



**SOUTH WAIRARAPA
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Kia Reretahi Tātau

Significance and Engagement Policy

Date of Approval	29 June 2009
Revised	xx June 2021
Policy Number	A800
Next Review	30 June 2024

SIGNIFICANCE AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY

1. Purpose

South Wairarapa District Council (Council) is responsible for making decisions on behalf of its communities and we aspire to work with our communities to ensure their views and preferences are taken into account.

The purpose of this policy is to let our communities know how and when they can expect to be engaged in Council's decision-making processes. It enables us and our communities to identify the degree of significance attached to particular decisions and ensures that Council are informed from the beginning of a decision-making process about the extent and type of engagement. It also ensures that we meet our obligations under the Local Government Act 2002 (the Act).

We use the term "engagement" in this policy as an umbrella term that refers to all approaches Council uses to connect with and receive feedback from our communities. Section 3.1 describes the different engagement approaches Council uses, from providing information through to community empowerment. Note that "consultation" is one of these approaches and has a particular meaning and obligations under the Act.

2. Our general approach to determining significance

Council will determine the level of significance of a decision based on criteria identifying the level of importance and likely impact of the decision on the current and future wellbeing of the district. It will also consider people who will likely be particularly affected by or have an interest in the decision, the capacity of the Council to perform its role, and the financial and other costs of doing so.

We have identified specific criteria to determine the degree of significance, set out in section 2.1 below. Council will use its judgement on a case by case basis when applying the criteria. To assist Council in making its judgement, commentary addressing the issue of significance will be included in each proposal for decision-making reported to Council and its committees. Should a proposal be considered of high significance, the report will describe how the relevant section of the Act and this policy are being addressed.

2.1. Criteria we use to assess significance

Our specific criteria for assessing the degree of significance are:

- » The level of importance to the South Wairarapa District.
- » The level of community interest and degree of impact on interested or affected people.
- » The consistency of the proposed decision with existing policy and strategy.
- » The impact of the decision on the Council's capacity and capability.

We have also identified a number of key factors to be considered under each of the criteria, set out in Schedule 1. When a decision is assessed as "high" on two or more of the criteria, it is likely to be

highly significant. Each of the four criteria are weighted equally and apply as a set. This means a single criterion alone does not determine the degree of significance.

Decisions assessed to be of high significance should normally be included in the Long-Term Plan or Annual Plan process. This ensures that they are linked to our community outcomes, proposed in the context of other decisions, and put before the community.

In cases where decisions of high significance need to be made outside of the Long-Term Plan and Annual Plan process, Council will follow an appropriate engagement and decision-making process which complies with sections 76 to 82 of the Act. The Special Consultative Procedure as discussed in section 3.3 will be used when that is specified in legislation.

For decisions of low or medium significance, we will ensure that the level of consideration and engagement is in proportion to the significance of the decision. Where decisions have been formally delegated and do not require reporting to Council, the assessment of significance may not necessarily be formally documented.

