

# SIGNIFICANCE AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY



Document Type	Operational Policy
Adopted by	Chief Executive
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Date Effective	1 July 2025
Responsible Department	Communications
Responsible Officer	General Manager Corporate Support
To be reviewed	Three yearly as a part of the Long-term Plan review process

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- 1.1. Let our communities know how and when they can expect to be engaged in Council's decision-making processes.
- 1.2. Provide guidance on the degree of significance to be attached issues, proposals, assets, decisions and activities.
- 1.3. Guide the Council's decision making on consultation and engagement.

## 2. Definitions

Definition	Detail
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.
Consultation	A subset of engagement - a formal process to gain input or feedback from the community about an identified Council option(s) or proposal subject to a decision.
Decision	A decision made by or on behalf of the Council, including those made by its Committees, the Chief Executive or officers under delegated authority. A decision implies that a proposal has been considered if required, that the views of the community have been taken into account in the decision-making process.
Engagement	The process of seeking views from the community to inform and assist Council decision making.
LGA 2002	Local Government Act 2002
Māori	Includes Hokonui Rūnanga and the mana whenua of Māruawai and its surrounding area.
Proposal	A suggestion of change presented to the Council, subsequently resulting in a decision made by or on behalf of the Council at a Council or Committee meeting.

Definition	Detail
Special Consultative Procedure (SCP)	<p>The Special Consultative Procedure, as outlined in <a href="#">section 83 of the LGA 2002</a>, which sets out minimum requirements for engagement including (but not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making available a Statement of Proposal.</li> <li>• Allowing a minimum of one month to receive written views.</li> <li>• Allowing people to present views in a spoken manner.</li> </ul>
Significance	<p>Defined in <a href="#">section 5 of the LGA 2002</a>, the degree of importance of the proposal or decision as assessed by the Council, in terms of its likely impact on, and likely consequences for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the District</li> <li>• any persons who are likely to be particularly affected by, or interested in, the issue, proposal, decision or matter.</li> <li>• the capacity of the Council to perform its role, and the financial and other costs of doing so.</li> </ul>
Significant	<p>Defined in section 5 of the LGA 2002, in relation to any proposal or decision means that the proposal has a high degree of significance. Decisions made by the Chief Executive or officers under delegated authority will not be deemed to be significant.</p>
Significant Activity	<p>A term used to describe those groups of activities which the Council has historically invested substantial funding. These may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roading</li> <li>• Water</li> <li>• Wastewater</li> <li>• Stormwater</li> <li>• Libraries</li> <li>• Reserves</li> <li>• Recreational facilities</li> <li>• Solid waste</li> </ul>
Strategic Asset	<p>Defined in s5 of the LGA 2002 as an asset or group of assets the Council needs to retain if it is to maintain its capacity to achieve or promote any outcome it determines is important to the current or future well-being of the community.</p> <p>The following are the Council's strategic assets at the time of the adoption of this policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• James Cumming Community Centre &amp; Library</li> <li>• Gore Aquatic Centre</li> <li>• MLT Event Centre</li> <li>• Eastern Southland Gallery</li> <li>• Māruawai Centre</li> <li>• Dolamore Park</li> <li>• Bannerman Park</li> <li>• Hamilton Park</li> <li>• Tulloch Park</li> <li>• Queens Park</li> <li>• Gore Public Gardens</li> <li>• Cemeteries</li> <li>• Mataura Library &amp; Service Centre</li> <li>• Mataura Community Centre</li> </ul>

Definition	Detail
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civic Administration Building</li> <li>• Gore Airport</li> <li>• Sports Grounds</li> <li>• Wastewater network (as a whole)</li> <li>• Gore oxidation ponds</li> <li>• Stormwater network (as a whole)</li> <li>• Water reticulation and treatment network (as a whole)</li> <li>• Roding network (as a whole)</li> <li>• Gore Transfer Station</li> </ul>
Statement of Proposal	A document that provides the basis for consultation with the community under the SCP by setting out the Council's proposition with respect to a particular decision.
Council	Gore District Council

### 3. Principles

#### 3.1. The Council will:

- Be consistent and transparent in how it engages the public
- Commit to genuine community engagement
- Ensure the view of Māori are considered when engaging
- Consider language, accessibility and cultural needs in any engagement
- Act honestly and openly when analysing and presenting any engagement results
- Provide appropriate information to help people understand what is being proposed
- Allow sufficient time for the community to consider and respond
- Prominently outline a proposals or decisions cost in any engagement.

