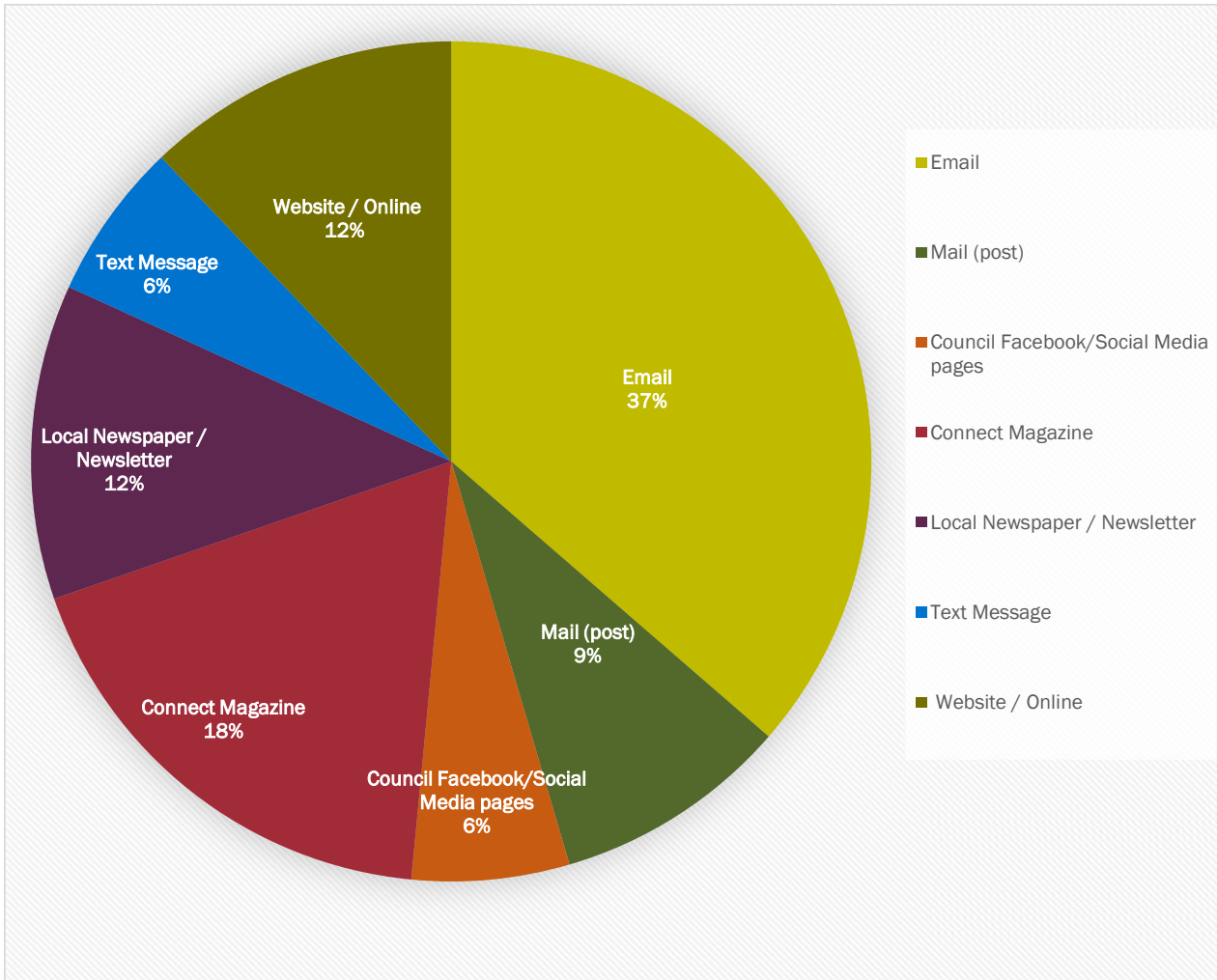
What are your main areas of interest?



