

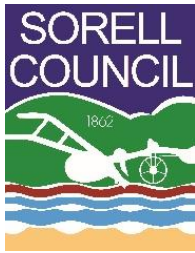


COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

February 2020



Community Coast Country



COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

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INTRODUCTION

Council's Communication and Engagement Strategy ("The Strategy") outlines how we communicate and engage with the community, as well as the key initiatives and actions that we will take to improve communication and engagement between Council, stakeholders and the community.

We aim to build upon our current communication and engagement methods and activities ensuring consistent messaging across all platforms to reach a greater percentage of the community, to increase their knowledge of Council's activities and decisions, the outcomes of those decisions and how they can be involved.

The Strategy has been developed to:

- Continue to improve the flow of information between Council and the community;
- Further increase transparency and provide opportunity for two-way communication;
- Ensure that all Council communications are timely and easily understood by all of our stakeholders;
- Ensure Council's communication and engagement activities meet the requirements set out in the *Local Government Act 1993*; and
- Consistently reflect Council's Purpose, Vision, Values and Objectives as outlined and adopted in Council's *Strategic Plan 2019 – 2029*.

Council's *Strategic Plan 2019-2029*, focuses on Council's role in delivering the community's vision for the Sorell Municipality. This Strategy is fundamentally linked to the objectives of the Strategic Plan, in particular objective four 'Community Confidence in Council'. Further to this, the development of an integrated Communications and Engagement Strategy was identified as a key priority in the *Annual Plan 2019-2020*. Input into the draft Strategy was sought from Council Staff, Management and Councillors.

Council are committed to the process of transparently sharing information and recognise the benefits that effective communication and engagement has for building the community's confidence in Council.

Effective communication and engagement requires buy-in from all stakeholders. Both Council Staff and Councillors are responsible for the organisations reputation. Everything we say and do impacts on the public's perception of Council.

The development of The Strategy has been informed by:

- The results of the Communication and Engagement Community Survey;
- The results of the Internal Staff Survey;
- Council's *Community Engagement Strategy 2011*;
- Feedback from Council's Senior Management Team and Elected Members.

Key Challenges

A key challenge for Council is operating in a typically reactive environment which often directs the communication and engagement methods and activity that are undertaken. Shifting from operational and reactive messages to more strategic and proactive messages with greater consistency, interest and relevance is a priority. Council aims to share more positive stories that showcase the good work we do for the community and instill community confidence in Council.

A further challenge also lies in harnessing the many communication and engagement activities into one consistent approach that reflect the priorities of the community and Council.

Council has limited budget and resources to meet the needs of a growing community, with high expectations for new infrastructure and services. The Strategy seeks to help bridge this gap.

Who Is This Strategy For?

The key stakeholders Sorell Council regularly communicates and engages with include:

- Residents and rate payers;
- Local businesses;
- Community groups;
- Visitors and tourists;
- Councillors;
- Politicians, both Federal and State;
- Agencies such as Federal and State Government departments, industry groups and not-for-profit groups; and
- Regulatory and peak bodies such as auditors, Local Government Association (LGAT), Local Government Division, Southern Tasmanian Councils Authority, Environmental Protection Authority etc.

These groups are unique and have different interests in Council functions and activities. Therefore, our communication and engagement approach with these groups needs to suit their differing requirements, whilst also being consistent with Council's objectives.

What is Good Communication and Engagement?

We recognise that good communication and engagement is about sharing information, expressing thoughts and concerns and listening to others. It is a two-way process that helps to build positive relationships between Council and the community and allows a sense of trust to develop.

Good communication and engagement between Council and the community supports participation and active involvement in the decisions that affect that community.

It is us providing opportunities for the involvement of the community in creation of local solutions to local issues that affect the Municipality. It involves actively listening and considering what the community has to say when making decisions.

Perhaps most importantly, good communication and engagement is best measured in terms of its outcomes. Achieving the desired outcomes of The Strategy will decide if we are practicing effective communication and engagement.

Good community engagement is guided by the IAP2 Federation's Public Participation Spectrum to help define the public's role in any public participation process. The IAP2 Spectrum is an internationally recognised standard for engagement.

