city of
PALMERSTON
*'A Place for People'*




# COMMUNICATION & ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

City of Palmerston acknowledges the Larrakia people as the Traditional Custodians of the Palmerston region. We pay our respects to the Elders past, present and future leaders and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

## COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY

City of Palmerston is committed to embracing diversity and eliminating all forms of discrimination within our facilities and welcome all people regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity or faith.



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

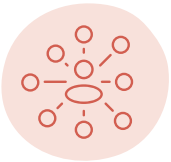
City of Palmerston's Communication and Engagement Strategy provides a strategic framework to guide how Council communicates, engages and builds relationships with the community, stakeholders, businesses and visitors. The strategy supports Council's vision of Palmerston being 'A Place for People' and aligns with the Community Plan, Municipal Plan and Council's broader strategic priorities.

The strategy recognises the important role communication and engagement plays in adopting trust, strengthening community connections, supporting transparency and encouraging meaningful participation in Council initiatives and decision making. As the Northern Territory's second largest and fastest-growing city, Palmerston's communication and engagement approach must continue to evolve to meet the needs of a diverse, connected and growing community.

The strategy establishes a coordinated and community-focused approach across key areas including:



**Public relations & media**



**Communicating with the community**



**Marketing**



**Issues management**



**Community engagement**

It outlines the principles, tools, tactics and performance measures that will guide communication and engagement activities across the organisation. The strategy also reinforces the importance of accessibility, inclusion, transparency and consistency across all communication channels and engagement activities.

A strong emphasis is placed on:

- Clear and accessible communication
- Timely and accurate information sharing
- Meaningful and inclusive engagement
- Proactive and coordinated communication
- Digital-first and multi-channel approaches
- Continuous improvement through monitoring, evaluation and community feedback

The strategy is supported by overarching key messages, tone of voice guidance and stakeholder analysis to ensure communication reflects Council's identity, values and community expectations.

By implementing this strategy, City of Palmerston aims to strengthen community awareness, increase participation and engagement, support informed decision-making and continue building a connected, resilient and future-focused city.

# BACKGROUND

## A PLACE FOR PEOPLE

City of Palmerston is guided by its vision as 'A Place for People' and its mission 'to place people at the centre of all we do and deliver, by providing excellent services to our community'. To help achieve this vision and mission, City of Palmerston developed a Community Plan in consultation with the Palmerston Community. The plan outlines six key outcomes. These outcomes serve as the communication content pillars and guide the focus of Council communications.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Family and community** | Palmerston is a safe and family friendly community where everyone belongs. |
| **Vibrant economy** | Palmerston is a destination city for employment, it is a place where businesses are encouraged to set up and grow |
| **Cultural diversity** | In Palmerston we celebrate our cultures in a way that values our diversity. |
| **A future focus** | Palmerston is an innovative city that sustains itself through the challenges of the future. |
| **Environmental sustainability** | Palmerston is an environmentally friendly, liveable city that promotes renewable practices and sustainability. |
| **Governance** | Council is trusted by the community and invests in things that the public value. |

## ACCESSIBLE COMMUNICATION

City of Palmerston is committed to providing accessible and inclusive ways for the community to give feedback and receive information. Council will continue to provide access through a range of communication channels which meet the identified needs of the community, in alignment with Council's accessibility and inclusion commitments and relevant frameworks.

## SUSTAINABILITY

City of Palmerston is committed to actively managing and reducing its environmental footprint through sustainable practices, responsible resource use and long-term planning that supports the wellbeing of our environment and community.

Printed materials should be used selectively and purposefully, prioritising audiences with limited access to digital channels and distribution in high traffic community areas. Digital channels will be the primary method of distribution, with print used to support and extend reach.

## AUDIENCE

The primary audience for this strategy is the Palmerston Community, who actively participate in community life, need to be kept well-informed and be given opportunities to provide feedback. Council must also consider industry and government stakeholders as partners for collaboration and contribution to community outcomes. Visitors and potential residents are considered for their impact on growth, while council employees are integral to the success of the strategy, with effective internal coordination and information sharing supporting consistent and informed communication with the community.