### 4. Engaging with Māori

4.1. Engagement with Māori will take into account any co-governance or co-management arrangements, including those established by legislation (including Treaty of Waitangi claim settlement legislation), and/or the relationship of Māori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral land, water, sites, wāhi tapu, valued flora and fauna, and other taonga.

### 5. Application of the Policy

#### 5.1. This policy is applied in two steps:

- Step 1: Determining the significance of the proposal/decision
- Step 2: Determining the requirement to engage or not (guided by the level of significance), and if there is a requirement to engage, what level should that be at.

5.2. Where the Council makes a decision that is significantly inconsistent with this policy, the steps identified in section 80 of the LGA 2002 will be applied.

5.3. There may be occasions when the Council does not follow this policy. Examples include:

- where failure to make a decision urgently would result in unreasonable or significant damage to property
- risk to people's health and safety, or
- the loss of a substantial opportunity to achieve the Council's strategic objectives.

### **Step 1 – Determining the level of significance**

- 5.4. The Council will consider the following when assessing the degree of significance of proposals and decisions, and the appropriate level of engagement:
- Is there a legal requirement to engage with the community
  - The level of financial consequences of the proposal or decision
  - Whether community interest is high
  - Whether the proposal or decision will affect a large portion of the community
  - The likely impact on present and future interests of the community
  - The likely impact on Māori cultural values and their relationship to land and water
  - Whether the proposal affects the level of service of one or more significant activities
  - Whether the likely consequences are controversial and has a likely impact on the reputation of the Council
  - Whether community views are already known, including the community's preferences about the form of engagement
  - The form of engagement used in the past for similar proposals and decisions.
- 5.5. The Council will consider the level of financial consequences (short and long term) in relation to unbudgeted operating cost or capital cost in the Long-term Plan.
- 5.6. If a proposal or decision is affected by the above considerations, it is more likely to have a high degree of significance.
- 5.7. In general, the more significant an issue, the greater the need for community engagement.
- 5.8. If a matter is considered to be significant, staff reports will include a statement indicating why this conclusion was reached. The statement will include an explanation of which factors indicate the decision is significant, the potential implications of the decision, the range of community views that might exist, and whether there is a need for a further degree of community engagement before a final decision is made.
- 5.9. Where the proposal or decision is considered to be significant, the report will also include a statement addressing the appropriate observance of ss.77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82 and 82A of the Act as applicable, together with the corresponding degree of community engagement considered.

### **Step 2 - Determining engagement approach**

- 5.10. The Council acknowledges that community engagement occurs across a spectrum at differing levels and is broader than consultation.
- 5.11. Engagement is a process involving all or some of the community and can be focused on sharing information, generating ideas, decision making, and/or problem solving.
- 5.12. Council staff will consider existing information on the community's views and perceptions related to a proposal before undertaking any further community engagement.

