COMMUNICATION POLICY

PURPOSE

The Shire of Quairading is to implement the actions of the Communications Plan, improving the communication flow and engagement between the Shire, the community and other stakeholders.

Successful communication may be achieved through the widespread distribution of timely, regular, consistent and truthful information in partnership with productive community consultation on key issues.

OBJECTIVE

This policy identifies the types and extent of internal and external communication that the Shire of Quairading is committed to providing.

The Quairading Shire acknowledges that the effective dissemination of information and communication is a vital element in building a positive identity for the Shire through greater community awareness of its services, activities, achievements and resources.

This policy aims to improve the Shire's communication and engagement practices with the local community, visitors, Council and other stakeholders.

The outcomes and benefits of effective communication and community engagement include:

a. Increased community awareness about services, planning and program delivery;

b. Increased awareness of community views and the issues that should be considered as part of the decision-making process;

c. Ensuring the community understands the decision-making process and how their feedback influences Council's decisions;

d. Increased awareness of the needs, priorities and diversity of the community, which in turn ensures that service provision and planning functions are aligned appropriately;

e. Increased levels of community ownership and acceptance of decisions;

f. The Shire and the community working together to address local issues where appropriate;

g. Potential for time, resources and cost savings for the Shire; and

h. Ensure Staff are kept fully up to date and informed about Shire matters.

It is crucial that the Shire sends a strong, accurate and consistent message to the community in all of its communications. This policy is designed to facilitate that process.

POLICY

That Council provide effective and appropriate communication and community engagement practices with the local community, visitors, employees and other stakeholders.

GUIDELINES

Annexure A – Communication Plan attached.

Customer Service Charter.

Community Engagement Policy.

STATUTORY ENVIRONMENT

The Shire President and the Chief Executive Officer are the only approved spokespersons for Council - *Local Government Act 1995* Section 2.8 & 5.41(f)

Record of Policy Review						
Version	Author	Council Adoption	Resolution	Reason for Review	Review Date	CEO Signature
01	Neville Hale (ACEO)	29/6/17	217-16/17	Review of Policy - 2.23 Communication Policy		
02	Graeme Fardon			Policy Review Project	4/12/18	
03	A&R Committee	20/12/18	115-18/19	Revised 12/12/2018		
04	Graeme Fardon	17/12/20	97-20/21	Biennial Policy Review - Minor Amendment	Dec 2020	
05	Nicole Gibbs	27/10/22	96 – 22/23	Biennial Policy Review - Minor Amendments	Oct 2024	

COMMUNICATION PLAN

1. Scope

The Communication Plan applies to Councillors, staff and consultants responsible for communication and community engagement undertaken for, or on behalf of, the Shire of Quairading.

2. Procedure

2.1 The Shire's Stakeholders

The characteristics of each stakeholder are to be considered including their needs, wants, attitudes and perceptions of the Shire in addition to how they receive their information.

The Shire of Quairading communication stakeholders include:

2.1.1   Ratepayers and residents

2.1.2   Potential residents of the Shire of Quairading

2.1.3   Shire Councillors

2.1.4   Employees

2.1.5   Visitors to the district

2.1.6   Investors, developers and individuals with business interests within the Shire of Quairading

2.1.7   Potential investors and developers

2.1.8   Customers who seek products or services or information from the Shire

2.1.9   Community and government departments and organisations

2.1.10 Local and regional media

2.1.11 Suppliers of goods/services

2.1.12 Contractors.

2.2 Principles of Effective Communications

This Communications Plan has been developed based upon the principles of good communication.

Visibility: Visibility leads to recognition and acceptance plus it allows the community to see the breadth and value of the Shire's work.

Simplicity: The community is busy with many aspects of their lives whether at work or home. Communication must be simple and straight forward to ensure maximum readership.

Repetition: The more a message is repeated via various mediums, the wider its audience will become.

Value: The message should be structured with the community effect as its foundation.

Listening: Good (and effective) communication requires two parties - the giver and the receiver. It is important that feedback on all issues is encouraged and processed.

Consistency: To build credibility and a positive reputation, messages need to be consistent.

2.3 Benefits of Effective Communications

2.3.1   Builds trust

2.3.2   Fosters a positive reputation

2.3.3   Strengthens relationships with key stakeholders

2.3.4   Assists the Shire to deal with negative press and a crisis from a position of strength

2.3.5   Improves employee's morale and job satisfaction

2.3.6   Helps attract and retain employees.

3.   Communication Strategies

3.1 Corporate Identity

The corporate image that the Shire of Quairading presents is vital. The corporate identity is projected through all visual and print communications, signage and social media presence.