**Council employees**

**Potential residents and visitors**

**Community, industry and government stakeholders**

**Palmerston Community**

## DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT

2021 Census data shows that City of Palmerston is home to young, busy, working families who are focused on building their future. With a median age of 31 and high rates of employment, most households are juggling work, children and daily commitments. They will likely need information that is quick to find, easy to understand and accessible.



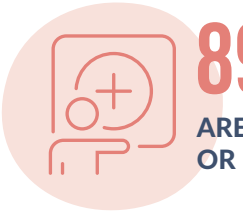
**31**
**MEDIAN AGE**



**76%**
**LIVE IN A FAMILY HOUSEHOLD**



**22%**
**BORN OVERSEAS**



**89.1%**
**ARE EMPLOYED PART OR FULL TIME**

# PURPOSE

The purpose of this communication and engagement strategy is to strengthen the relationship between City of Palmerston and its community by guiding clear, consistent and community-centred communication that builds engagement and trust.

## STRATEGIC

Ensure all communication and engagement activities are guided by a strategic approach which supports clear, accessible and meaningful interactions with the community

## INNOVATIVE

Explore innovative and inclusive ways to communicate and engage with the community

## TRANSPARENT

Demonstrate progress against Council's strategic goals and build community trust through open and transparent communication

## CONSISTENT

Deliver clear, consistent messaging across all communication and engagement materials so the community receives accurate and timely information.

# MASTER NARRATIVE

Palmerston is a place where people belong, businesses thrive, culture is celebrated and the environment is valued. Guided by its vision as 'A Place for People', City of Palmerston is committed to delivering services, infrastructure and programs that enhance liveability, support families and strengthen local business.

As the Northern Territory's second largest and fastest-growing city, Palmerston plays a vital role in the region's economic, social and environmental future. Council works in partnership with residents, businesses, industry and government to ensure growth is sustainable, inclusive and aligned with community expectations. This includes investing in green spaces, improving connectivity and accessibility, supporting local industry, promoting cultural diversity and embedding sustainability across all operations.

City of Palmerston models responsible governance, transparent communication, community engagement and sustainable environmental management. Through strategic planning, evidence-based decision-making and a commitment to innovation, Council is helping shape a resilient and future-focused city that can respond to challenges and embrace new opportunities.



# OVERARCHING KEY MESSAGES

## Who we are

- City of Palmerston is a welcoming, vibrant, family-friendly city that fosters diversity and unity
- We strive to create a community where everyone belongs and everyone feels safe
- Our vision as 'A Place for People' guides every decision we make
- City of Palmerston plays a key role in the region's future as the second largest and fastest-growing city in the Northern Territory
- We value strong families, connected communities and a safe, inclusive city
- We nurture a vibrant local economy where businesses are encouraged to set up and grow
- We believe cultural diversity is a strength that enriches our community
- We invest in and take care of our natural environment
- City of Palmerston is committed to being an environmentally friendly, liveable city that promotes renewable practices and sustainability

## Leadership and governance

- Council is committed to transparent, accountable and accessible decision-making
- We plan for the future through responsible governance and long-term strategic planning
- We invest in what the community values including safety, liveability, sustainability and economic opportunity
- We engage early, listen actively and provide clear feedback on how community input shapes decisions
- We engage with the community in ways that are inclusive, visible, innovative and responsible
- We empower residents to participate in shaping their city, from sustainability initiatives to planning decisions
- City of Palmerston responds to issues with accuracy, transparency and timeliness, ensuring the community receives clear and reliable information



# COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

This strategy builds on the foundations of the work already achieved and sets out the next, more detailed phase of Council's communication and engagement approach. It provides a framework for how City of Palmerston will inform, connect and engage with the community across the following areas:



