

Significance and Engagement Policy

1. Introduction

The purpose of local government includes enabling democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities. The consultation and engagement focus is an important function as engagement with the community produces better and more sustainable decision-making.

The Significance and Engagement Policy will guide how Gisborne District Council (Council) engages with its communities about important Council decisions.

This policy outlines the type of things that you can expect to be consulted about like: the sale of assets; the key issues in the Long Term Plan (LTP) and Annual Plan; a decision that will change a service that you expect and value, or something that will add cost to the ratepayer.

Tairāwhiti First!

Tairāwhiti Tangata First to see the light

Tairāwhiti Taonga First choice for people and lifestyle

Tairāwhiti Wawata First choice for enterprise and innovation

First place for the environment, culture and heritage

2. Significance and engagement

2.1 What do we mean by significance?

Significance refers to the degree of importance of an issue, proposal, decision or matter before Council in terms of its likely impact on:

- The wellbeing of the district
- Affected people and communities
- Council's ability to perform its role as a local authority and achieve its strategic objectives in the Long Term Plan.

These issues then form the basis for a criteria to assess the level of significance. (The criteria is outlined in part 3A). If the decision is assessed as important, the greater the requirement for engagement.

2.2 What do we mean by engagement?

Engagement describes the process of seeking information from the community to inform and assist decision-making. Council values and is committed to effective community engagement because better decisions are made when there is community input. Council's approach to engagement is outlined in Part 4.

3. How will we determine the significance of a decision?

Council will determine significance in two ways, outlined in A and B below:

3.1 Significance Criteria



All matters for Council decision will be assessed for its impact on the following:

- the effects on all or a large part of the Gisborne district
- the effects on individuals or specific communities including the impact on Māori
- the level or history of public interest in the matter or issue
- consistency with Council's current strategy and policy including the Strategic priorities
- impacts on Council's financial strategy, Long Term Plan and Annual Plan and levels of service (also including the Regional Land Transport Plan, if applicable)
- whether the decision is reversible.

Council officers will need to think about each of the six criteria and make a recommendation about the decision's significance to the elected members.

The final decision about the significance of any matter rests with elected members. When making this determination other factors may need to be considered; e.g. urgency, safety, commercial sensitivity and public good (refer to Part 5).

Each criteria can also determine the amount of engagement required. For example, if a single criteria is impacted highly, there may be a requirement for more targeted consideration and engagement.

3.2 Council's Strategic Assets

The policy needs to list the assets that Council considers to be strategic. Any asset listed is deemed significant under this policy and the appropriate level of engagement is required if there are any changes to the status of the asset under this definition (refer Appendix 2).

The assets and groups that Council considers to be strategic assets are as follows:

- the HB Williams Memorial Library
- the Gisborne district roading network as a whole
- the water supply network as a whole – including storage lakes, reservoirs, pump stations and reticulation, the

pipeline (including bridges and trestles), Waingake water treatment plant, Bushmere augmentation plant

- the land drainage system as a whole – including the stormwater pipe network, the Waipaoa River flood control system, the Te Karaka flood control system, other open river systems, waterways, wetlands and retention basins
- the sewage collection, treatment and disposal system as a whole – including the sewers, pump stations and the treatment station outfall
- the reserves lands as a whole – including land held under the Reserves Act and the land used for parks, gardens, sports fields, recreational areas and cemeteries
- the Council's swimming pool and built recreational facilities
- the system as a whole of off-street parking facilities owned or operated by Council
- Council's investment in community housing as a whole
- Gisborne Airport.

3.3 Procedure

1. Every agenda item requiring a decision of Council will require the author to consider significance and consequently, the corresponding engagement.

2. Council staff will apply an assessment tool to measure the significance of a matter for Council decision and include the assessment and result in the Council report. Some decisions are made in that report, and some are part of a longer and more inter-related decision making process.

3. If a matter is assessed as significant under the criteria then the staff member will indicate the level of engagement required for the matter and include an engagement plan with the report. An engagement plan will include:

- engagement objectives and outcomes
- key messages and target audiences
- risk / issue identification
- action plan (including resources and timeframes)
- report back and review.

4. Council (or the relevant committee) may accept the report writer's assessment of significance made in the report and, where relevant, the appropriate level and type of community engagement. Where the report writer's assessment of significance is not accepted, a separate resolution will be made to that effect.

5. This procedure is to be followed in every instance, except for reports going to the Hearings Committees, on decisions relating

to the Resource Management Act 1991 where significance has already been determined in accordance with that Act.

