

# Significance and Engagement Policy

## Purpose and Scope

1. To enable Council and its communities to identify the degree of significance attached to particular issues, proposals, assets, decisions and activities.
2. To provide clarity about how and when communities can expect to be engaged in decisions made by Council.
3. To inform Council from the beginning of a decision-making process about the extent, form and type of engagement required.

## Principles

4. The Council will be consistent and transparent in how it engages the public.
5. The Council will ensure Maori views are considered when engaging.
6. The Council will consider the language, accessibility and cultural needs in any engagement.
7. The Council will act honestly and openly when analysing and presenting any engagement results.
8. The Council will prominently outline a proposals' or decisions' cost in any engagement.

## Definitions

Community	A group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common. Includes interested parties, affected people and key stakeholders.
Consultation	A subset of engagement; a formal process where the community can present their views to the Council on a specific decision that is proposed and made public.

## Definitions

Decisions	Refers to all decisions made by or on behalf of Council including those made by officers under delegation. Decision implies that a proposal has been considered.
Engagement	Is a term used to describe the process of seeking information from the community to inform and assist decision making. There is a continuum of community involvement.
Significant and Significance	As defined in Section 5 of the LGA 2002 <b>Significance</b> , in relation to any issue, proposal, decision, or other matter that concerns or is before a local authority, means the degree of importance of the issue, proposal, decision, or matter, as assessed by the local authority, in terms of its likely impact on, and likely consequences for, - (a) The district or region: (b) Any persons who are likely to be particularly affected by, or interested in, the issue, proposal, decision, or matter: (c) The capacity of the local authority to perform its role, and the financial and other costs of doing so
Significant Activity	Is an activity (or group of activities) as listed below:  Any activity or group of activities where the total expenditure was in excess of 10% of the total annual Council expenditure. Total expenditure includes external interest expense and accounting depreciation.

## Definitions

Significant project or asset purchase	Any project or asset purchase where the total expenditure was in excess of 10% of the total annual Council expenditure.
Strategic Asset	A list of Strategic Assets of the Ōpōtiki District Council is contained in Schedule 1 of this policy. For the purpose of the Policy, the Council considers its strategic assets as a whole, because it is the asset class as a whole that delivers the service.

## Policy

9. Engaging with the community is needed to understand the views and preferences of people likely to be affected by or interested in a proposal or decision.
10. This policy applies to any proposal presented to the Council for a decision. It is applied in two steps:
  - a. Step 1 – Determining the significance of the proposal/decision.
  - b. Step 2 - Determining the requirement to engage or not (guided by the level of significance). If there is a requirement to engage, the level of engagement is set.
11. The Council will take into account the Principles as outlined earlier when assessing the degree of significance of proposals and decisions.
12. If a proposal or decision is affected by a number of the above principles, it is more likely to have a higher degree of significance.
13. Council is required to undertake a special consultative procedure as set out in Section 83 of the Local Government Act 2002 on certain matters (regardless of whether they are considered significant as part of this policy).
14. Differing levels of engagement may be required during the varying phases of decision-making on an issue, and for different stakeholders.
15. Joint Management Agreements, Memorandum of Understanding or any other similar high level agreements can be considered as a starting point when engaging with various bodies, including Māori.

16. When Council makes a decision that is significantly inconsistent with this policy, the steps identified in Section 80 of the Local Government Act 2002 will be undertaken.

## Criteria for Determining Significance

17. The following criteria will be used to determine whether the proposal or decision being considered by the Council is significant. If an issue exceeds one or more of the following criteria, the matter is more likely to have a high degree of significance.
  - Any transfer of ownership or control, or the construction, replacement or abandonment, of a strategic asset as outlined in Appendix 1 of this policy
  - A decision that will have a major and long-term impact on the capacity of the Council to carry out any activity identified in the Long Term Plan
  - A decision that will have a major and long-term impact on Council's Strategic Direction
  - A decision that will have a major and long-term impact on a wide range of people and/or groups who reflect the makeup of the District's community
  - The issue, proposal, or other matter that will have a major and long-term impact on Council's current level of service.