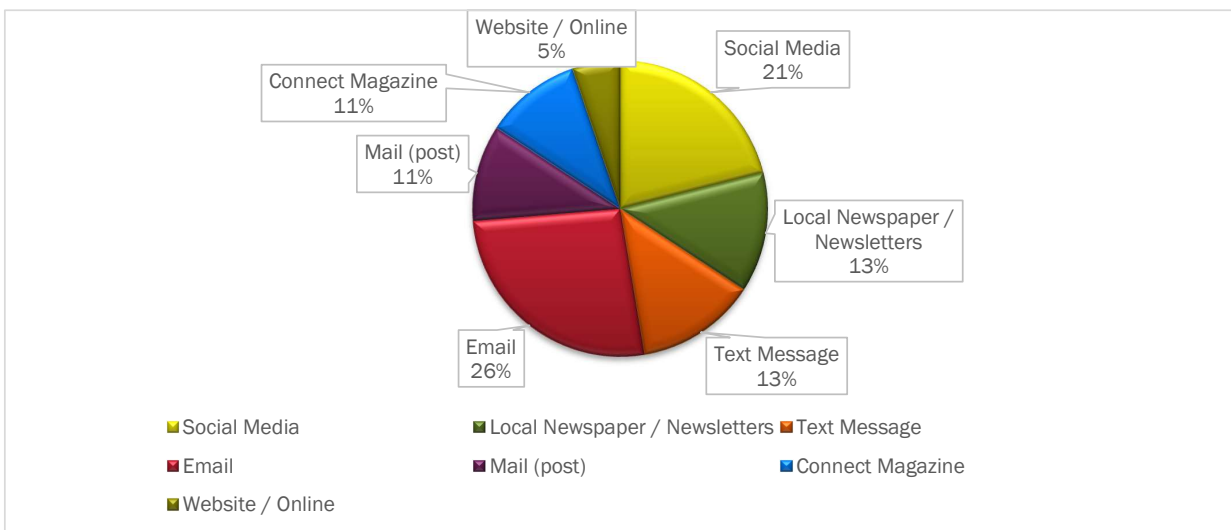
From the list of ways you can provide your ideas and feedback, which would be most relevant to you?



Where are the best places to promote the opportunity for YOU to share your ideas and feedback?



How would you like us to share the outcome?



Qualitative Data

This section of the report looks at the written answer to questions within the survey and focus groups. Word clouds have been used as a visual representation of the frequency of themes generated by the data. Some 'featured contribution' quotes have also been singled out that were deemed important enough to highlight.

Summary of overall qualitative data

- Social media came up frequently specifically Instagram for promotion.
- Transparency is extremely important to the responses including sharing back the consultation results. They stated this will assist in the community trusting council and the community engagement process.
- Members were disappointed when engagement was not obviously occurring (Examples provided include Cockatoo Cottages and Motorsport complex planning)
- Ensure engagement is genuine so the community can influence the projects/plans
- Our older residents would like to see engagements advertised on community notice boards
- Respondents would like to see more communication emailed.

Do you have any ideas how council could better involve the community in the decision-making process?



Featured Contributions

- Putting out monthly feelers to the general public asking for areas for improvement around the council, and whatever is the most responded answer to focus on that for that month (or something similar).
- Social media is usually a good place to engage with the public (younger age groups especially). Something like a Twitter or Facebook page
- They could advertise it more on social media and try to make it more interactive.

How could Council have better conversations with you about decisions that impact you and your community?



Featured Contributions

- Via online forms or surveys such as this.

- Trust is a significant issue in the community when it comes to engagement with Council. Council listening, recording and including responses would be a good start. Genuine care and responsibility for delegated duties would be great, as well as duty of care.
- Q and A forums for community to ask questions
- Again this is why we have councillors who are supposed to be the conduit between council and myself. They need to be available for all members of their ward. Council could hold more engagement sessions with the community to get their opinions on topics/issues. In the outer regions of the Shire, I would suggest a representative of Council went out to those regions to hold those engagement sessions. Quick and easy to complete surveys are also an easy way for the community to engage and express their point of view. Council needs to be available not unavailable, and when contacted, reply so that the community knows you are here for them. Too many times council is contacted with no response back. This leads to a mistrust of Council who takes no care or responsibility.
- Involve the community. Have the community vote on infrastructure needs, recreation venues etc. do not go ahead if there are not enough votes so that useless items that council thinks are necessary are being infused into the community.
- Better notifications of meeting perhaps via text, people could register via social media or email
- Keep bringing out surveys, post it onto a website even have Facebook videos, set up zoom meetings or something like that until COVID is over.

Do you have any other ideas of how you would like to provide your ideas and feedback?



Are there any other ways we can promote these opportunities to you?



