



Kaupapa Whakapāpātanga me te Hiranga

Significance and Engagement Policy

'When' and 'how' Council will engage with its communities about important Council decisions



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Introduction

The purpose of local government includes enabling democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities. Engagement with the community is an important part of fulfilling that purpose.

What is the purpose of this policy?

The Significance and Engagement Policy guides 'when' and 'how' Gisborne District Council (Council) engages with its communities about important Council decisions. The 'when' to engage is determined by the significance of the decision being made. The 'how' is guided by the engagement framework in this policy.

He aha ngā whakarite matua?

What are the key terms?

The key terms used in this policy are 'significance', 'engagement', and 'strategic asset'.

What do we mean by significance?

Significance is the importance of an issue, proposal, decision or matter before Council. It is measured by its likely impact on the criteria listed in Part 3 of this policy. The criteria have been developed based on three key factors:

- The economic, social, cultural and environmental 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.

What do we mean by engagement?

Engagement is the process of seeking information from the community to inform and assist decision-making, and providing the community information on the outcome of a decision-making process. Council values and is committed to meaningful community engagement so that important decisions are made with input from the community. Engagement can also be targeted with specific groups or sections of the community rather than with the community as a whole. Council's approach to engagement, including when we will not engage with our community, is outlined in Part 4.

What do we mean by strategic asset?

Under the Local Government Act (LGA) 2002 this policy is required to identify 'strategic assets'. Strategic assets are defined in LGA 2002 as an asset (or group of assets) that needs to be retained so that Council can maintain its capacity to achieve or promote any outcome that Council determines to be important to the current or future well-being of the community. These assets include:

- any asset or group of assets listed in this policy;
- any land or building owned by Council and required to maintain Council's capacity to provide affordable housing as part of its social policy; and
- any equity securities held by Council in:
 - a port company within the meaning of the Port Companies Act 1988;
 - an airport company within the meaning of the Airport Authorities Act 1966.

Ka pēhea tātau e mōhio i te hiranga o tētahi whakatau?

How will we determine the significance of a decision?

Council will determine significance in two ways - criteria, and named strategic assets.

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
- the impact on the relationship of Māori including the importance of tikanga and their relationship with ancestral land, water sites, waahi tapu, valued flora and fauna, and other taonga
- the level or history of public interest in the matter or issue
- the financial impact
- consistency with Council's current strategies and policies including the Strategic Priorities in the Long Term Plan
- impacts on Council's, Long Term Plan, Annual Plan, and levels of service (also including the Regional Land Transport Plan, if applicable)
- whether the decision is reversible.

Climate change is an important consideration for Council that is assessed using a Climate Impact Statement rather than being a criteria for significance. This enables a more detailed analysis to be conducted and also proposes mitigation/adaptation methods.

Council officers provide a recommendation of a decision's significance to 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.

Council's strategic assets

The list of assets named below are considered to be 'strategic assets' by Council. However not all decisions made about these assets will be significant. For example, the roading network as a whole is strategic but the purchase or sale of small land parcels that make up the network may not amount to a significant decision.

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

- the HB Williams Memorial Library
- the Council's 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), land at Waingake, and water treatment plants
- 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 Olympic Pool Complex 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
- Council's shares in substantive¹ council controlled organisations
- ownership of the Gisborne Airport site.

¹ A substantive council controlled organisation is a council-controlled organisation that is either wholly owned or wholly controlled by the Council and either: is responsible for the delivery of a significant service or activity on behalf of the Council; or owns or manages assets with a value of more than \$10 million.

Ka pēhea tātau e tauwhāinga?

How will we engage?

Council's approach to community engagement

Council communicates and engages with our community all the time to deliver our work - whether it's to gather input at the start of a process, get feedback on a proposal, or just keep people informed of decisions that have been made and work that is being undertaken. There is a responsibility to communicate the work we do with the right information, at the right time, in the right way.

Council has a number of different legal requirements for engagement depending on the matter being decided. The legal requirements are the minimum standards that we then build on in our approach to community engagement.

Council's approach to community engagement is to:

- promote a sense of ownership of Council decisions by the community
- inform people and communities about issues that affect them
- provide opportunity for people and communities to have meaningful input into Council decisions
- create a sense of awareness of the diversity of opinion within the community
- show leadership
- deliver innovation and be responsive in all communication and interactions with our community.

Council's preferences for engagement methods may be different for different types of issues and opportunities, and that these preferences may change over time.

