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SIGNIFICANCE AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY

Purpose and Scope

1. To enable Council and its communities to identify the degree of importance 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.

Revocations

4. The Taupō District Council Policy to Determine Significance 2012 is revoked when this policy comes into force on 1 December 2014.

Definitions

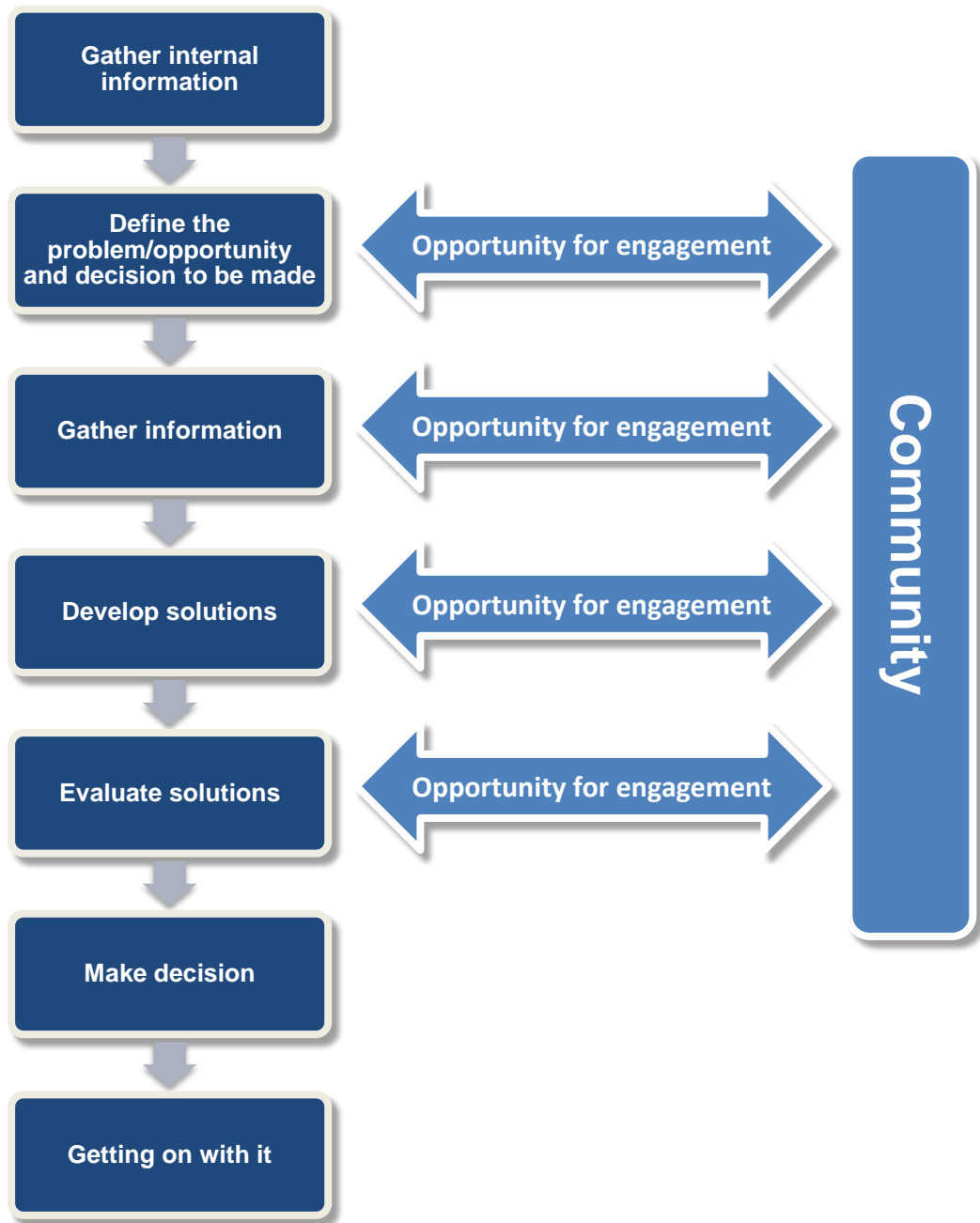
The Act	The Local Government Act 2002.
Community	A group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common. Includes interested parties, affected people and key stakeholders.
Decisions	Refers to all decisions made by or on behalf of Council including those made by officers under delegation. (Management decisions made by officers under delegation during the implementation of council decisions will not be deemed to be significant).
Engagement	A term used to describe the process of providing and seeking information and feedback from the community to inform and assist decision making.
Significance	As defined in Section 5 of the Act.
Significant	As defined in Section 5 of the Act.
Strategic asset	As defined in Section 5 of the Act and Schedule 1 of this policy.

Policy

Decision making process

5. There are **multiple opportunities to engage** with the community throughout the decision making process. Council will determine on a case by case basis whether it is appropriate to engage at all of these opportunities, or whether Council needs to be more selective.