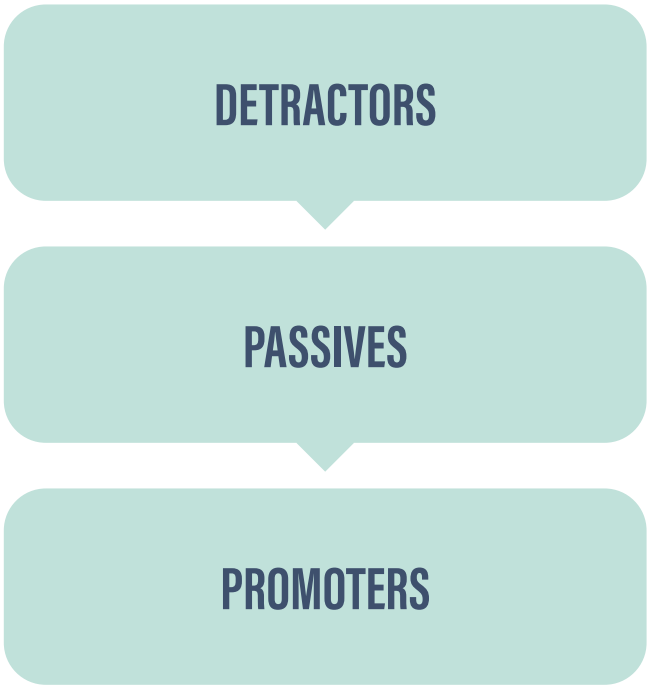
The following strategic principles underpin all communication and engagement activities delivered under this strategy ensuring the objectives and overarching goal are achieved:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Consistency** | Ensure messaging, tone and information are consistent across all channels |
| **Clear and transparent information** | Be clear about decisions, processes and outcomes so stakeholders and community members can understand what is happening and why |
| **Timeliness** | Share information early where possible and at appropriate stages of a process so community members have meaningful opportunities to understand and respond |
| **Inclusivity and accessibility** | Communicate in plain English and ensure information is accessible to diverse audiences |
| **Purpose-driven communication** | Align communication and engagement activities with organisational goals, priorities and desired outcomes |

One of the key measures of Council's reputation and community sentiment is the Net Promoter Score (NPS), captured through the annual community satisfaction survey. Residents are asked how likely they are to recommend living in Palmerston on a scale from 0 to 10, with responses grouped as detractors, passives and promoters. The overall NPS is calculated by subtracting the percentage of detractors from the percentage of promoters, resulting in a score between -100 and +100.

NPS reflects the community's overall experience of living in Palmerston and may be influenced by a range of factors, including Council services, communication, engagement and broader community experiences. It is therefore not a direct measure of communication and engagement performance but provides a useful overarching indicator of community sentiment over time.

Through clear, timely, consistent and accessible communication and purposeful and transparent engagement, City of Palmerston aims to contribute positively to community understanding, trust and overall sentiment.




**In 2025 Council's Net Promoter Score was -6, with 30% detractors, 45% passive, 24% promoters.*

# PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MEDIA

City of Palmerston's approach to public relations and media focusses on strengthening relationships and building trust through the media. The strategy prioritises proactive storytelling and clear narratives and ensures all media interactions are consistent, timely and aligned to the six Community Plan Outcomes.

To help achieve an increase in share of voice in the media, the following approaches will be considered;

- Create a proactive schedule of stories aligning to the six outcomes
- Develop material, where necessary, to support proactive media relations
- Develop and maintain an accessible Image Library that can be utilised by marketing and media platforms
- Improved quarterly media monitoring to track coverage, identify emerging issues and reporting on insights
- Explore alternative relevant spokespeople to address various conversations in the media where appropriate
- Improve sponsorship agreements to leverage from joint marketing opportunities
- Improve consistent response times to media through priority actioning adhering to the Customer Service Charter



Palmerston pumped with national win

Palmerston's $2.3m community hub that caters to bikes, scooters and skates across all skill levels has earned the city national recognition. Picture: City of Palmerston

Thomas McLean

A pump track that opened earlier this year at the Zuccoli Community Hub has earned the City of Palmerston national recognition.

