

Te Hihira me te Whakapānga Kaupapa Here

Significance and Engagement Policy

Executive Summary

The Council is responsible for making decisions on behalf of its communities. We engage with our communities every day and in different ways. This can range from simple messages to keep an individual or group informed, or it can be a two-way process where we ask the community for their viewpoint. This information is used to inform the decisions the Council makes.

This policy provides guidance to the community about when they can expect to be informed about a proposal, or be asked for their view on an issue, to feed into the decision making process.

Purpose

This policy establishes an approach for determining the significance of Council decisions and sets out when and how we will engage with communities in our decision making, relative to the significance of the decision.

*We want to:
have the right conversations - with the right
people - about the right issues*

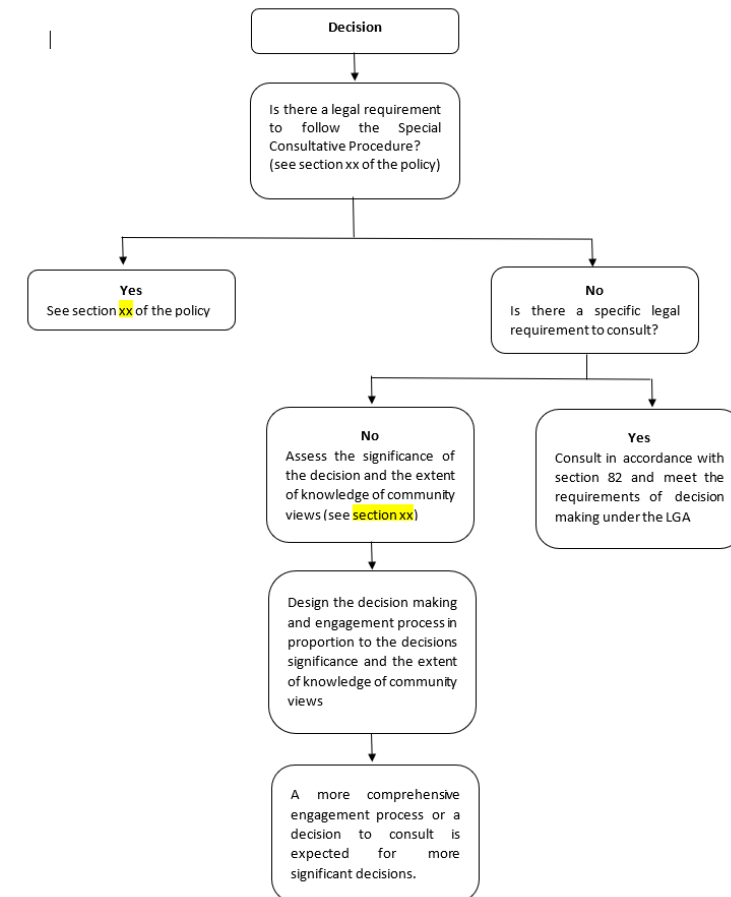
Objectives

The objectives of this policy are:

- To enable the Council and its communities to identify the degree of significance attached to particular issues, proposals, assets, decisions and activities.
- To let communities know how and when they can expect to be engaged in the Council's decision making processes.
- To inform the Council from the beginning of a decision making process about the extent, form and type of engagement required.
- To ensure that the Council meets all legislative requirements for consultation and community engagement, including the requirements of section 76AA of the Local Government Act 2002 (LGA 2002).

Policy

1. Process overview diagram



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Significance and Engagement Policy

2. Determining Significance

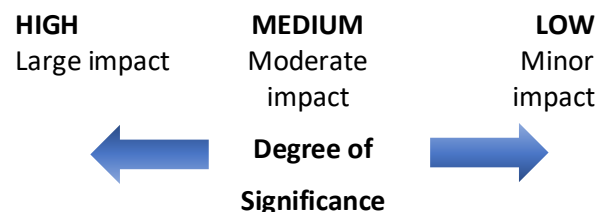
We first need to consider the level of significance in relation to the proposal, asset, decision or activity.

The following sections provide the step by step process for how we determine significance.

2.1 Assessment

For each decision an assessment will be undertaken by the report writer using the following thresholds and criteria, to determine significance:

2.1.1 Degree of significance



2.1.2 Criteria to determine significance

Council officers will need to think about the following five criteria, and make a recommendation to the elected members about the decision's significance. The final decision about the significance of any matter rests with elected members.

Criteria	Measure
Degree	The number of residents and ratepayers affected and the degree to which they would be affected by the decision or proposal.
Levels of service	The achievement of, or ability to achieve, the Council's stated levels of service as set out in the Long Term Plan.
Decision	Whether this type of decision, proposal or issue has a history of generating wide public interest in South Taranaki.
Financial	The impact of the decision or proposal on the overall budget or whether it is included in an approved Long Term Plan and the Council's ability to carry out its existing or proposed functions and activities now and in the future.
Reversible	The degree to which the decision or proposal is reversible.
Environment	The degree of impact the decision would have on the environment.