No part of the logo or branding may be reproduced, modified, adapted or published in any way on any other website, social media site or online space without the express permission of the Chief Executive Officer.

Any requests or enquiries regarding reproduction and should be addressed in writing to:

The Chief Executive Officer
Shire of Quairading
PO Box 38
QUAIRADING, WA 6383

Or

Att: CEO
shire@quairading.wa.gov.au

3.2 The Shire's Website

The website provides current information about the Shire, its services and the area it represents in addition to the ability for site visitors to interact with the Shire online via the provision of online forms which invites users to make an enquiry or report an issue.

Members of the community are also given the opportunity to promote upcoming community events and programs. However, all submissions for inclusion on the community and business sections are to be moderated by the website administrator before being published.

Information must be consistent with the Shire's relevant policies and procedures as well as relevant legislation in relation to corporate and local government communication and correspondence.

The website is to be maintained and updated on a weekly basis as a minimum. Documents to be available for downloading from the website should be in an Adobe Portable document file (pdf) format to protect the integrity of the document.

3.3 Emergency Management

In the event on an emergency, the Shire's website and/or social media and/or text messages will be used to update the community on breaking developments and emergency information. Content displayed on the social media platforms is to be authorised by the Chief Executive Officer or the CEO's delegated officers, please refer to Council's Social Media Strategy.

3.4 Internal Communication

The Elected Councillors and employees are the Shire's most effective public relations ambassadors. It is vital that all Councillors and employees receive timely, relevant, consistent and user friendly information to ensure that they are adequately informed on the Shire's activities, minimising the likelihood of misinformation in the community.

Effective internal communication is a multi-way process that flows up, down and across the organisation. Communication also encourages a participatory approach to change management, increases employee morale and encourages more effective communication between employees across departments.

The Shire utilises four main methods of communication with its staff: face to face, verbal, electronic and written. These are utilised in many ways, including but not limited to:

3.4.1 New employee induction process to provide a platform of understanding of the organisation.

3.4.2 Utilisation of all of staff e-mails to distribute key messages and keep staff informed. Staff and Councillors are issued with media releases at the same time as they are distributed to the media.

3.4.3 Regular Executive Management Team meetings.

3.4.4 Regular managers and staff meetings.

3.4.5 Formal written correspondence

3.5 External Communication

3.5.1 The Shire President and the Chief Executive Officer are the only official spokespersons for the Shire of Quairading.

3.5.2 Any enquiries from media outlets must be directed to the Shire President or the Chief Executive Officer.

3.5.3 All press releases or media statements are required to be authorised by the Shire President and/or the Chief Executive Officer prior to being forwarded to the media.

3.5.4 All correspondence detailing the outcome of Council meetings is generated by the Chief Executive Officer or his authorised delegated officer/s.

3.5.5 Unconfirmed minutes of the Council meeting are posted in the document centre on the shire website within 14 days of the Council meeting. Confirmed minutes of the Council meeting are to be posted within 5 days of the next Council meeting. Unconfirmed minutes of committee meetings are to be posted within 7 days after the meeting is held.

3.6 Inward communication

3.6.1 All correspondence to the Shire must be addressed to the Chief Executive Officer and is then referred to the appropriate officer for attention or if requiring a Council decision, may be referred to the next available Council or committee meeting.

Any requests and/or complaints made via the telephone or in person are to be made in writing or alternatively be entered into the Customer Service Portal to be forwarded to the relevant department for appropriate action, where the issue is assessed and prioritised by an authorised officer.

Community members also have the option to report issues via the "Snap, Send, Solve" app.

3.6.2 Correspondence addressed to the Shire President or Elected Members is considered to be correspondence to the Shire and therefore constitutes a record under the *State Records Act 2000*. The most effective manner in which to communicate with Council is as per point 3.6.1 above.

3.6.3 In case of emergency, the Shire President can be contacted (number available on the Shire website), alternatively the Chief Executive Officer can be contacted on 9645 2400 or 0429 451 001 (anytime).

3.7 Councillor and Staff communication

Communication between Councillors and staff is in accordance with the Code of Conduct Policy.

3.8 Publications

3.8.1 Annual Report

The Shire's annual report is produced each year and made available to the public pursuant to the *Local Government Act 1995* and available on the website or by requesting a hard copy at the Shire office.

3.8.2 Social Media

Shire social media pages are updated on a regular basis to inform the community about the Shire's projects and activities. The posts provide the opportunity to recap and reinforce key messages that may or may not have already appeared in the media.
The Shire of Quairading social media pages are managed in accordance with the Social Media Strategy.

3.8.3 The Shire Advertisements and Notices

Shire advertisements and notices are placed in the West Australian and other publications when appropriate.