The facility won the Productivity Through infrastructure category at the 2026 National Awards for Local Government, which recognises projects that deliver lasting community benefits.

The asphalt track is divided into three parts: green for beginners, blue for intermediates and red for advanced riders. It can be used by bikes, scooters and skates. Skaters previously told the NT News the track was "nothing short of incredible", believing it would draw people from Darwin and Casuarina.

In a Facebook post this week, the City of Palmerston called the win a "fantastic achievement" and thanked those who helped bring the track to the community.

The Local Government Association of the NT congratulated the City of Palmerston for this "outstanding achievement and well-deserved national recognition".

"This national recognition highlights the important role local government plays in delivering strategic infrastructure that enhances liveability, supports growing communities and creates long-term benefits for residents," it said.

*NT News snippet, 2026*

## TOOLS AND TACTICS

The following tools and tactics are some examples of what can be used to support achieve the outcomes:

- Media release
- Media alert
- Event
- Fact sheet
- FAQs
- Holding statement
- Talking points

## KPIS

| KPI | MEASURE |
|---|---|
| Proactive stories pitched | Minimum of three proactive media opportunities, pitches or story leads distributed per quarter aligned to Community Plan outcomes. |
| Media mentions | Minimum of 26 mentions across radio, print, online and TV each quarter including sponsorships/ partnerships |



# COMMUNICATING WITH THE COMMUNITY

The timely, accurate and consistent sharing of information between City of Palmerston and the community is key to achieve the overall goal of the strategy. This approach applies to communication across the organisation, recognising that effective communication with the community is a shared responsibility.

Specifically, the types of communication we refer to includes service updates, project information, public notices and general announcements, keeping the community connected and informed of Council's activities and programs.

Communication can be strengthened through adopting a clear and coordinated approach. Communications should prioritise clear information which is aligned with Council's Community Plan Outcomes, is easy to understand and available to all community members. Where possible, digital communication methods should be prioritised to adhere to City of Palmerston's commitment to environmental sustainability.

To help achieve the goal and objectives of this strategy, the following approaches will be considered;

- Strategically plan and prepare communication through comprehensive investigation, aligning to the principles, tailoring messaging if required, identifying target stakeholders and developing clear, concise and accessible information
- Distribute information across appropriate channels, either physical or digital, using a coordinated multi-channel approach to maximise reach and engagement
- Review outcomes to evaluate the effectiveness of communication and refine future communication approaches for continuous improvement