Featured Contributions

- Colourful online posts and ads in the paper
- Community/interest groups. Community noticeboards. Public meetings. Rates notices/reminders is usually a missed opportunity for communication.
- Township Committee, Noticeboard, Social media needs to be the local township committee not Cardinia

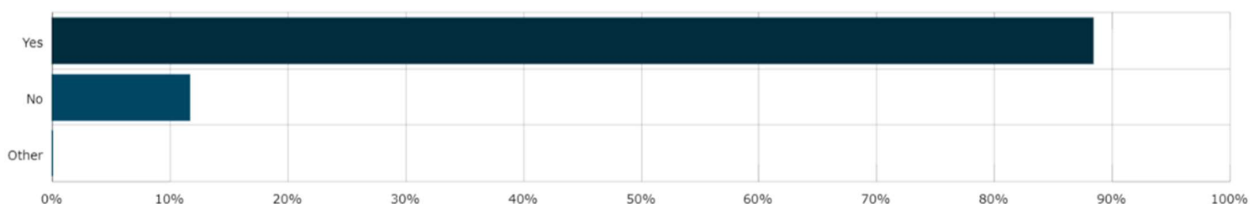
How do you think Council could make the decision making process more inclusive, transparent and accessible?



Featured Contributions

- See previous comments. Council agenda, minutes and meetings on line is positive. Library hard copies is important (when libraries are accessible). Intention is key. As is establishing trust with the community. Listing of pros/cons/interesting impacts for community and councillor consideration together would help.
- Make it accessible to community members that don't use the internet.
- By reaching out to different age groups teens, adolescents, adults, seniors
- Don't send people to a master plan and ask for views when decisions and costing have already been decided
- Publish results of surveys Actually listen to the public instead of just run with pre-planned ideas

If you have provided your ideas and feedback would you like to be informed once the project has completed or a decision has been made?



Is there anything else you would like to share?

Featured Contributions

- Yes. Updates and reminders of next stage of consultation coming up and occurring please. There are significant issues with interest group focus. For example, consulting the user groups at a reserve will attend to their interests, but not necessarily the interests of those in the community who are funding but not utilising these resources. There is poor/no feedback on why ideas/suggestions/requests are rejected, dropped, or not included in reporting or actions. Decisions can appear to be based around officer convenience/inconvenience and management reporting schedules, rather than community needs, enforcement of laws/regulations, or planning regulations. Saying worse is happening elsewhere shouldn't be an excuse for allowing breaches of laws/regulations and not enforcing compliance. Failure to respond to correspondence (email, telephone calls) from the community has been a concern. A direct dialogue with community about working together with community is needed if that is Council's true intent. Reflection Question: How have school children, or elders who are not using the internet, been encouraged and supported to respond to this community consultation survey?

- Council should have physical council notice broads in townships. Other notice board ideas are medical centres, banks (Bendigo) supermarkets, etc.) Paper surveys can go in Connect, newsletters or newspapers, Keep surveys short so people can complete them quickly. Distribute the opportunity to contribute to retirement/over 50 villages. when doing pop ups at shopping centers, Thursdays seems to be the busiest days.
- Recently we had a new playground and skatepark built in Gembrook. There was a lot of effort put into the planning of the skatepark the shire hired a skatepark designer and the children had there say. Unfortunately the skatepark design was not shown to us before it was built. We dont get many skateboarders which is very sad. There are areas that were built that have no purpose that take up space and things that were built back to front and the actual skating area is very limited. To many elements not enough community input. Very sad outcome for the skaters.
- Feedback should be provided in whatever form the idea/feedback was provided in.

Staff Feedback

A staff survey was also delivered concurrently with the open community engagement on the policy. The intent of the internal survey was to gain an understanding from staff around their perception of the current community Engagement process and how it can be improved.

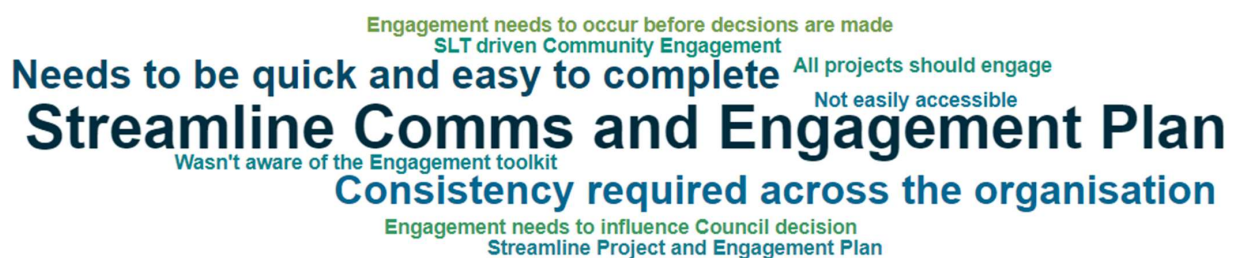
Analysis

Consistent themes

- Staff are time poor for the planning and actual time it takes to genuinely engagement the community
- Staff see Community Engagement as a priority of council
- Staff want to ensure we have the flexibility to include the communities feedback
- Staff want to ensure we are hearing from hard to reach groups
- Staff understand we need to build the communities trust

Responses

Do you have any feedback about the current Community Engagement documents and templates?