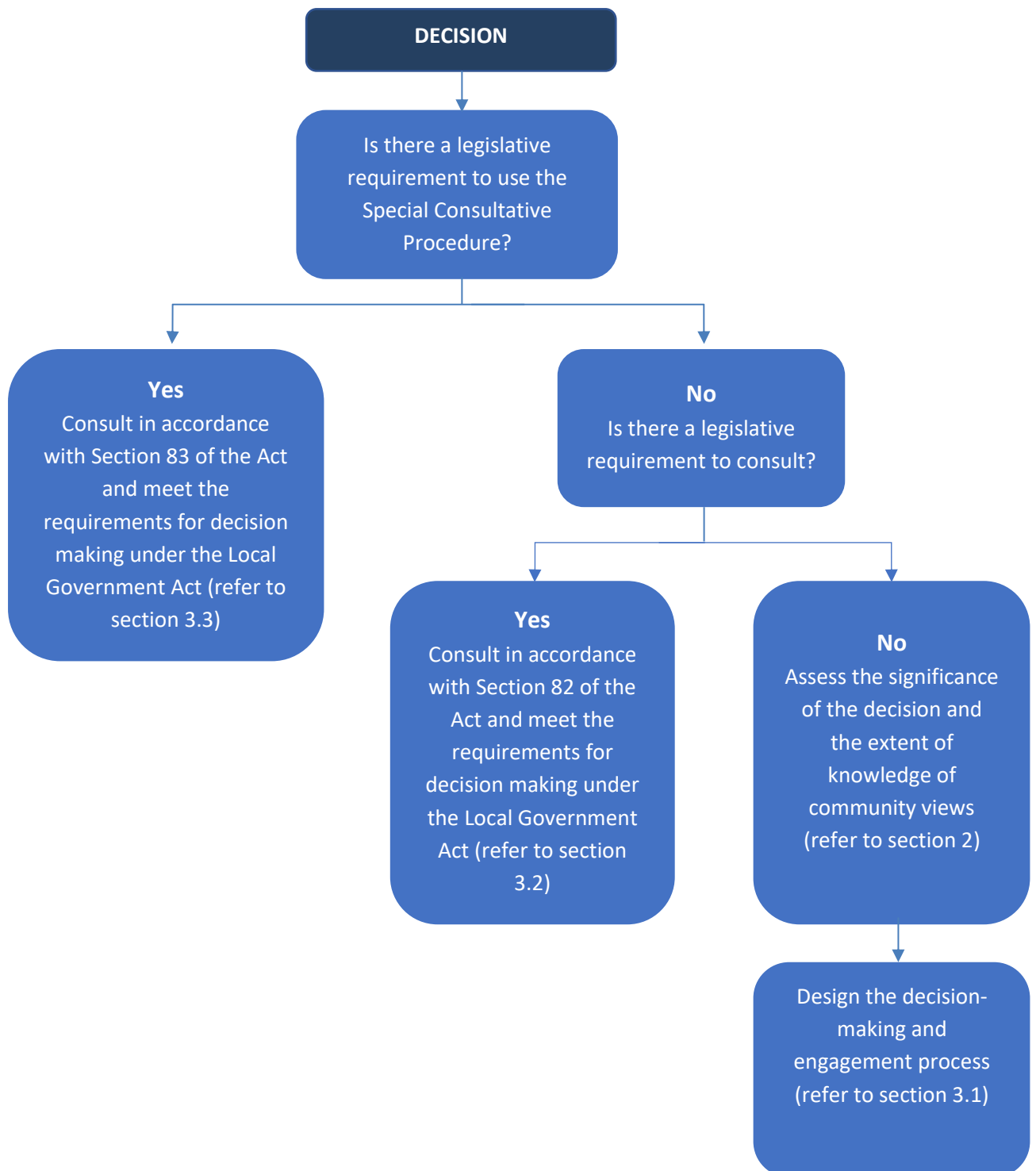
3. Our approach to decision-making and engagement

Some decisions require the use of the Special Consultative Procedure, discussed in section 3.3. For all other decisions, Council is required to:

- » Identify the objective of the decision.
- » Identify all reasonably practical options and assess the advantages and disadvantages.
- » Design the decision-making and engagement process, taking into account:
 - » The significance of the matter, as identified in this policy; and
 - » Whether there is sufficient knowledge of the views and preferences of those likely to be affected by, or have an interest in, the matter (if not, further engagement is appropriate).

This is demonstrated in the following flowchart.

Flowchart to identify Council's engagement approach

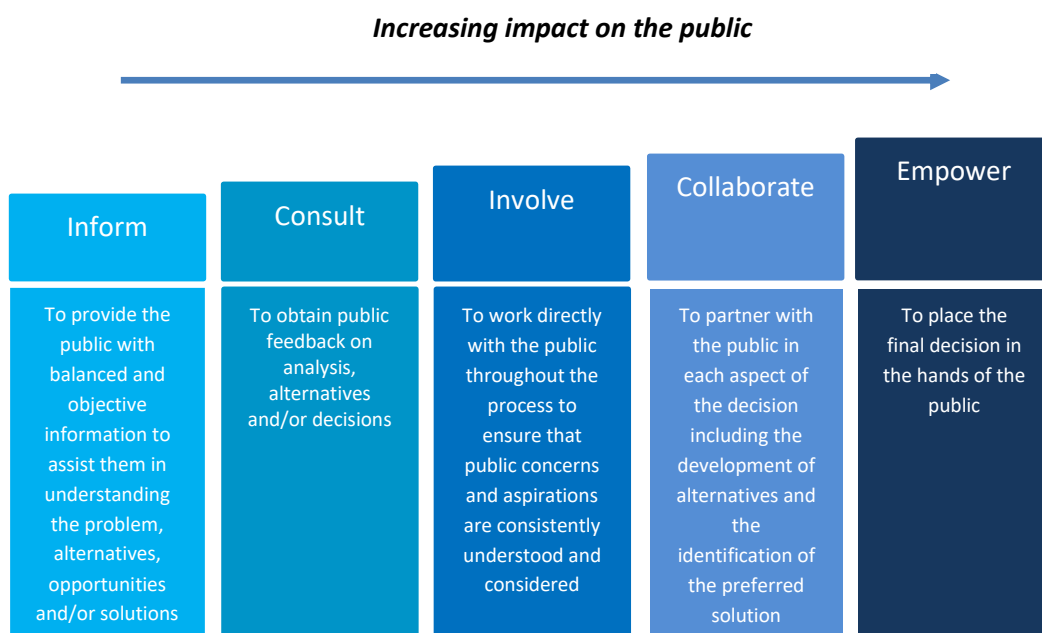


3.1. Considered and early engagement

Consultation is only one form of engagement; it is designed to obtain feedback on proposals. Council regularly consults on proposals through processes such as the Long-Term Plan and, when consulting, follows the principles of consultation set out in section 3.2.