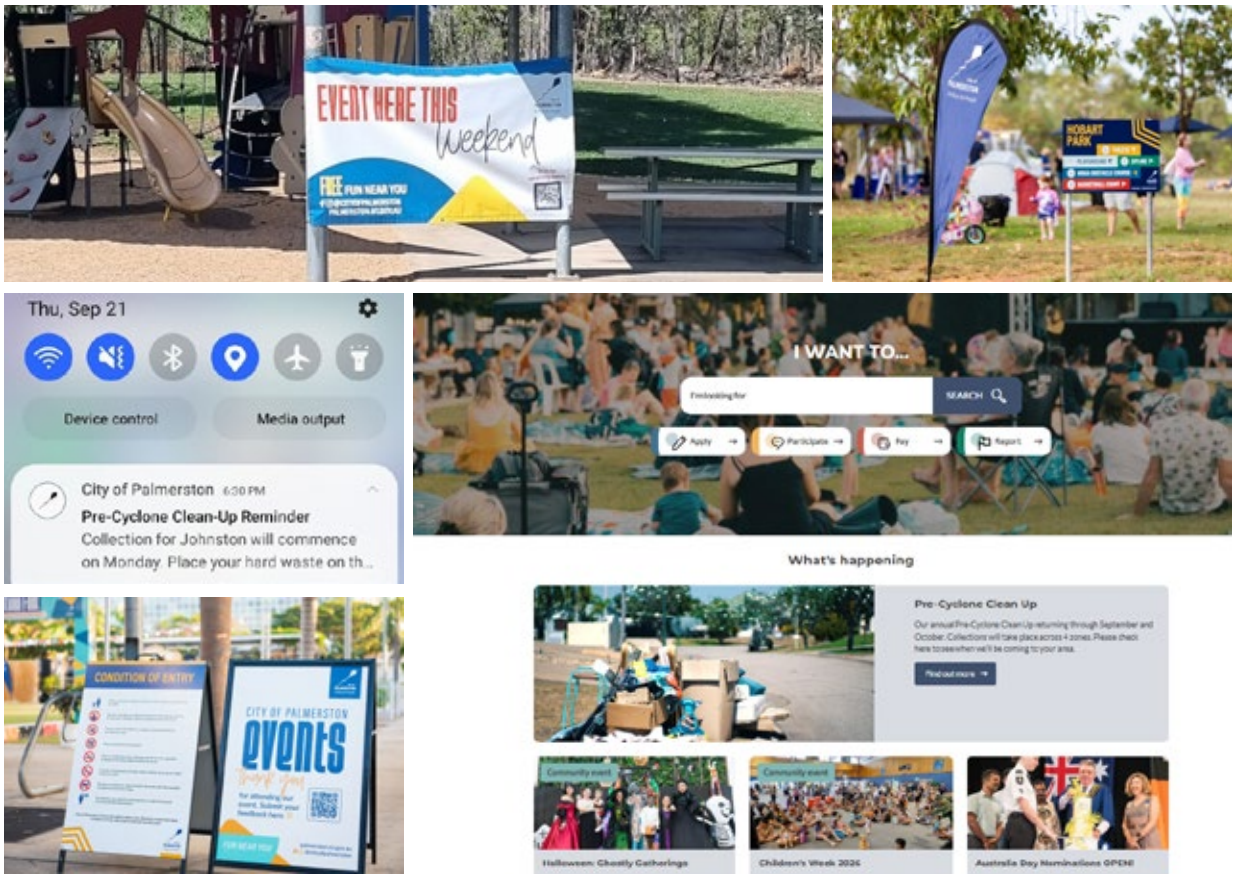
# TOOLS AND TACTICS

The following tools and tactics are some examples on how to support this approach.

- Website
- Mobile app
- Chatbot
- QR codes
- Social media
- eNewsletters
- Flyers/printed materials
- Innovative trials
- Fact sheets
- FAQs
- Letters/notices
- Community noticeboards
- Video inductions
- SMS

# KPIS

| KPI | MEASURE |
|---|---|
| Information reach and engagement | Maintain consistent year on year reach across Council communication channels including website, social media, e-Newsletters and mobile app |
| eNewsletter performance | 20% open rates of eNewsletters |
| Overall social media audience growth and engagement | Increase total social media followers year on year |
| Communication preferences aligned | Distribution of communication methods and improved alignment with community preferred communication methods as per community satisfaction survey |




*Communication in practice*

# MARKETING

Marketing plays a key role in shaping how the community experiences and engages with Council and its programs and initiatives. City of Palmerston should adopt a strategic, insight driven marketing approach that strengthens community awareness, encourages participation and reinforces trust.

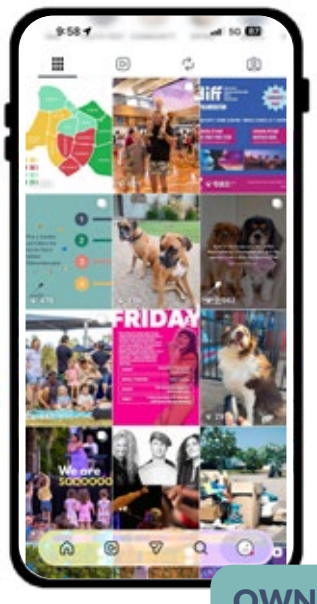
Council's marketing efforts should ensure content is community centred and has a positive outcomes focus. Campaigns should be designed to be accessible and inclusive ensuring all community members, regardless of background, ability or location, can engage.