Council will report annually through its Annual Report on all decisions determined to be significant.

Regardless of consultation requirements under special purpose legislation, such as RMA, Council will still apply its community engagement framework to a particular matter (e.g. for pre-consultation and early engagement on plans, strategies and policies).

Council's approach to community engagement is outlined in Part 4 with practical examples listed in Appendix 1.

4. How will we consult and engage?

4.1 Council's approach to community engagement

Council's approach to community engagement is to:

- promote a sense of ownership of its decisions by the people of the district
- inform people and communities about issues that affect them
- provide opportunity for meaningful input into decisions
- create a sense of awareness of the diversity of opinion within the community
- show leadership
- enable staff to be innovators in the approaches that they recommend and take
- meet its legal obligations.

This is used to guide community engagement for all Council activity, including matters deemed significant under this policy.

It is important to acknowledge that preferences may be different for different issues and may change over time.

4.2 How communities want to engage

Communities and Tangata Whenua have told Council that they expect to contribute directly to decision-making.

They expect engagement to be coordinated and timely. Community advice to Council about engagement includes the following:

- ensure meaningful consultation on the design of town features
- the community is actively engaged in decisions affecting it

- encourage government agencies to improve their communication, coordination and consultation for the benefit of the community
- opportunities for early and meaningful input into significant decisions
- direct community participation in local decisions
- involve youth in planning and decision making
- involve elderly in planning and decision making
- talk to affected people about disability issues when planning
- greater Councillor and staff visibility
- regular community discussion forums
- innovative solutions and community engagement.

Community preferences will be surveyed every three years and will inform the methods and timing of consultation in each case.

4.3 Levels of engagement

There are many ways that Council and communities can engage in Council decision-making.

Council uses the framework shown below from the International Association of Public Participation to guide community engagement.

The greater the level of engagement the greater the level of involvement of communities in decision-making.

Examples of how this is applied are presented in Appendix 1.

LEVEL	GOAL
Inform	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.
Consult	To obtain feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.
Involve	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.
Collaborate	To partner with the public (or Stakeholders) in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.
Empower	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.

4.4 Engaging with Tangata Whenua and Māori

Council has obligations to Māori in Tairāwhiti ⁽²⁾. Council provides opportunities and capacity for Māori to contribute to its decision-making processes.

Existing general and project specific relationship processes between Council and Tangata Whenua will remain as a starting point for engagement, and changes to legislation may require we review and update our policies and processes to ensure they are consistent and implemented into Council practice.

For any significant decisions in relation to land or a body of water, Council will take into account the relationship of Māori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral land, water sites, waahi tapu, valued flora and fauna, and other taonga.

5. Council's commitment

There are times where we won't normally consult the community because the issue is routine, or operational, or because there is an emergency. We know that consultation "fatigue" or over-consultation can cause people to tune out of conversations with councils, so we want to concentrate on having the right conversations on the issues that are genuinely significant.

Here are some of the things that we won't generally be asking about:

- organisational decisions (e.g. staff changes and operational matters) that do not materially reduce a level of service
- emergency management activities during a state of emergency – Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002
- decisions taken to manage an urgent issue, or
- decisions to act where it is necessary to:
 - comply with the law
 - save or protect life, health or amenity
 - prevent serious damage to property
 - avoid, remedy or mitigate an adverse effect on the environment
 - protect the integrity of existing and future infrastructure and amenity.
- decisions that are commercially sensitive (e.g. awarding contracts)
- any decisions that are made by delegation/sub-delegation to officers

2 The 'Fostering Māori capacity to participate in Council decision making policy' outlines Council's approach to Māori policy, engagement and outcomes in the 2018 Long Term Plan

- entry or exit from a development agreement (private contract) under section 207A Local Government Act 2002 (LGA)
- decisions in relation to regulatory and enforcement activities.

6. What is the Special Consultative Procedure requirement?

In some cases the law says that Council must use a more formal process for engagement requiring specific procedures to be followed. This is known as the Special Consultative Procedure. Examples of when this may be the case are illustrated on the next page.

Recent changes in the Resource Management Act include the collaborative planning process which is an optional collaborative process in Part 4 of Schedule 1. It can be used as an alternative planning track for policy statements and plans. It is available where a council is undertaking a review, change, or preparing a new plan or policy statement, including a combined regional and district document.