Council, when engaging with affected or interested communities, will recognise the relationship elected members have with the location, specific communities and individuals affected by consultation or engagement initiatives. Participation of elected members in Council engagement is an essential component for our engagement approach.

How communities want to engage

Communities are dynamic and evolve rapidly. Technology is changing the way that our communities want to engage with us and there is an increased uptake and desire for online engagement. Council's engagement methods are evolving to meet new platforms that our communities use.

Face-to-face opportunities are still important as these opportunities strengthen relationships, and provide visibility and accountability.

Council will continuously review feedback from communities about engagement processes and continue to evolve our methods on an ongoing basis rather than only reviewing methods at a fixed point in time.

Phases of engagement for Council's decision-making processes at Council and Committees

Council uses three phases of engagement to guide our engagement approach and method. The level of significance determines how many phases of engagement will be undertaken. More information is in Appendices 1 and 2.

1. Early engagement	2. Consultation	3. Promotion
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We'll engage with affected communities in the planning or development of concepts for proposed documents or work programmes, to:• identify needs or aspirations• find out what people want us to change or improve• ask for input into solutions or options.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• After drafting proposed documents, changes or work programmes, we present actions, options, implications and benefits to get submissions from affected groups or the wider community, to:• check it reflects their input or desired outcomes• find out if they agree or disagree with the proposal or preferred options• identify if there are any further things to consider before we implement the proposal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We'll inform, educate or promote to our community what we're doing and how it affects them. This is generally when work has been planned, a decision has been made, or change is occurring.

Engagement on other matters

Not all matters that Council will engage with the community on are linked to a decision-making process through Council and its committees. Examples include decisions made under officer delegations and decisions made through partnership models.

Some of these other matters may have engagement requirements under legislation (e.g. consent notification process) and others may not.

In some cases the different phases of engagement used by Council in its decision-making process will be applied under these other matters. In addition or instead of these phases Council may have a collaborative engagement process and decision-making model with a defined group/s, or empower a defined group/s to make a decision/s under a clearly defined framework.

There will also be matters that may be both subject to a Council decision-making process at Council or a Committee as well as another type of engagement outlined below.

Type	How we will engage with the community
<p>Officer delegated decision</p> <p>Example:</p> <p>Road closure for works notifications</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officers also make a number of decisions every day under their delegations that won't be communicated broadly to the community. However, some decisions made under an officer's delegated authority may require a 'promotion' phase of engagement with one or more communities or households. • In exercising their delegated authority an officer might also conduct a 'Engagement' phase with a focused set of individuals, households, or communities. • An officer may collaborate with a focused set of individuals, households, or communities in exercising their delegated authority.
<p>Decision from a formal partnership model</p> <p>Example: Joint Management Agreement with Te Rūnanganui o Ngāti Porou for the Waiapu River catchment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This model is a collaborative decision-making environment with a specified interested group/s on a defined area of interest. • There is a high level of engagement between Council and its partners but other phases of engagement ('engagement', 'consultation' or 'promotion') might also need to be extended to other individuals, households, or communities on a case-by-case basis.
<p>Collaborative decision with other entities</p> <p>Example:</p> <p>Rau Tipu Rau Ora – Covid-19 Recovery Plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council works with a number of different entities in a variety of areas, including central government agencies. • There is a high level of engagement between Council and these entities on the projects/programmes they are working on but other phases of engagement ('engagement', 'consultation' or 'promotion') might also need to be extended to other individuals, households, or communities on a case-by-case basis.

Type	How we will engage with the community
<p>New central government requirements</p> <p>Examples:</p> <p>Building Act amendments</p> <p>Resource Management Act amendments</p> <p>Local Government Act amendments</p> <p>Dog Control Act amendments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council is the regulator for a number of central government regulations and legislative requirements. • Although the relevant central government agencies communicate these changes. Council chooses in some instances to provide further engagement with its communities through a 'promotion' phase to increase awareness and understanding. The 'promotion' phase is also sometimes required to communicate changes to existing Council processes or that there is now a new process.
<p>Civil defence operations and other emergencies led by other agencies</p> <p>Examples:</p> <p>Weather warnings</p> <p>Tsunami warnings</p> <p>Preparation and personal resilience for different events</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council typically conducts a 'promotion' phase of engagement for any emergency happening in Tairāwhiti or nationally. This will include sharing material from other agencies as well as creating and sharing original material. • Council is responsible for civil defence in Tairāwhiti and part of this is readiness and resilience, not just engaging when an emergency event is happening. This will include sharing material from other agencies as well as creating and sharing original material.
<p>Community-led decision</p> <p>Examples:</p> <p>Township plans</p> <p>Patutahi Reserve Board</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council delegates decision-making power to a specified group/s within a clearly defined process or framework. This may be through a provision in a legislative framework or a Council-set framework.