Featured Contributions

- It is quite onerous completing the Community Engagement Plan and the Comms Plan. Different expectations from the plans means more work - streamlining this would be good.
- I once had to fill out a project plan and a community engagement plan, and ideally this document would all have been one combined document.
- They need to be as easy as possible for staff to complete and it not only needs to be endorsed but enforced across council, so EVERYONE completes one. We need a consistent approach to ensure the whole community is authentically consulted
- I believe that the Community Engagement Policy needs to be amended to more strongly commit Council to authentic community engagement. Community Engagement needs to influence Council decision making.... rather than be something that is carried out after a decision has already been made i.e. it needs to take place early in the decision making process

(not at the end). Community Engagement Handbook could be strengthened by providing Council Officers with more direction regarding negotiable/non-negotiable aspects of community engagement. The non-negotiable aspects need to be real non-negotiables and evidence provided (e.g. a law doesn't permit this or that)...a Council Officer's personal preferences or arbitrary rules (e.g. because it makes the Council Officer's job easier) can't be tabled as non-negotiables.

- The documents are not easily accessible e.g I have found the policy on the Council website but where is the plan and handbook. Everyone is busy if they are not accessible people won't use them as it is too hard and just move on. It's important to remember community engagement is not generally driven by a 'model' so much as by a framework of guiding principles, strategies, and approaches. The framework should be based on principles that respect the right of all community members to be informed, consulted, involved and empowered. Community engagement should utilise a range of tools and strategies to ensure success. It should also place a premium on fostering and enhancing trust as a critical element in long-term, sustainable engagement and effective governance and be approached as a positive opportunity to engage with and work alongside the community.

Do you have any feedback or ideas about the 'Creating Cardinia' engagement platform?



Featured Contributions

- Its great but unfortunately Cardinia Shire residents don't readily access Council's website
- Feels like an opportunity but I am a bit confused about the difference between councils website and Creating Cardinia. How do ratepayers know which one to use and when or is the strategy we will always invite them in and they won't realise the difference?
- It's great! fantastic platform!

Can you please provide any feedback or comment on your experience of community engagement development and delivery?



Featured Contributions

- First class! It is good to have someone who can provide direction and make me think outside the box on ways to engage different community groups.
- I have observed Council Officers engaging with the Community (I'm not sure whether or not they planned this engagement with the assistance of the Community Engagement Facilitator). In my experience, this engagement was poorly planned and executed. Parameters weren't clear, the process was disempowering, relationships between Council and Community were fractured, Council Officers failed to listen effectively to the community and Council's reputation was damaged.
- I value the work the Community Development Team does in assisting the organisation with connecting to the community. The tips and tricks provided on engagement and tapping into the teams community relationships in order to undertake community engagement is great.
- their support is essential, as they have the bigger picture knowledge of what's going on across Council. They can link people together, so consultations can be combined rather than ask the same community to complete multiple surveys for example. They also can give suggestions and ideas on the best ways to engage your target audience.
- Its still difficult to get input from 'hard-to-reach' communities - often we don't have enough time/flexibility in our timelines to work at the community's pace to ensure we do get a representative response - it's still difficult to ensure people are aware of opportunities for consultation - I've had feedback from partner organisations that they wish they could subscribe to updates, so that whenever consultation or grant opportunities open they get a notification.

What could your team or Council do better to involve the community in project and decision making?



Featured Contributions

- Make every opportunity genuine. We are getting much better at engagement but there are still occasions where people aren't listened to or they might be but there is no feedback loop so it appears that they haven't been listened to.
- Up skill Council staff more on community engagement techniques so that we can do more engagement with confidence. Make sure community engagement is well planned at the beginning of projects and enough time is allowed.
- Allow lots of time for hard to reach p and or / over engaged groups Have a clear position in advance on how the engagement feedback will be used Close the gap explaining how feedback influenced the decisions - or did not influence decisions made Provide information in platforms where people will access this - so not just our website Ensure engagement is accessible to diverse communities and community members, different age groups, different cultural backgrounds and takes into account varying levels of literacy and technology access
- I'm relatively new to Council, however, I'm concerned that there is a 'prejudice' against authentic, effective community engagement at Cardinia Shire. I'm finding that many Council Officers talk negatively about the community and seem to have an 'us vs them' mentality...which undermines effective community engagement. Engagement appears to be adversarial rather than collaborative in approach, and I get the sense that the primary motivator for undertaking community engagement is to 'tick a box', 'I've engaged' rather than because there is deep commitment to authentic engagement and working for the benefit and wellbeing of

the community. If my observations are correct, deep cultural change needs to occur; attitudes, values, habits and practices need to change.