## SCHEDULE 1- STRATEGIC ASSETS

Section 5 of the Local Government Act requires the following to be listed in this Policy:

- a. any asset or group of assets listed in accordance with section 76AA(3) by the local authority; and
- b. any land or building owned by the local authority and required to maintain the local authority's capacity to provide affordable housing as part of its social policy; and

- c. any equity securities held by the local authority in—
  - (i) a port company within the meaning of the Port Companies Act 1988
  - (ii) an airport company within the meaning of the Airport Authorities Act 1966

The following is a list of assets or group of assets that the council needs to retain if it is to maintain its capacity to achieve or promote any outcome that it determines to be important to the current or future well-being of the community:

Strategic Asset	Note
Roading and Traffic Network	Includes footpaths, street lighting and off street parking
Wastewater Network	Includes land, pipes, pump stations and sewage ponds
Water Treatment Network	Includes land, pipes, pumps, reservoirs and treatment plants
Stormwater Network	Includes reticulation and pumps.
Harbour Development	
Reserves and Sport Fields	
Library	Includes Book collection
Public Toilets	
Cemeteries	
Cycleways	
Aerodrome	
Council's Administration Building	

## SCHEDULE 2 – COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GUIDE

Community engagement:

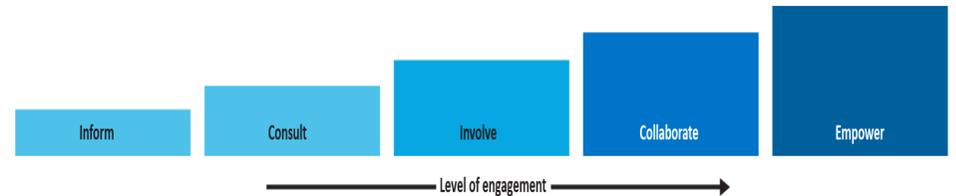
- is a process

- involves all or some of the public
- is focused on decision-making or problem-solving.

The model below shows the increasing level of public impact as you progress through the spectrum from left to right - 'inform' through to 'empower'. In simply 'informing' stakeholders there is no expectation of receiving feedback, and consequently there is a low level of public impact. At the other end of the spectrum, 'empowering' stakeholders to make decisions implies an increase in expectations and therefore an increased level of public impact.

It will not always be appropriate or practicable to conduct processes at the 'collaborate' or 'empower' end of the spectrum. Many minor issues will not warrant such an involved approach. Time and money may also limit what is possible on some occasions.

In general, the more significant an issue, the greater the need for community engagement.



When engaging with the community, Council will:

- Seek out and encourage contributions from people who may be affected by or interested in a decision
- Provide relevant, timely and balanced information so people can contribute in a meaningful way
- Provide a variety of appropriate ways for people to have their say
- Tell the community what the Council decision is and the reasons for that decision

Engagement tools and techniques

Over the time of decision making, Council may use a variety of engagement techniques on any issue or proposal and the tools may be adapted based on a range of other factors, including history and public awareness of the issue, stakeholder involvement, and timing related to other events and budgets. Council will also take into consideration that the community can feel 'over consulted' (stop asking us what we think and get on with it).

Each situation will be assessed according to both the issue and the phase of decision making and the individual circumstances it presents. The following table provides an example of the differing levels of engagement that might be considered appropriate, the types of tools associated with each level and the timing generally associated with these types of decisions/levels of engagement.

Level	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
<b>What does it involve</b>	One-way communication providing balanced and objective information to assist understanding about something that is going to happen or has happened.	Two-way communications designed to obtain public feedback about ideas on rationale, alternatives and proposals to inform decision making.	Participatory process designed to help identify issues and views to ensure that concerns and aspirations are understood and considered prior to decision-making.	Working together to develop understanding of all issues and interests to work out alternatives and identify preferred solutions.	The final decision making is in the hands of the public. Under the Local Government Act 2002, the Mayor and Councillors are elected to make decisions on behalf of their constituents.
<b>Types of issues that we might use this for</b>	Water restrictions. Temporary Road Closure. Adopt Annual Report. Emergency Works.	Regulation Policy such as Local Alcohol Policy. Developing and adopting a Bylaw. Adopt LTP or Annual Plan	Review of the Opotiki District Plan.	Sub Regional Spatial Plan	Election voting systems (MMP, STV or first past the post)
<b>Tools Council might use</b>	Websites Information flyer Public notices	Formal submissions and Hearings	Workshops Focus groups	External focus groups Other Council involvement	Binding referendum Local body elections

Level	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
<b>When the community can expect to be involved</b>	Council would generally advise the community once a decision is made	Council would advise the community once a draft decision is made and would generally provide the community with up to 4 weeks to participate and respond.	Council would generally provide the community with a greater lead in time to allow them time to be involved in the process.	Council would generally involve the community at the start to scope the issue, again after information has been collected and again when options are being considered.	Council would generally provide the community with a greater lead in time to allow them time to be involved in the process e.g. typically a month or more.