Engagement is a broader, often ongoing process of sharing information with the community and seeking feedback with the purpose of involving the community in the decision-making process. It provides an opportunity for Council to better understand the views and preferences of interested and affected persons on a decision or proposal being considered by Council.

Council uses the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum which indicates different engagement approaches from providing information through to community empowerment. This spectrum shows the increasing level of public impact as you progress through the spectrum.



Different levels of engagement are appropriate during the varying phases of decision-making and the IAP2 spectrum allows for different levels of engagement depending on the decision. In general, the more significant an issue, the more comprehensive the engagement process is expected to be.

Council is also committed to engaging early so that the decision-making process is well informed by those impacted by a decision. An assessment of the degree of significance of proposals and decisions, and the appropriate level of community engagement, will be considered in the earliest possible stages of a proposal, before decision-making occurs, and if needed, be reviewed as the proposal develops.

3.1.1. How does Council engage?

Council works with its communities on a variety of levels including as customers, stakeholders, ratepayers, subject matter experts and partners. We also have working relationships with a wide range of groups such as community organisations, business organisations and government sectors.

We seek to have ongoing conversations with the community and use a wide variety of channels to do so including social media (Facebook and Neighbourly), the Council website, rates newsletter, local newspapers, radio, Annual and Long-Term Plans, elected members, public meetings, workshops, events, libraries, and surveys. Our community boards also have a specific responsibility for engaging with their communities of interest and advocating on their behalf.

Council is guided by the type and nature of the decision when determining how it will go about communicating and engaging with its communities. We have set out a guide to the different approaches and tools we may use in Schedule 2. The guide is intended to be indicative only and does not bind Council to a particular engagement process. As discussed, Council will also consider the significance of the matter and the extent to which views and preferences of those likely to be affected by, or have an interest in, the matter are already known in designing the engagement process.

Council will make available all information regarding decisions it makes in response to all submissions from the community.

3.1.2. Engaging with Māori

Council respects the unique status of Māori in our community and is committed to continuing to build and strengthen our relationships and engaging in a range of ways to ensure we are providing opportunities for Māori to contribute to the decision-making processes.

One of our key mechanisms for engaging with Māori is working with the Māori Standing Committee to ensure the contributions of local iwi and marae are represented.

Council will engage with the Māori Standing Committee on matters of significance to Māori in our community and, in particular, where any matter involves a significant decision in relation to land or a body of water to ensure that the relationship of Māori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral land, water, sites, waahi tapu, valued flora and fauna and other tāonga are considered.

Council will also engage directly with iwi and marae representatives where appropriate.

Council recognises that early engagement is often the most effective, particularly for those decisions which have greater significance. We are committed to providing relevant information to inform Māori contribution and improve Māori access to the Council's engagement and decision-making processes.

3.1.3. When might Council not engage?

There may be occasions when Council considers that it is not necessary or appropriate to engage with our communities on a particular matter. This includes when:

- » the decision is not of a nature or significance that requires engagement

- » Council already has an understanding of the views and preferences of interested or affected parties
- » a decision has already been made or the likely decision is apparent
- » there is a need for commercial sensitivity or confidentiality
- » the likely costs of the consultation are not in proportion to the benefits
- » there is a threat to public health and safety or significant damage to property
- » an urgent response is required and it is not reasonably practicable to engage.

3.2. Principles of consultation

When undertaking consultation, Council will follow the principles set out in section 82 of the Act:

- » identify the people who will or may be affected by or have an interest in the decision or matter
- » provide them reasonable access to relevant information in an appropriate format
- » give people clear information about the purpose of the consultation and scope of the decisions to be taken
- » encourage people to give their views
- » give people a reasonable opportunity to present their views in an appropriate way
- » listen to views with an open mind and give them due consideration
- » provide a clear record of decisions made and any other relevant material.

Where the Act requires Council to consult, we will make the following available to the public:

- » the proposal and reasons for it
- » an analysis of practical options
- » a draft of the proposed plan, policy or relevant document to be adopted (or proposed changes to the plan, policy or document being amended).