- Provide more support to business units/ staff 'scared' to talk to the public. eg. Professional development not about the community engagement policy but maybe about dealing with agro residents, difficult questions, face to face negativity etc. Diplomacy training as a segway or intro to community engagement. Not all units are used to dealing with residents and it would be good to see how confident staff are to engage with community if this was an opportunity for PD. Something similar to the lunch box sessions that ran previously.
- Have authentic conversations and agree what the short / medium / long-term outcomes are. Look for quick wins and opportunities for the community to invest and take carriage of some really tangible projects, if done properly this will change the story and the image of Cardinia Shire Council. For this to happen successfully I believe there should be a place based model with really skilled Community Development Workers that work at a grass roots level building the capacity of the community. This could be utilised by using the empty Community facilities across the Shire we have seen through the success of the Emerald Hills Hub and the Bush fire Recovery Centre when we put highly skilled Community Development workers out in the community to build authentic relationships it works really well and the community benefits.

Do you have anything else you would like to share about community engagement at Cardinia?

Improvements are noticeable
More resources required
Listen to the communities feedback
 Engagement champions (promoters)
 Close the loop Up-skill staff **Allow time** Ensure a diverse response
 More support
 Ensure residents are responded to

Featured Contributions

- We really need a 'team' for engagement. Having one person devalues engagement when is should sit right up there along something like communications.
- I think we do it well, but could do it so much better. We have such an opportunity to connect with our community and deliver services that are wanted and needed.
- I believe that there needs to be greater commitment for community engagement to take place at the beginning of the decision making process (then throughout and at the end)...Community engagement should inform Council decisions not be a tokenistic, tick the box, activity that happens at the end of the decision making process (if at all) Council Officers engaging with the community need to be committed and able to:
 - Actively/effectively listen
 - Be solutions focused – able to positively explore creative, imaginative, From new ways of working and doing things with the community
 - Be flexible - Some things are non-negotiable...e.g. the law...however, lots of things can be negotiated
 - Respect and empower the local community - viewing the local community as invaluable assets who bring local knowledge, networks/connections, a wide variety of skills/experiences, passion and understanding of their community to the table...Also understand that the community should be involved in decisions that effect/impact their lives
 - Accept and manage conflict in the community engagement process well Not sure whether there is a Community Engagement PD budget for staff (and if there is, whether it is adequate).

Draft Community Engagement Policy exhibition feedback.

The Draft Policy was on exhibition from the 16 November to 23 December 2020. This included seeking feedback internally from council staff.

During the exhibition period the draft policy page received 304 views, however this only resulted in 2 community members leaving feedback.

Community member 1:

I hope this version is used properly and more engagement than the current policy.

1. There has been decisions made that are likely to affecting residents where in some cases they are not engaged because they may not understand the implications and do not use the internet and are therefor would not even see the surveys etc.

2. I think that Council should create a Community Reference Group to advise Councillors and/or Officers as to whether a proposed item should go to public consultation and to recommend the form that should take. This would also be counted as Community Engagement in keeping with this policy.

3. More emphasis should be made of face to face consultation. Whist your demographic chart shows only over 55's wanting that as a preference. it should not preclude face to face as the most valuable method of consultation. Face to face tends to assist participants hearing others opinions which can trigger more concerns that need to be addressed.

Community member 2:

I agree with the chart for over 55s. I really like the connect magazine.

Internally there were 2 contributions from staff through the Creating Cardinia platform.

Children, Youth and Family Services:

It reads really well, is clear and is comprehensive. I think under 'responsibilities' it needs to be crystal clear that engagement plans sit with staff. not the engagement officer and there will be consequences if they are not completed and approved e.g. work doesn't go ahead. Under 'deliberative panel' make mention of how to engage with other groups like children, LGBTIQ+. Given this is a legislative requirement, can there be compulsory online training that includes IAP2 info, VAGO principles and examples of ways to engage with the community. I still feel staff across the organisation aren't getting it and it's (community consultation) not being completed as good as it could be. Providing training could elevate its importance. It is included in new staff's induction?

Youth Services:

Looks great

Staff from Customer and Service Improvement, Communications and Planning teams also provided feedback directly via email which included grammar and structure suggestions.