Engaging with tangata whenua and Māori

Council has obligations to Māori in Tairāwhiti². Council provides opportunities and capacity for Māori to contribute to its decision-making processes.

In some cases the different phases of engagement used by Council in its decision-making process will be used. In addition or instead of these phases Council may have a collaborative process or decision-making model with a defined iwi/hapū/whānau/group, or empower a defined iwi/hapū/whānau/group to make a decision/s under a clearly defined framework.

Existing general and project-specific relationship processes between Council and tangata whenua are the starting point for engagement. Any changes to legislation may require a review of our policies and processes for engaging with tangata whenua and Māori to ensure they are legally compliant, and reflected in Council practice.

1. Inform	2. Engage	3. Consult/ Involve	4. Collaborate	5. Empower
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We'll provide Māori with balanced and objective information to assist in understanding the problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We'll create opportunity to provide feedback on a defined issue and preferred option, alternative options and participate in the hearing process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We'll work directly with Māori to ensure concerns and aspirations are understood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We'll partner in each aspect of the decision and identification of preferred solution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We'll place final decision making in the hands of Māori

² The 'Fostering Māori Capacity to Participate in Council Decision-making Policy' outlines Council's approach to Māori policy, engagement and outcomes.

When we will not engage with our community

There are times where we won't normally engage with the community because the issue/opportunity is routine, or operational, or because there is an emergency. We want to concentrate on having the right conversations on the issues that are genuinely significant for our communities.

Here are some of the things that we won't generally engage with our communities about:

- organisational decisions (e.g. staff changes and operational matters) that do not materially reduce a level of service
- decisions that are consistent with Council's Long Term Plan or another policy or plan that have already been subject to consultation required by legislation or this policy
- emergency management activities during a state of emergency
- decisions taken to manage an urgent issue
- 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 officer decisions that are made under delegation/sub-delegation
- entry or exit from a development agreement (private contract) under section 207A Local Government Act 2002
- decisions in relation to regulatory and enforcement activities.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Engagement matrix

Staff must consider the required engagement for a decision or work programme as part of their assessment of significance.

The three-phase engagement model focuses on the connection between significance and engagement in the decision-making process.

If a decision or work programme is considered to have an overall 'High' significance under this policy Council will conduct three phases of engagement (Early Engagement, Consultation, Promotion) as part of the process. The process will start with engagement as part of the design phase, consultation on a proposal, and promotion of the final outcome.

If a decision or work programme is considered to have an overall 'Medium' significance under this policy Council will conduct two phases of engagement (Consultation, Promotion) as part of the process. The process will start with consultation on a proposal, and promotion of the final outcome.

If a decision or work programme is considered to have an overall 'Low' significance under this policy Council will conduct one phase of engagement (Promotion) to communicate the final outcome.

The phases of engagement are sequential – early engagement comes before consultation, consultation comes before promotion.

High significance	Medium significance	Low significance
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Early engagement• Consultation• Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consultation• Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promotion

Appendix 2: Phases of Engagement

Phases	Early Engagement	Consultation	Promotion
	(Early engagement)	(Formal Engagement and Special Consultative Procedure)	(Informing and Educating)
Purpose	<p>We'll engage with affected communities in the planning or development of concepts for proposed documents or work programmes, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify needs or aspirations • find out what people want us to change or improve • ask for input into solutions or options. 	<p>After drafting proposed documents, changes or work programmes, we present actions, options, implications and benefits to get submissions from affected groups or the wider community, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • check it reflects their input or desired outcomes • find out if they agree or disagree with the proposal or preferred options • identify if there are any further things to consider before we implement the proposal. 	<p>We'll inform, educate or promote to our community what we're doing and how it affects them. This is generally when work has been planned, a decision has been made, or change is occurring.</p>
Outcome	<p>We'll use feedback to develop direction, content or actions in proposals or work programmes.</p>	<p>We'll use submissions to determine final recommendations and inform elected members in making decisions.</p>	<p>Communication is typically one-way, however it's intended that the community is aware or takes action as a result. We evaluate if communication is successful via measures of action and/or through feedback where necessary.</p>
Timeframe	<p>2 – 6 weeks depending on significance</p>	<p>4 weeks (minimum)</p>	<p>Following decision or prior to implementing work. As required to provide ample promotion or notice.</p>