7. Our decision-making process

We know that people need full and clear information to base their opinions on. You can expect that if we ask your views, we will always let you know:

Appendix 1: Engagement Tools

TOOLBOX: Examples of Council using Levels of Engagement

- what is the issue that requires a decision?
- how should the problem be defined? What is proposed?
- why?
- the options that we have
- our preferred option and why
- costs and rating impact, if any. What are the impacts, if any?
- how the community can have a say
- the timeframe and process
- how we will communicate the outcome.

8. Hearings and feedback

We will look at alternative approaches to hearings, where appropriate. When there's a hearings process:

- if we're asked to do so, Council will facilitate interpretation (including te reo Māori and sign language).
- there is no requirement under the amendment to the LGA to provide individual feedback but we do need to provide access to decisions. Our policy is to go further than the Act requires. Consequently:
 - we will acknowledge the receipt of any submission and notify the decision either by email or letter
 - we will make all decisions available online
 - we will provide free access to terminals at the HB Williams Memorial Library to residents and ratepayers so they can read decisions online.

9. Changes to the Significance and Engagement Policy

For the adoption of this Policy and subsequent three-yearly reviews, Council will ask people for their engagement preferences and will review those preferences each three-year term. It may also be amended from time to time.

* During the decision making a process, a range of engagement tools and methods may be needed over time. The level of engagement and consultation is determined by the significance of the issue or relationship. Examples of what this might look like have been provided below:

Type of engagement	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
What does it involve	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
When the community can expect to be involved	Council would generally advise the community once a decision is made When milestones are achieved	Council would advise the community once a draft decision is made and would generally provide the community at least four weeks to participate and respond	Council would generally provide the community with a greater lead in time to allow them 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 to be involved in the process
* Types of issues that we might use this for:	New services Safety e.g. trees coming down Rain & stormwater warnings Formulating plans Formal reporting	Policies Bylaws Strategic documents Reserve Management Plans	Long Term Plan Pre-draft initiation (incl. RMA matters) Strategies Plans Policies	Joint management Formal partnerships Community revitalisation programmes	Election voting systems (MMP, STV or First Past the Post) Capacity-building
What does it involve	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
When the community can expect to be involved	Website, social media Information flyer, QR codes Public notices Email banner Print media Library display Radio	Formal submissions and hearings Focus groups Phone surveys Public events – A&P Show, Farmer's Market Text messaging	Workshops Focus groups Citizen's panel Scoping or issues paper Website Social media prototyping Community meetings	External working groups (involving community experts) Memorandum of Understanding Contracts Service agreements	Training workshops Media - encouraging people to vote

Type of engagement	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
	Council fora – committees, hearings Submissions process		Stakeholder database		
EXAMPLES: 2015-17	Stage two Asset Transfer to CCTO, Gisborne Holdings Ltd (GHL) [Top 10 Holiday Park and Vehicle Testing Station] 2016	Plan changes Bylaw reviews (Freedom Camping 2016, Public Places Stock Control 2017) Titirangi Reserve Management Plan review 2016 Comms survey 2017 Community Facilities Survey 2017 Gambling Venue Policy 2015 Stage One asset transfer to GHL (Council administration buildings) 2016	Freshwater Advisory Group Parking policy 2017 Urban Development Strategy 2015	Community Facilities Strategy Governance Group Titirangi Co-management Working Party Township Planning (Te Karaka, Tokomaru Bay, Muriwai/Manutuke) Alfred Cox Masterplan	Patutahi Reserve Board He Huarahi hei Whai Oranga/Tairāwhiti Economic Action Plan 2017 Activate Tairāwhiti/Eastland Community Trust

Appendix 2: Definitions

Term	Definition
Community	A network of people and organisations linked together by common factors. This might be a network of people linked together geographically i.e. in one place, or linked by a common interest or identity.
Engagement	Making meaningful connections between groups of people.
Significance	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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the current and future social, economic, environmental, or cultural wellbeing of the district or region any persons who are likely to be particularly affected by, or interested in, the issue, proposal, decision or matter the capacity of the local authority to perform its role, and the financial and other costs of doing so.
Strategic Asset	An asset or group of assets that the local authority needs to retain if the local authority is to maintain the local authority's capacity to achieve or promote any outcome that the local authority determines to be important to the current or future well-being of the community; and includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> any asset or group of assets listed in accordance with section 76AA by the local authority; and

Term	Definition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="339 387 1481 443">• 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<li data-bbox="339 465 1481 622">• any equity securities held by the local authority in:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="403 517 1481 551">◦ a port company within the meaning of the Port Companies Act 1988<li data-bbox="403 589 1481 622">◦ an airport company within the meaning of the Airport Authorities Act 1966.