Engagement takes place on a number of different levels:

Public Participation Goal	Promise to the Public	Examples
Inform	Provide Information to the Community	Fact Sheets Website
Consult	Obtain community input	Focus Groups Surveys
Involve	Work directly with the community throughout the process	Workshops
Collaborate	Create partnerships with groups within the community to be involved on an ongoing basis	Resident Advisory Committees
Empowerment	To place final decision making in the hands of the community	Ballots Elector Polls

Principles That Guide the Way We Communicate and Engage

The Strategy has been developed based on the following guiding principles for effective communication and engagement:

1. Prioritise communication and engagement that is proactive, positive, consistent and transparent.
2. Provide supporting information to assist stakeholders to make informed opinions.
3. Be inclusive and accessible to all members of the community.
4. Ensure that the broader views of the community are considered in the planning and decision making processes.

Guidelines for Community Advertising

Council will support community groups to advertise their programs, activities and events, in line with our guiding principles for effective communication and engagement. We can do this via our Facebook page, the events calendar on our website and community noticeboard in the Council Offices.

In order for Council to help promote your event, activities or programs, there are some guidelines that must be met:

- It must be not for profit;
- It can't be of a political nature, or contain political party logos, slogans or images;
- It must be taking place in our Municipality;
- Fliers must be provided electronically in JPEG or PNG format; and
- Fliers must clearly contain contact details people can use to get more information.

How We Communicate and Engage

We communicate and engage with the community through a variety of different mediums including print, social media, digital, face to face and mail. Our communication and engagement activities and methods (excluding phone calls, emails, meetings and face-to-face communication that occurs on a day-to-day basis) consist of:

- **Council Meetings** - All Council decisions are made at the monthly meeting and these are open to the public to attend, with meetings agendas available four days beforehand. Agendas contain extensive reporting on Council activities, projects and programs.
- **Public Representations** - Question time from the public at every Council meeting, petitions to Council and Motions to the Annual General Meeting.
- **Community News newsletter** - Mailed twice per year with Rates Notices to rate payers and contains Council news, information, events and opportunities for consultation.
- **The Sorell Times** - Monthly ad in The Sorell Times covers Council decisions, works, events, community information, opportunities for consultation and the Mayors Report.
- **The Mercury** - Advertising of Development Applications, Council meetings and community information.
- **Media Releases** - Sent to local media outlets (print, radio and televisions) regarding Council news and events.
- **Media and Stakeholder Relations** - Mayoral media interviews and liaison with stakeholders including Politicians, investors and the broader community.
- **Council Publications** - E.g. Waste Management Services Calendar, Community Services Directory, Parks and Beaches Guide – convey Council and community news and information.
- **New Residents Kits** - Contains information about Council services, local events and community services.
- **Website** - Publishes news and events for the community, along with the regulatory advertisements and documentation.
- **Intranet** - Internal website which provides information and documents for staff.
- **My Local Services App** - Free app which delivers information about Council services and news, waste management and events for the local community.
- **Facebook** - Regular posts about Council news, events and projects. Approximately 2,799 Followers (as at 29 January 2020).
- **Instagram** - Regular posts about the Municipal area. Approximately 276 Followers (as at 29 January 2020).
- **Community Conversations** - Informal community meetings held in locations around the Municipality. An opportunity for residents to engage with the Mayor, Councillors and Council Management on local issues of concern in an informal setting.
- **Seniors Advisory Group** - Group of local senior residents who meet four times per year to discuss issues affecting older members of our community.

- **Service Providers Meetings** - Local Service Providers meet four times per year to network, discuss their programs, services and issues, and what's happening locally.
- **Pembroke Park Advisory Committee** - Group of representatives from local sporting clubs based at Pembroke Park who meet twice per year to discuss issues and operations at Pembroke Park and help Council guide the growth and development of the facility.
- **Hall Committees** – A volunteer group of community members who form a Special Committee of Council governed by Terms of Reference who manage the operations of Council owned community halls at Copping and Dunalley.
- **Council Noticeboard in Reception** – The TV screen in reception promoting Council events and projects with corresponding photos.
- **Partnership Meetings** - Such as South East Region Development Association, Southern Tasmanian Council Authority, Local Government Association of Tasmania, Destination Southern Tasmania, Waste Strategy South etc.

The Strategy seeks to streamline these many methods and activities into one consistent approach that reflect the priorities of the community and Council. Investigating opportunities to share more positive news and stories that showcase the good work we do for the community to instil community confidence in Council is a priority.