2.2 Strategic Assets

Under section 76AA (3) of the LGA 2002, the Council must list the assets it considers to be strategic assets. It has considered the previous list and re-confirmed that the following assets or groups of assets are strategically important to achieve and promote the current and future well-being of the South Taranaki community:

- All roading networks;
- All solid waste networks (excluding buildings);
- All water supply networks (excluding buildings);
- All wastewater networks (excluding buildings);
- All stormwater networks (excluding buildings); and
- Housing for the elderly.

Where a strategic asset is a network, or has many components, decisions can be made on individual components within the network without being regarded as significant, unless that component substantially affects the level of service provided to the community.

Decisions can be made to physically alter strategic assets to prevent an immediate hazardous situation arising or repair an asset due to damage from an emergency or unforeseen situation. Any decision relating to the sale or transfer, or sale of a shareholding of any of the above mentioned assets, is a significant matter and will trigger the Special Consultative Procedure (SCP).

See also section 3.6 (Determining when not to engage).

2.3 Requirements for reports:

2.3.1 Every agenda item requiring a Council decision will require the report writer to consider significance and engagement, as defined within this policy.

2.3.2 Each decision will be considered case by case to determine significance.

2.3.3 The consideration, disclosure and engagement will be proportional to the significance of the decision.

3. Engagement

After assessing the level of significance, we decide on the level of engagement required.

3.1 Principles of engagement

- **Genuine** – we will engage honestly, and will respect and listen to the community’s views with an open mind, and will give due consideration to them when making decisions.

- **Timely** – we will engage with the community as early as practicable. We will allow time for participants to contribute, and for them to be able to raise points on the issue.
- **Purposeful** – we will be clear about the purpose of the engagement and the ability and scope of the engagement to influence the decision.
- **Inclusive and accessible** – we will engage in a way that encourages participation by all who are likely to be affected by, or are interested in, a decision.
- **Recognition of diversity** – we will try to engage in ways that are appropriate to the issue and those we are seeking to engage, having regard to their culture, age, and ability.
- **Informed** – we will provide clear, easy to understand and objective information relating to the engagement, and ensure it is readily available so participants can make informed contributions.

3.2 Determine level of engagement

We have identified four levels of engagement that we may use to convey information to the community on decisions we make.

Engagement assessment levels

Level	Goal
Inform	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to help them understand the problems, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.
Consult	To obtain public 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 in each aspect of the decision, including the development of

alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.

3.3 How we will engage

3.3.1 We will communicate across multiple channels to reach ratepayers and residents. This may include:

- Council’s website
- Sent with rates notices - *Southlink Extra*
- Local newspapers (*Southlink* and public notification)
- Email
- Social media
- Antenno
- Face to face meetings / events
- Online surveys
- Other means of communication on a case by case basis

3.3.2 For any engagement above level “Inform”, an officer must complete a communications plan and or engagement plan. [See link here:](#)

3.4 Providing information

Depending on the level of engagement (when we will inform, consult, involve or collaborate), we will generally provide information on:

- What is proposed?
- Why?
- What options are available?

- Our preferred option, and why, when it’s appropriate to say so.
- Costs and rating impact, if applicable.
- How the community can have its say.
- The timeframe and the process.
- How we will communicate the outcome.

There will be times when engagement will mean that not all of the information listed above can be provided, depending on the level of engagement we have decided to use.

3.5 Engagement with Māori

The LGA 2002 provides principles and requirements to facilitate participation of Māori in local decision making processes.

Our goal is greater engagement with Māori, which includes strengthened and ongoing partnerships. We aim to receive advice, appropriate information and understanding from Iwi groups about the potential

***We want to:
concentrate on having the right conversations - on the issues that are genuinely significant to the South Taranaki community.***

implications and/or effects of proposals on tangata whenua values.

Our engagement with Māori is outlined in He Pou Tikanga / Ngā Iwi-Council Partnerships Strategy

3.6 Determining when not to engage

There are times when the Council will not consult with the community, because the issue is routine, or operational, we must meet certain standards, or because there is an emergency. We also want to strike the right balance, and not over-consult. ‘Consultation fatigue’ could result in the community tuning out of conversations with us.

Here are some examples of things we won’t be asking about:

- Organisational decisions such as staff changes and operational matters that do not 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;
- Decisions that are commercially sensitive (for example, awarding contracts).
- Any decisions made by delegation/sub delegation to officers.
- Entry or exit from a development agreement (private contract) as per section 207A LGA 2002.
- Decisions in relation to regulatory and enforcement activities.
- When we are not required to consult by law, we can consider making a decision without consultation on a case by case basis.