Council should adopt an integrated, multi-channel approach for its marketing activities and campaigns, selecting channels based on audience needs, preferences and campaign objectives. Council will use a mix of owned, earned and paid channels to ensure widespread reach across the community. This includes:

- Owned channels – controlled by Council
- Earned channels – indirectly controlled by Council
- Paid channels – advertising and promotion

A streamlined, consistent approach to marketing activities should be followed, as shown below.

1. **Plan:** Define objectives, identify target audiences and align with Council priorities. Ensure audience needs are considered from the beginning.
2. **Develop:** Create clear, audience focused messaging that aligns with Council's tone of voice and overarching key messaging. Develop campaign materials that reflect Council's brand and values
3. **Deliver:** Implement campaigns across selected channels using a digital-first, multi-channel approach to maximise reach and adhere to Council's commitment to sustainability
4. **Monitor:** Track performance of campaigns in real time (where possible) and adjust activities to improve effectiveness
5. **Evaluate:** Measure results against KPIs and capture insights and feedback to inform future campaigns




OWNED



EARNED




PAID

# TOOLS AND TACTICS

## OWNED CHANNELS

- Website
- Social media (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn)
- eNewsletters
- SMS notifications
- Council publications
- Signs and digital screens

## EARNED CHANNELS

- Media coverage (newspaper, radio and TV)
- Partnerships with local organisations, schools or businesses
- Social media sharing and engagement from community

## PAID CHANNELS

- Social media advertising
- Print advertising
- Radio advertising
- Signage/banners/bus shelters
- Sponsored content
- Partnerships

# KPIS

| KPI | MEASURE |
|---|---|
| Campaign reach | Achieve campaign reach targets set based on campaign objectives, audience and budget. |
| Conversion rate | Monitor people taking a desired action such as registrations, survey completion or bookings<br>**depending on campaign* |
| Brand awareness | Increase in recognition or awareness of Council and its initiatives |



# ISSUES MANAGEMENT

City of Palmerston is committed to providing timely, accurate and coordinated communication during issues, incidents and emergencies that may impact the community, Council operations or Council's reputation.

Issues management is a proactive approach focused on identifying and addressing emerging concerns before they escalate. There is a coordinated response used during significant incidents or emergencies that require urgent communication and community updates. During emergencies, communication will align with Council's established emergency management arrangements and be coordinated with relevant emergency management stakeholders.

Council will adopt a consistent and transparent approach to issues management and communication by:

- Proactively develop risk assessments and mitigation tactics as well as drafting issues management communications for planned initiatives
- Monitor emerging issues and community concerns
- Identify delegations/spokespeople for issues that may arise
- Provide timely and accurate information
- Communicate clearly and consistently across channels
- Support community safety and awareness
- Coordinate communication internally and externally
- Respond appropriately based on the level of impact and risk.

Communication responses may include updates through:

- Council website
- Social media
- Media statements and interviews
- Direct stakeholder communication
- SMS or emergency notifications where appropriate
- Community updates and public notices.

Council will continue to review and refine its issues management approach to support continuous improvement and community confidence.



# ISSUES MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK




| | |
|---|---|
| **Identify** | Identify risks associated with initiatives or activities through risk assessments, including drafting communications to use in the event of an issue. . Monitor emerging matters, risks and community concerns through media, social media, operational updates and stakeholder feedback. |
| **Assess** | Assess the potential impact, level of risk, stakeholder interest and likelihood of escalation. |
| **Plan and implement** | Provide coordinated, accurate and timely communication using appropriate channels and messaging. |
| **Monitor and review** | Continue monitoring community response and emerging information to adapt communication as required and support continuous improvement. |

During issues, incidents and emergencies, Council's communication aims to deliver timely updates, support community awareness and understanding, ensure consistent messages across spokespeople and platforms and capture lessons learned to strengthen future responses.