How We Engage

How Council engages with the community is determined by the level of impact and capacity for input of the project or decision. We currently engage on a number of different levels:

Public Participation Goal	Promise to the Public	Council Examples
Inform	Provide Information to the Community	Facebook, Website, Sorell Times advert, <i>Community News</i> newsletter
Consult	Obtain community input	Strategic Plan Focus Group and Community Survey, Community Conversations
Involve	Work directly with the community throughout the process	Sorell Skate Park Upgrade Project site visits
Collaborate	Create partnerships with groups within in the community to be involved on an ongoing basis	Imlay Street Park redevelopment, Seniors Advisory Group, Community and Youth Grants Program
Empowerment	To place final decision making in the hands of the community	Ballots, Elector Polls

Key Communication and Engagement Objectives

The Strategy will support the Purpose, Vision, Values and Objectives of Sorell Council, promote its activities and assist in the effective and efficient running of Council.

Council recognises that there is scope to build upon current community understanding of what Council does, Council's activities, how community feedback and interest is taken into account during decision making, as well as how Council advocates on behalf of the community.

The key objectives of The Strategy are to:

1. Continue to assess the different communication needs of our community.
2. Increase the community's knowledge and understanding about Council decisions, policies, activities and services.
3. Make the most effective use of appropriate media and technologies.
4. Ensure that internal communication is effective.
5. Consult and engage regularly, and in a timely manner, with the community.
6. Promote Sorell Council and its activities in an articulate and consistent way.
7. Make it easy for people to find out about the Sorell Municipality.
8. Ensure what Council says about itself is consistent with the customer experience of Council.
9. Improve the way we communicate the outcomes of our projects, programs, activities and decisions.
10. Commit to detailing and communicating how community feedback influenced Council's plans, actions and advocacy.

The Action Plan – How We Will Achieve Our Objectives

The Strategy will be resourced under existing budget allocations wherever possible. Any identified priorities and projects which require funding will be subject to approval in Council's Annual Plan and Budget.

Objective	1. Continue to assess the different communication needs of our community.
Actions	<p>KEY STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS – Meet with key stakeholder groups to gain a deeper understanding of communication and engagement issues and seek effective solutions for them.</p> <p>ANALYSE THE CRM DATA – See what people are contacting Council about and how we can address this at a communication and engagement level.</p>
Objective	2. To increase the community's knowledge and understanding about Council decisions, policies, activities and services.
Actions	<p>CURRENT PROJECTS TAB – Include a 'Current Projects' tab (or similar) on the website that is visible and regularly updated to ensure the most up to date information, with photos included where appropriate, is available.</p> <p>HAVE YOUR SAY – Develop a Have Your Say section on the website. This could include details of what community members are currently being asked to comment on, surveys and polls, upcoming community conversation sessions, Council Meeting dates, Special Meeting dates and a link to the feedback form.</p> <p>PROMOTE THE WAYS PEOPLE CAN GET INVOLVED WITH COUNCIL – Regularly promote the ways residents can become involved with Council via the website, social media channels and Sorell Times advert.</p> <p>PROMOTE COUNCILS LOBBYING EFFORTS BETTER - Develop media releases and social media posts that demonstrate and promotes Council's advocacy activities and priorities.</p>
Objective	3. To make the most effective use of appropriate media and technologies.

Actions	<p>ONLINE ACCESSIBILITY – Work towards implementing online communication materials that meet accessibility requirements for residents of all abilities.</p> <p>SOCIAL MEDIA TRENDS – Keep up to date with the current trends in social media to ensure we are communicating via the channels our community is most engaged with.</p> <p>EMAILS – Trial using an email provider such as Mail Chimp to communicate Council works updates, Council decisions and Have Your Say items.</p>
Objective	4. To ensure that internal communication is effective.
Actions	<p>LIVEPRO – Continue to develop LivePro as the core information hub for Customer and Business Support staff.</p> <p>INTRANET REVIEW AND REFRESH – Undertake a review of the Intranet and implement identified actions from the staff survey to ensure the Intranet becomes the core hub for internal communication. Actions to implement include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A live Corporate Calendar • A Council Noticeboard • HR Updates • Council’s social media pages posts • Events Calendar • Link to job vacancies on website • Staff contact listing and seating chart • General Managers Updates • Current Council Works and Projects
Objective	5. To consult and engage regularly with the community.
Actions	<p>HAVE YOUR SAY – Develop a Have Your Say section on the website. This could include details of what community members are currently being asked to comment on, surveys and polls, upcoming community conversation sessions, Council Meeting dates, Special Meeting dates and a link to the feedback form.</p> <p>PROMOTE THE WAYS PEOPLE CAN GET INVOLVED WITH COUNCIL – Regularly promote the ways residents can become involved with Council via the website, social media channels and Sorell Times advert.</p>