3.3. Special Consultative Procedure

In some circumstances, Council must use the special consultative procedure (SCP), such as when adopting or amending the Long-Term Plan and making, amending or revoking bylaws of significant interest to or impact on the public. The Council may also choose to use the SCP for other matters where not specifically required by legislation.

This procedure is set out in section 83 of the Act and requires the Council to prepare a statement of proposal and make this publicly available. A period of at least 1 month must be given for feedback, and Council must provide an opportunity for people to present their views through spoken interaction or using New Zealand signage.

When using the SCP, we will accept submissions in a variety of forms (e.g. online survey, paper form, email, phone etc.) and publicly advise of all the ways submissions are being accepted. We will also hold public hearings to provide an opportunity for people to present their views to Council and consider all submissions prior to making decisions.

4. Strategic Assets

Section 97 of the Act requires that any decision that significantly alters the level of service provided by the Council of a significant activity (including to commence or cease any activity) or transfers ownership or control of a strategic asset to or from the Council must be provided for and consulted on in the Long-Term Plan.

Strategic assets are defined in Section 5 of the Act as:

“ ... 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 1998;*
 - ii. an airport company within the meaning of the Airport Authorities Act 1966.”*

Our list of strategic assets is provided in Schedule 3. Assets have been included where they are important in achieving Council’s community outcomes or where Council ownership or control is essential to the long-term provision of the associated service.

Significant decisions in relation to strategic assets are decisions that concern the whole asset group and not each individual components within the group, unless that component substantially affects the ability of the Council to deliver the service. It is the principle of provision of the services, not individual components, that make these asset groups strategic.

5. Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years. It may also be amended from time to time.

Schedule 1 – Criteria and factors for assessing significance

Criteria <i>When a decision is assessed as high on two or more criteria it is likely to be highly significant</i>	Key factors to consider in assessment of significance rating	
<i>Degree of significance</i> High ←————→ Low		
Importance to South Wairarapa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates or ceases an activity group • Large reduction in levels of service • Irreversible or difficult to reverse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No change to an activity group • Little or no change in levels of service • Easily reversed
Community Interest and impact on affected parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level of prior public interest or the potential to generate interest or controversy • Large division in community view on the decision • A moderate impact on a large proportion of the community or high impact on a moderate proportion • Large impact on specific group(s) of the population (e.g. Maori, youth, town) or individuals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low level of prior public interest or low chance of generating interest or controversy • General consensus in community view on the decision • Low impact on a limited number of individuals • No particular group of the population or individual affected
Consistency with existing policies and strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision is substantially inconsistent with current policies and strategies • Decision is inconsistent with community outcomes • Is a new direction from a prior decision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision is highly consistent with current policies and strategies • Decision aligns with community outcomes • Is a logical step from a prior decision
Impact on Council's capacity and capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High capital or operational expenditure • Large impact on Council's overall resources and rating level or debt • High impact on the Council being able to perform its role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low capital or operational expenditure • Small impact on Council's overall resources and rating level or debt • Low impact on the Council being able to perform its role

Schedule 2 – Community engagement

LEVEL	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Engagement goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identified of the preferred solution	To place final decision making in the hands of the public
Types of issues that we might use this for	Annual Report Water restrictions Project updates	Bylaws Policy amendments Annual plan	Spatial Plan Long-Term Plan Policy development	Representation review	Local Body Elections Electoral voting systems
Tools we might use	Website Media releases Social media	Formal/informal submissions and hearings Surveys or feedback forms Focus groups Public meetings	Workshops Huis Surveys Focus groups Public meetings	External working groups (involving community experts)	Referendums Local Body Elections
When the community can expect to be involved	We would generally advise the community once a decision is made.	We would generally advise the community when a draft decision is made and generally provide the community with up to 4 weeks to participate and respond, unless there is good reason to have a shorter period.	We would generally provide the community with a greater lead in time to allow them time to be involved in the process.	We 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.	We would generally provide the community with a greater lead in time to allow them time to be involved in the process. e.g. typically a month or more.

Schedule 3 – Strategic Assets

Below is a list of assets the Council considers strategic:

- » the roading network, including footpaths, street lighting and parking;
- » the wastewater network, oxidation ponds and pump stations;
- » the water treatment, storage and supply networks;
- » solid waste facilities;
- » the stormwater network and water races;
- » parks, reserves and sports fields;
- » swimming pool facilities;
- » libraries;
- » Council-owned buildings, including the ANZAC Hall, Waihinga Centre and Greytown Town Centre;
- » public toilets;
- » cemeteries;
- » senior housing.