4. Formal Consultation

4.1 Special Consultative Procedure

Some legislation specifically requires us to use the Special Consultative Procedure (SCP) to engage with the public. This is a very prescribed process set out in section 83 of the LGA 2002. The SCP is the most common type of formal consultation we undertake. This process is required for some plans and processes, including but not limited to, adopting or amending a Long Term Plan or bylaw.

The SCP process requires us to prepare a statement of proposal and make it publicly available. We are required to collect feedback from the public in the form of submissions for a minimum of one month, and allow each submitter the opportunity to present their views at a hearing.

- Protect the integrity of existing and future infrastructure and amenity.

If the SCP is required, we must use the process described in the LGA 2002, and we are not required to undertake an assessment using sections 2 and 3 of this policy.

4.2 Hearings and Feedback

- Hearings are held at the Council Chambers, Albion Street, Hāwera, unless otherwise designated.
- Submitters can give their feedback using audio link or audio-visual link. We provide free internet access and terminals at every LibraryPlus in the District.
- We can facilitate interpretation, including Te Reo Māori and New Zealand sign language.
- We will acknowledge the receipt of any submission.
- We notify the decision by email or letter and on the Council's website.

5. Definitions

The Council is the South Taranaki District Council (elected members and/or officers).

6. Review of Policy

The Significance and Engagement Policy will be reviewed every three years, as part of the Long Term Plan process, to ensure it reflects the way in which the Council engages with its communities.

Assessment Matrix

	Criteria		Explanation		Assessment score (number)
2.2	1. Strategic asset?	Yes	Is it a strategic asset where levels of service are impacted?	Yes	3
				No	0
		No		0	
Determining Significance (section 2.1.2)	2. Number of people affected?		LOW Less than 100		1
			MEDIUM Less than 500 but more than 100		2
			HIGH Greater than 500		3
	3. Degree of impact on people affected		Criteria 3-9 require qualitative assessment. Remember: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Front page newspaper test • Impact on individuals and groups • Potential benefit vs. risks • Financial cost of the outcome • Potential precedent set • Related to land or water? • Assessed against environmental sustainability and climate change criteria? • Of political interest N/A = 0 L = 1 M = 2 H = 3		
	4. Impact on levels of service				
	5. Level of potential community interest				
	6. Cost of proposal				
	7. Is the decision reversible? Yes = 0, No = 2				
8. Degree of impact on the environment					
3.5	9. Impact on Māori				
Total					
Level of significance			LOW	Score of 10 or less	
			MEDIUM	Score between 11 and 19	

	HIGH	Score of 20 or above	
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Once the level of significance has been calculated from the matrix, this decides the engagement level to be used, as follows:

Level of significance	Engagement level
LOW	Consultation may not be required, or inform only (case-by-case basis)
MEDIUM	<u>Must</u> inform, consult or involve.
HIGH	Must consult, involve or collaborate.

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Determining Significance guidance

Criteria	Measure	High	Medium	Low
Degree	The number of residents and ratepayers affected and the degree to which they are affected by the decision or proposal.	Impacts a large proportion of the community. <i>(for example, change in rubbish collection)</i>	Impacts a subgroup or groups within the community <i>(for example, creation of neighbourhood playground)</i>	Impacts an individual person or household. <i>(for example, removal of one light on the roadside outside a house)</i>
Levels of service	The achievement of, or ability to achieve, the Council's stated levels of service as set out in the Long-Term Plan 2024-2034.	Ceasing or commencing a service.	A more than nominal alteration of a service.	A nominal or no alteration of a service
Decision	Whether this type of decision, proposal or issue has a history of generating wide public interest in South Taranaki.	High degree <i>(for example, town centre redevelopment)</i>	Moderate degree <i>(for example, disposal of surplus land/building)</i>	Low degree <i>(for example, putting in a new bus stop)</i>
Financial	The impact of the decision or proposal on the overall budget or whether it is included in an approved Long Term Plan, and the Council's ability to carry out its existing or proposed functions and activities now and in the future.	Unbudgeted operating costs greater than 10% of total expenses in the financial year of the decision. And/or Unbudgeted capital costs greater than 1% of total assets in the financial year of the decision.	Unbudgeted operating costs greater than 5% (but less than 10%) of total expenses in the financial year of the decision. And/or Unbudgeted capital costs greater than 0.5% (but less than 1%) of total assets in the financial year of the decision.	Unbudgeted operating costs less than 5% of total expenses in the financial year of the decision. And/or Unbudgeted capital costs less than 0.5% of total assets in the financial year of the decision.
Reversible	The degree to which the decision or proposal is reversible.	Highly difficult <i>(for example, constructing a purpose built building)</i>	Moderately difficult <i>(for example, adoption of a bylaw)</i>	Low difficulty <i>(for example, minor amendment to a policy)</i>
Environment	The degree of impact the decision will have on the environment	Significant impact on the environment	Has some impacts on the environment.	Has little or no impact on the environment