Decision making process and engagement opportunities



Engagement

6. Council may engage with the community for a wide range of reasons. For relatively minor issues Council may simply inform the community of the decisions that have been made. At the other end of the spectrum there may be issues when Council wants to collaborate with communities and empower them to make decisions. Between these extremes there will be situations where Council needs to collect information about the potential impacts or the range of options that could address them. In those situations Council will provide information and seek feedback through consultation. Council's decision making process with regard to engagement is described in Schedule 2.
7. Council will engage with communities in different ways. This is a reflection of the diversity of the district's communities and the expanding number of ways that people communicate. Council will take into account the following **matters when assessing how to engage** with communities:

- a. The extent to which the current views and preferences of those affected by, or interested in, the issue are known by Council;
 - b. The importance of the issue and the implications from the perspective of those who may be affected, or have an interest, in the issue;
 - c. The costs and benefits of a particular form of engagement;
 - d. The type of community and their preferences for engagement; and
 - e. The relative importance of the matter to those affected and the wider community.
8. There will also be times when Council may not engage during the decision making process. Council **may chose not to engage** when:
- a. There is already a good understanding of the views and preferences of those that are affected or interested;
 - b. There is need for confidentiality;
 - c. The costs outweigh the benefits;
 - d. The matter has already been addressed through Council policies and plans;
 - e. An immediate or quick decision is required;
 - f. Emergency works are required; or
 - g. The matter relates to the operation and maintenance of a Council asset and responsible management requires the works to take place.
9. Council will use the Special Consultative Procedure (as set out in section 83 of the Act) where required to do so by law. There are also other pieces of legislation like the Resource Management Act 1991 and Reserves Act 1977, which have their own requirements with regard to engagement.
10. Council has specific legal requirements with regard to engaging with Maori, including Joint Management Agreements, Memorandum of Understanding or any other similar high level agreements. These will be considered as a starting point when engaging with Māori.

Determining significant decisions or proposals

11. Council will take into account the following matters when **assessing the degree of importance** of proposals and decisions:
- a. The level of financial consequences of the proposal or decision;
 - b. Whether the proposal or decision will affect a large portion of the community or community of interest;
 - c. The likely impact on present and future interests of the community, recognising Māori culture values and their relationship to land and water;
 - d. Whether the proposal affects the level of service of an activity identified in the Long Term Plan;
 - e. Whether community interest is high; and
 - f. The capacity of Council to perform its role and the financial and other costs of doing so.
12. For the avoidance of doubt, Council decisions are **considered to be significant** if they:
- a. Are identified as being of a high degree of importance;
 - b. Incur operational expenditure exceeding 7.5% of the annual Council budget;
 - c. Incur capital expenditure exceeding 2.5% of the total value of Council's assets, or where spent on a strategic asset, exceeds 25% of that assets value;
 - d. Require the transfer of ownership or control or the disposal or abandonment of a strategic asset as a whole;
 - e. Require the sale of Council's shareholding in any council controlled trading organisation or council controlled organisation;
 - f. Directly or indirectly, severely affect the capacity of Council to carry out any activity identified in the long term plan;

- g. Concern the entry into any partnerships to carry out a significant activity; or
 - h. Adopt a final Council policy or plan. In this instance compliance with the requirements of section 76 – 82 of the Act must be documented as part of the report to Council.
13. If Council identifies that a decision is significant the matter will be assessed against the requirements of section 76 to 82 of the Act. Those sections describe the decision making process that Council must go through and the principles of consultation.
14. When Council makes a decision that is significantly inconsistent with this policy, the steps identified in Section 80 of the Act will be undertaken.

SCHEDULE 1– STRATEGIC ASSETS

Section 5 of the Local Government Act defines a strategic asset as:

In relation to the assets held by a local authority, means 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-

- 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.

- Taupō District Libraries (including books and collections)
- Taupō museum (including heritage assets)
- Great Lake Centre
- AC Baths complex
- Taupō Events Centre
- Genesis Energy Turangi Aquatic Centre
- Council's joint ownership in the Taupō Airport
- Pensioner housing as a whole
- Council buildings and depots as a whole
- Amenity areas, reserves, sports fields and facilities under the Reserves Act 1977
- Cemeteries
- Public toilets (including the Superloo) as a whole
- Taupō landfill
- Refuse transfer stations
- Stormwater network as a whole
- Roading system as a whole (including footpaths, cycle paths, culverts, stock underpasses, off street car parking and bridges)
- Water storage, treatment and reticulation system as a whole (including the land, buildings, treatment plant, tanks and structures for all networks within the district.
- Wastewater network and treatment plant as a whole (including all land, buildings and plant for all wastewater networks and treatment plans within the district)

SCHEDULE 2– Process for determining whether to engage