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

City of Palmerston is committed to open and accountable decision-making informed by consultation with the Palmerston community.

Community engagement activities are guided by Council's Community Engagement Council Policy and the Engagement Institute (formerly International Association of Public Participation [IAP2]) Spectrum of Public Participation.

Council's key principles for community engagement are:

- INCLUSIVE
- TRANSPARENT
- INNOVATIVE
- ADAPTABLE
- ACCOUNTABLE
- SUSTAINABLE

A planned and consistent approach to community engagement ensures activities are culturally appropriate and tailored to the needs of the diverse community of Palmerston. Engagement should be meaningful, creating genuine opportunities for the community to contribute to decision making, while being clear about the aspects that can and cannot be influenced. A strong focus should be placed on closing the feedback loop, so participants understand how their input has informed decisions. The table below sets out the levels of engagement and influence in decision making. They are not mutually exclusive and, in many cases, Council will use a combination of techniques suited to the project or activity and stakeholders involved.

Community engagement activities should remain flexible unless there is a statutory requirement that applies. Engagements should be purpose driven, as opposed to meeting minimum engagement periods or prescribed actions. The focus will be on obtaining a balanced, unbiased view from the community and providing this feedback to Council to support informed decision making.

Community engagement activities will identify the purpose, level of engagement and target audiences, ensuring engagement aligns with the project objectives and community needs. Methods will be selected to suit the community and context, supported by clear, accessible information. Activities should use a mix of in-person and digital approaches to maximise reach and inclusion, keeping the above principles top of mind. Feedback should be considered alongside technical, financial, legislative and operational requirements to inform decision making, with outcomes communicated back to the community to close the feedback loop.

| | INFORM | CONSULT | INVOLVE | COLLABORATE | EMPOWER |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Goal** | To provide balanced and objective information in a timely manner. | To obtain feedback on issues, alternatives and decisions. | To work with stakeholders to ensure concerns and aspirations are considered and understood. | To partner with stakeholders in each aspect of decision making. | To place final decision making in the hands of the stakeholder. |
| **Council's role** | We will keep you informed. | We will explore options by listening and acknowledging your feedback. | We will work with you to ensure your concerns and aspirations are directly reported in the decisions made. | We will look to you for advice and innovation and incorporate this in decision making as much as possible. | We will ensure information and tools are available for you to meaningfully participate. |
| **Community's role** | Keep in touch. | Contribute ideas and feedback. | Share ideas, concerns and aspirations. | Work together to develop solutions. | Collaborate with Council to implement the agreed decision. |
| **Example situations/ projects** | Routine Council maintenance upgrades. | Changes to Council by-laws. | Designing a new local park or playground. | Developing long-term strategic plans. | Deciding on a controversial local issue. |
| **Example tools** | • Fact sheets<br>• Flyers<br>• Posters<br>• Social media<br>• Website<br>• Letterbox drops. | • Surveys<br>• Public information/ drop in sessions<br>• Written submissions<br>• Email and phone. | • Workshops<br>• Digital engagement. | • Workshops<br>• Working groups. | • Citizens jury<br>• Citizens panel. |

## TOOLS AND TACTICS

The following tools and tactics are some examples on how to support this approach.

- Community consultation
- Stakeholder meetings
- Workshops
- Pop up stalls
- Town Hall meetings
- Online surveys
- Interactive platforms
- Focus groups
- Community partnerships
- Visual engagement materials
- Conversation Café
- Consultation database

## KPIS

| KPI | MEASURE |
|---|---|
| **Participation levels** | Number of participants engaged through consultation activities, reported quarterly |
| **Quality of feedback** | Collect relevant and constructive feedback that supports informed decision making |
| **Consultation database** | Establish a growing database of community wishing to engage regularly on consultations |

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