- 5.13. The engagement approach (platform, questions, audiences, tactics, analysis, reporting) and associated communications, will be outlined by Council staff in a communication and engagement plan specific to the proposal. The content of this plan will be informed by subject matter experts.
- 5.14. The Council may use a variety of engagement techniques based on a range of factors, including history and public awareness of the issue/proposal, stakeholder involvement, and timing related to other events and budgets.
- 5.15. When engaging with the community, the Council will:
- Seek out and encourage contributions from people who may be affected by or interested in a decision
  - Provide reasonable access to relevant, timely and balanced information so people can contribute in a meaningful way
  - Provide a variety of appropriate ways and opportunities for people to have their say
  - Tell the community what Council's decision is and the reasons for that decision
  - Provide a clear record or description of the relevant decisions made by the Council and explanatory material relating to the decision.
- 5.16. There are times when it will not be appropriate to engage with the community on certain issues, proposals, decisions, or matters. Examples of this include:
- Organisational decisions (e.g. staff changes and operational matters) that do not materially reduce a level of service
  - Decisions that are consistent with the Council's Long-term Plan, or another policy or plan that has already been subject to consultation, or directives from central government
  - Protection of the privacy and safety of individuals (as provided for in the Privacy Act 2020 and Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987)
  - Maintenance of confidentiality and/or commercial sensitivity to enable the Council to carry out commercial activity or negotiations without prejudice (as provided for in the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987)
  - Where the Council is acting with urgency (for example under the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002)
  - Decisions to act where is necessary to:
    - Comply with the law
    - Save, or protect life, health or amenity and prevent serious damage to property
    - Avoid, remedy or mitigate an adverse effect on the environment
    - Protect the integrity of existing and future infrastructure and amenity
  - Decisions in relation to regulatory and enforcement activities.
- 5.17. The Council will use a customised version of an internationally recognised approach to public engagement (IAP2). The Council's Community Engagement Spectrum outlines its approach to determining level of engagement. Progressing from left to right, Appendix 2 shows increasing levels of community engagement in decision-making and expectations for each.

## 6. Use of Special Consultative Procedure

- 6.1. The Council will use the Special Consultative Procedure (as set out in section 83 of the LGA 2002) where required under the LGA or any other legislation.

- 6.2. The Council will develop a proposal to fulfil the requirements of section 82A of the LGA 2002, will make this available to the public, allow written submissions for a period of up to four weeks and will consider all submissions prior to making decisions.
- 6.3. Specific issues where the Council may use this form of consultation include:
- The adoption of an Annual Plan where it differs significantly from the content of the Long-term Plan
  - The adoption of the Development Contributions Policy where it differs significantly from the content of the previous policy
  - The making, amending, reviewing or revoking bylaws
  - Or any other situation as defined by section 87 of the LGA 2002 or where the Council deems an issue would benefit from this approach
- 6.4. A special consultation procedure is to be used for the adoption or amendment of a Long-term Plan but in accordance with the changes described in section 93 of the LGA 2002.
- 6.5. Where an engagement is not subject to the SCP (section 83 of the LGA 2002), the Council will apply the Principles of Consultation (section 82 of the LGA 2002).
- 6.6. Where engagement might be beneficial, but does not need to meet the requirements set out in either section 82 or 83 of the LGA, other less formal means of communication will be utilised.

## 7. Commencement Of Policy

- 7.1. This policy comes into effect on 1 July 2025.
- 7.2. This policy is to be reviewed no later than three years from the date it comes into effect, or as a part of the next Long-term Plan review process in 2027.
- 7.3. This policy was adopted by the Gore District Council at its meeting held on 30 June 2025.



Debbie Lascelles  
**Chief Executive**  
1 July 2025

### Document History and Version Control Table

Version	Action	Approval Date	Approval Authority	Due for Review
1	Review of original document	30 June 2025	Full Council	2028