Phases	Early Engagement	Consultation	Promotion
Delivery	<p>Surveying</p> <p><i>What:</i> Surveys, discussion threads, polls, webform or mail out form to database.</p> <p><i>Who:</i> Targeted groups or communities.</p> <p><i>How:</i> Promoted online, at council premises or in person via hui.</p> <p>Face to Face</p> <p><i>What:</i> Meeting face to face, workshops, focus groups or events to present and collect input.</p> <p><i>Who:</i> Requested with and by affected interest groups, attended by staff and/or relevant partner organisations.</p> <p><i>How:</i> Community-based meetings, events or locations.</p>	<p>Consultation document / Statement of proposal and submission form</p> <p><i>What:</i> Draft documents printed and online.</p> <p><i>Who:</i> Participants in early engagement, interested and affected stakeholders.</p> <p><i>How:</i> Distributed and promoted via website, direct mail / email, online, at council premises or in person via councillors.</p> <p>Face to Face</p> <p><i>What:</i> Drop-ins, meetings, deputations or hearings (SCP³ only) where people discuss/present their view to elected members.</p> <p><i>Who:</i> Interested or affected stakeholders and elected members</p> <p><i>How:</i> Meetings can be requested by community members with elected members, presentations to committees or council, or elected members can schedule regular meetings or drop in sessions.</p>	<p>Background documents and information posted to website</p> <p>Guides, booklets, pamphlets</p> <p>Direct mail, email</p> <p>News media</p> <p>Social media, video</p> <p>Advertising campaign - radio, digital, print</p> <p>Signage, Billboards</p> <p>Face to Face</p> <p><i>What:</i> Staff-led or community-led education workshops, seminars, events etc.</p> <p><i>Who:</i> Delivered by staff.</p> <p><i>How:</i> Communication plans and campaigns.</p>

³ SCP – Special Consultative Procedure as defined in section 83 of the Local Government Act 2002

Appendix 3: Significance Assessment Guidance

Criteria	Higher significance	Lesser significance
The effects on all or a large part of the Gisborne district	The decision would have a major impact on all or a large part of the district	The decision would have a lower impact on all or a large part of the district
The effects on individuals or specific communities	The decision would have a major impact on individuals or specific communities	There is a lower impact on individuals or specific communities
The impact on the relationship of Māori including their tikanga (culture and traditions) with their ancestral land, water sites, waahi tapu, valued flora and fauna, and other taonga	The decision would have a major on the relationship of Māori including the importance of tikanga and their relationship with ancestral land, water sites, waahi tapu, valued flora and fauna, and other taonga	The decision would have a lower impact on the relationship of Māori including the importance of tikanga and their relationship with ancestral land, water sites, waahi tapu, valued flora and fauna, and other taonga
The level or history of public interest in the matter or issue	There is a history of the matter generating wide and intense public interest and a reasonable expectation that this will again be so	There is no history of the matter generating widespread interest
The financial impact	<p>The impact is major and/or long term on either debt levels or rates</p> <p>There is a major and long term financial impact</p> <p>The decision results in a major departure from the Financial Strategy</p>	<p>The impact on debt levels or rates is of a low level</p> <p>There is a low level of long term financial impact</p> <p>There is no or little impact on the Financial Strategy</p>
Consistency with Council's current strategies and policies including the Strategic priorities	The decision results in a major departure from Council's current strategies and policies including the Strategic Priorities (Te taiao, Te hanganga, Ngā tikanga āwhina tāngata)	The decision is consistent with Council's current strategies and policies including the Strategic Priorities (Te taiao, Te hanganga, Ngā tikanga āwhina tāngata)

Criteria	Higher significance	Lesser significance
Impacts on Council's Long Term Plan, Annual Plan, and levels of service (also including the Regional Land Transport Plan, if applicable)	<p>Full exit from an existing activity or adding a new group of activities</p> <p>There is a major and/or long term change to services</p>	<p>Minor change to how Council manages groups of activities</p> <p>There is a medium to low level of change to services</p>
The decision involves a strategic asset	The decision involves the sale or transfer of more than 20% of a strategic asset	The decision does not impact on Council's ownership of the asset
Whether the decision is reversible	The decision is irreversible and would impact negatively on future generations to a high degree	The decision is reversible, or if it is irreversible, the impact on future generations would not be high