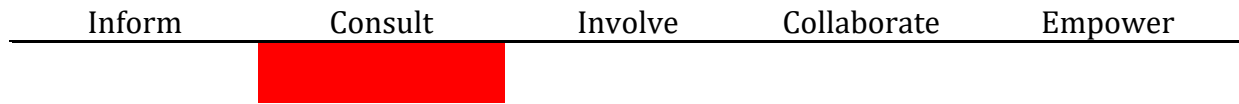


Guidelines - Community Forums



Level of participation adapted from the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

Nature of the Meeting

Community Forums will generally be held where the community has indicated a need for discussion on a matter or where Council believes that the holding of a local forum on a matter will assist Council in engaging with the Community.

Community Forums may be ward specific or may be broader than one ward.

Community Forums will generally be based around the need to communicate and discuss an identified issue/issues.

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP²) Spectrum is designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any community engagement program. The five levels of participation are defined as Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate and Empower. In relation to the IAP² Spectrum, the level adapted to this style of meeting is CONSULT.

Administration

Community Forums will principally be organised and administered by the Governance Unit in conjunction with any other unit involved in the issues scheduled to be discussed.

The number of Community Forums will largely be dependent on community need.

Format and Content

- A set agenda will be prepared for a Community Forum. *(Note where feasible the community may be invited to pre-submit topics/questions for the Forum on-line in advance of the Forum.)*
- Information displays, fact sheets, discussion papers, Q&A sheets will be arranged for each event by the department who has the expert carriage of the topic/topics to be discussed at the Community Forum. Format templates will be provided by Governance (in conjunction with Media and Communications) for each of these types of documents and will be CGD branded in a consistent and effective manner.
- Events will generally be held on business days (Mondays excluded) only and should typically start at a time that suits those who can only attend outside of business hours.
- All Councillors should be invited to attend Community Forums. Where the issues to be discussed are largely of a ward nature, the Ward Councillors should be seated in a manner where it is acknowledged that they are the representatives for that Ward.
- Community Forums will be chaired by the Mayor where the event is non-ward based. Where the Community Forum is Ward based the Forum should be chaired by a Ward Councillor established by agreement between the respective Councillors.

- The CEO/Director or the Mayor/Councillor may give a summary of the issues to be discussed at the event. A Council officer may give a presentation regarding any of the issues raised at the event. Each Councillor will be given the opportunity to speak on any of the issues presented on the night, or give their own presentation.

Staff Attendance

- Community Forums will be attended by appropriate staff to address the issues that are contained on the Agenda.
- A staff member nominated to take minutes will also attend.

Location of Forum

- The location of the Community Forum will be determined having regard for:
 - the number of community members expected to attend;
 - the relative room size and number of tables and chairs available at the facility;
 - the ideal need to meet with the community close to the issue of concern;
 - the likely weather conditions and the availability of heating/cooling in regard to this;
 - security/parking and the minimisation of any adverse impact on the immediate surrounding areas.

Advertising

Where possible, Community Forums will be advertised in “The City” edition the month it is scheduled to happen. *(NB: A minimum of six weeks lead time is required and frequently the community desire to seek a Community Forum may not allow for this to occur.)*

Forums will be advertised within the front six pages of local papers two weeks before they are scheduled to occur. A media release will also be sent to each local newspaper in the week prior to the event. .

A letter box invitation drop will be organised three weeks before the event. *(Where lead time permits.)* The extent of the letter box invitation will be determined in discussion with the Ward Councillors having regard to the issue/issues to be considered.

Signage will be placed in each Council Customer Service Centre and Library three weeks before each event. Signage will also be placed at the venue if permitted.

Advertisement of the Community Forum will also be placed on Councils website.

Attendance

An Attendance Register will be provided at each event. Governance officers will ensure that attendees are registered and will take notes of any discussion and questions raised. These will be provided to the relevant officers after the meeting for action if required and will be noted in a register for follow up.

Minutes of the Community Forum will be made available on-line via Council’s website.

Catering

Tea and coffee will be provided prior to the commencement of the Forum and at the discretion of the Ward Councillors. Sandwiches, cakes and light refreshments may be provided at the conclusion of the Forum to encourage less formal interaction to occur.

Governance

A Community Forum will be subject to legislation under the *Local Government Act 1989* in relation to assemblies of council and conflicts of interest.

No Community Forums can be scheduled to take place during a three-month period prior to a Municipal Election. Community Forums should also not be held during the three month period prior to State and Federal elections when the issue is of State or Federal significance.

Conduct

All Forums will be held in an environment where respect is shown to all participants. Poor conduct will not be condoned or tolerated from any participant. It is the responsibility of the "Chair" to call any poor or inappropriate conduct and take steps to remove the offending party from the forum.