## Appendix 1 – Determining Significance

Significance Level →			
Key consideration	High	Medium	Low
Alteration of a service which comes under the Council's significant activities	Ceasing or commencing a service. (e.g. the closure of the pool)	A more than nominal alteration of a service. (e.g. the digitisation of most hard copy books at public libraries).	A nominal or no alteration of a service. (e.g. the undertaking of a tender with a different contractor).
Involves the transfer of ownership or control of strategic assets to or from the Council.	Majority transfer (i.e. more than 51%) or transfer in its entirety. (e.g. a full transfer of a theatre facility).	Minority transfer. (e.g. long-term lease of a pool).	Nominal or no transfer. (e.g. the transfer of a council owned statue)
Level of financial consequences in relation to unbudgeted operating cost or capital cost in the 10-year plan.	Unbudgeted operating cost(s) greater than 10% of total expenses in the financial year of the proposal / decision. (e.g. a \$6m unbudgeted increase in lease costs). AND/OR Unbudgeted capital cost(s) greater than 1% of total assets in the financial year of the proposal / decision. (e.g. the construction of a \$10m unbudgeted building).	Unbudgeted operating cost(s) greater than 5% but less than 10% of total expenses in the financial year of the proposal / decision. (e.g. a \$3m unbudgeted increase in lease costs). AND/OR Unbudgeted capital cost(s) greater than .5% but less than 1% of total assets in the financial year of the proposal / decision. (e.g. the construction of a \$5m unbudgeted building).	Unbudgeted operating cost(s) less than 5% of total expenses in the financial year of the proposal / decision. (e.g. a \$1m unbudgeted increase in lease costs). AND/OR Unbudgeted capital cost(s) less than .5% of total assets in the financial year of the proposal / decision. (e.g. the construction of a \$1m unbudgeted building).
Ability to reverse the decision.	Highly difficult. (e.g. constructing a purpose-built building)	Moderately difficult. (e.g. adoption of a Bylaw).	Low difficulty. (e.g. minor amendment to a policy)
Consistency with a prior decision or decisions (i.e. proposal or decision which is consistent with current policies and strategies)	Decision or proposal is significantly inconsistent. (e.g. a decision or proposal that retires a Council adopted strategy).	Decision or proposal is consistent but with some notable variations. (e.g. a decision or proposal contrary to the public places policy allowing restaurants to use entire width of public footpaths for outdoor entertainment).	Decision or proposal is consistent. (e.g. adopting the public places bylaw to enforce the public places policy).



Significance Level →			
Key consideration	High	Medium	Low
Levels of public interest known.	High levels of public interest known. (e.g. the adoption of the psychoactive substances policy).	Moderate levels of public interest known. (e.g. the adoption of the Event Sponsorship policy).	Low levels of public interest known. (e.g. the adoption of an amendment to a dog control policy).
Impact on proportion of the community.	Impacts a large proportion of the community. (e.g. a change in the rubbish collection timeframes).	Impacts a subgroup or groups within the community. (e.g. the creation of a neighbourhood playground).	Impacts an individual person or household. (e.g. refunding an individual their overdue library fines).
Degree of impact on affected people in the community.	High degree. (e.g. the change of a road name).	Moderate degree. (e.g. the investment in a small playground)	Low degree. (e.g. changing the timetable for swimming programmes).

## Appendix 2 – Determining Engagement Approach

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Goal	To provide affected communities with clear, balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives or solutions	To gain input or feedback from the community about an identified Council option(s) or proposal.	To work directly with affected communities throughout the process to ensure their issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered in decision making.	To work closely with affected communities to clarify the issue(s), develop alternative options and recommend a preferred and agreed solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of affected communities.
Types of issues that we might use this for	Annual Report Road closures Water Restrictions	Annual Plan Bylaws Policy Amendments	Long-term Plan (LTP)  District Plan	Representative Review  Commercial street layout	Local Body Elections
Tools we might use	Website Media release Social media E-newsletter	Formal submissions Focus groups Surveys Social Media	Hui Workshops Focus group Public meetings	External working groups (involving community experts).	Referendums



	<b>Inform</b>	<b>Consult</b>	<b>Involve</b>	<b>Collaborate</b>	<b>Empower</b>
	Antenno Newspaper	Public Meetings			
<b>When the community can expect to be involved</b>	The Council would generally advise the community once a decision has been made.	The Council would advise the community once a draft decision has been made on a proposal and would generally provide the community with up to four weeks to participate and respond.	The Council would generally provide the community with a greater lead-in time to allow it time and /or the chance to be involved in the process for a proposal	The Council would generally involve the community (and/or a subset of the community) at the start to scope the issue, after information has been collected, and when options for a proposal 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
<b>Level of significance</b>	Low to medium	Medium to high	Medium to high	Medium to high	High