	<p>REVIEW THE STRUCTURE OF COMMUNITY CONVERSATION MEETINGS – Review the structure of these meetings to ensure they are meeting the needs of Council and the community.</p> <p>PROJECT MANAGEMENT PLANS – Review the ‘Stakeholder Engagement’ sections of the Project Management Plan templates to ensure they meet the requirements of the community.</p>
Objective	6. To promote Sorell Council and its activities in an articulate and consistent way.
Actions	<p>BRANDING AUDIT - Complete an audit of Council’s branding to ensure consistency in its use across the Municipality.</p> <p>STYLE GUIDE – Update Council’s Style Guide to provide guidelines for the way all Council branded documents and publications should be presented from both a graphic and language perspective.</p>
Objective	7. To make it easy for people to find out about the Sorell Municipality.
Actions	<p>WEBSITE REVIEW – Undertake a review of Council’s public website. Investigate an upgrade to make it more user friendly and easier for people to find the information and/or documentation they need (subject to budget and/or resourcing approval). Ensure all information is presented in an articulate and consistent way in line with Council’s objectives and key messages. Actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a <i>Current Projects</i> tab • Create a <i>Have Your Say</i> tab • Tourist Information tab <p>WEBCAST/LIVESTREAM COUNCIL MEETINGS – Trial webcasting/Livestreaming Council Meetings for three months.</p>
Objective	8. Ensure what Council says about itself is consistent with the customer experience of Council.
Actions	<p>CUSTOMER SERVICE CHARTER – Refresh all staff on the standards outlined in the Customer Service Charter.</p> <p>CUSTOMER SERVICE SURVEY – Analyse the data from the Customer Service Survey to find out how we are going and areas for improvement.</p>

	<p>CUSTOMER SERVICE FOCUS – Commitment to good internal and external customer service from all areas of the organisation is included in Council’s <i>Operational Plan 2019-2020</i> and as a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) in the Performance Reviews of all staff.</p> <p>COUNCILLOR FEEDBACK – Periodically ask Councillors what feedback they are receiving about Council.</p>
Objective	9. To improve the way we communicate the outcomes of our programs and activities.
Actions	GO ONE STEP FURTHER – When communicating the outcomes of Council projects, programs and decisions make the outcomes for the community clear, relatable, measurable and in plain English, including before and after photos where appropriate.
Objective	10. A commitment to detailing and communicating how community feedback influenced Council’s plans, actions and advocacy.
Actions	<p>COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS REPORT – Report yearly on the issues and themes identified at Council’s Community Conversation meetings and Council’s response and actions taken to address them.</p> <p>COMMUNITY CONSULTATION FEEDBACK – Following community consultation Council will report back to the community and provide clear feedback on how their input influenced the plan/strategy/decision.</p>

Communication and Engagement Outcomes

The Strategy will enable Council to:

- Continue to communicate our key messages and “good news” through the local newspaper and social media in a proactive, positive and inclusive manner.
- Present a consistent image and consistent approach to communications and community engagement.
- Build upon our partnership with the community by having authentic conversations.
- Establish effective internal communication.
- Have a community that is better informed and aware of Council services and activities.
- Have community members that feel involved in, and satisfied with, Council decision making.
- Have greater recognition for and understanding of the positive outcomes and benefits that Council projects and activities provide for the community.
- Be seen as a key driver in advocating for local interests.
- Gain insight and understanding into the needs of the community.
- Have the confidence of the community.
- Make informed decisions.
- Have Council staff that are customer focused and ready to listen.

How Will We Evaluate The Strategy?

The Strategy will be reviewed annually and formally assessed five years after it is adopted by Council, or within twelve months of a new Council being elected. This will ensure that current issues, community feedback and any new and emerging communication and engagement trends and methods can be appropriately captured and reflected in The Strategy.

It is recommended that the major initiatives and outcomes linked to The Strategy are built into the performance reviews and KPI's of key Council staff as appropriate.

Feedback

We encourage you to contact us directly to provide your feedback on The Strategy.

Contact us via the following methods:

Email	sorell.council@sorell.tas.gov.au
Website	www.sorell.tas.gov.au
Phone	6269 0000 (weekdays from 8.00am to 4.45pm, excluding public holidays)
Mail	Sorell Council PO Box 126 SORELL TAS 7172