

Item No: 15.

Subject: **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY**

Summary

This report seeks Council endorsement of the new Community Engagement Policy following community consultation on the draft policy.

The policy has been developed to meet the requirements of the Local Government Community Engagement Charter, which requires all South Australian councils to adopt a compliant Community Engagement Policy by 11 September 2026.

Recommendation

That Council:

- 1. notes the outcomes of community consultation undertaken on the draft Community Engagement Policy in Attachment 1; and**
 - 2. adopts the Community Engagement Policy as presented in Attachment 2.**
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Background

At the Council meeting held on 9 June 2026, Council endorsed the draft Community Engagement Policy for public consultation, a requirement under section 50 of the *Local Government Act 1999* and the State Government's Community Engagement Charter.

In addition to seeking feedback on the draft policy, the consultation also invited community members to provide suggestions on how Council's community engagement practices could be improved.

Consultation was undertaken between 11 June and 2 July 2026. The opportunity to participate was promoted through Council's website and YourHoldfast.com, the Holdfast News e-newsletter, social media channels, and through hard-copy surveys and displays available at Council libraries and community centres.

The Community Engagement Policy must be formally adopted by 11 September 2026 to ensure continued compliance with the Community Engagement Charter and associated legislative requirements.

Report

Community consultation on the draft Community Engagement Policy was undertaken between 11 June to 2 July 2026 inclusive. A total of six submissions were received from City of Holdfast

Bay residents.

The consultation was hosted on the Council's engagement platform YourHoldfast. Hard copies of the policy and survey were also made available at Council libraries and community centres, with the consultation promoted through Councils' communications channels.

As the consultation related to a policy required under legislation and the State Government's Community Engagement Charter, the scope for substantive changes to the policy was limited. As such, it was anticipated that participation levels would be relatively modest, consistent with the experience of local government engagement practitioners across South Australia when consulting on mandatory governance policies.

While the number of submissions received was limited, the consultation generated broader interest through visits to the project page and access to supporting documents. This suggests a level of passive participation, with community members accessing information about the policy and Council's engagement obligations and approach without providing direct feedback.

Feedback on the draft policy

Feedback received was generally supportive of the updated Community Engagement Policy and its alignment with the Community Engagement Charter. However, respondents noted that the success of the policy will ultimately depend on how it is implemented in practice. An engagement summary report has been prepared and is provided in Attachment 1 for Council's consideration.

Refer Attachment 1

Participants expressed a desire for Council to clearly explain engagement decisions, particularly how and why different levels of engagement are selected for specific projects or decisions. Respondents also emphasised the importance of transparent and accessible communication throughout the engagement process.

Key themes raised through the consultation included:

- clear communication through plain English and easy-to-understand information on consultation materials;
- proactive engagement with people directly affected by proposals;
- continued use of a variety of communication channels to reach different segments of the community;
- the importance of 'closing the loop' by reporting back on what was heard and how feedback influenced decision making; and
- building community trust through meaningful engagement and demonstrating that feedback has been genuinely considered and, where appropriate, incorporated into outcomes.

Overall, respondents highlighted fairness, transparency and accountability as critical factors in building community confidence in Council's engagement processes. There was a strong expectation that Council not only seeks community input, but also clearly communicates how that input has informed decision-making.

As no specific concerns were identified in relation to the content of the draft Community Engagement Policy through the consultation process, no amendments have been made. A final version of the policy is presented in Attachment 2 for Council's consideration and adoption.

Refer Attachment 2

Budget

Not applicable

Life Cycle Costs

Not applicable

Strategic Plan

Holdfast 2050+ Vision: Wellbeing Actions 2020–30

Objective: *Promote active citizenship where all people are encouraged to be heard and contribute to decision making in their community, especially those who are normally excluded.*

Council Policy

Community Engagement Policy

Statutory Provisions

Local Government Act 1999 (SA), section 50A

Written By: Manager Communications and Engagement

A/General Manager: Community and Business, Mr A Filipi

Community Engagement Policy

Consultation period - Thursday 11 June to 5pm Thursday 2 July 2026

Purpose of engagement

To invite the community to review the draft Community Engagement Policy and provide feedback. The community were also invited to share their views on how community engagement could be improved.

Overview

Consultation on the draft policy was hosted on Council's community engagement website:

www.yourholdfast.com/engagement-policy

The community were able to share their feedback by:

- An online survey on www.yourholdfast.com/engagement-policy
- A hard copy survey
- Written feedback (via mail or email)
- Calling the Project Lead

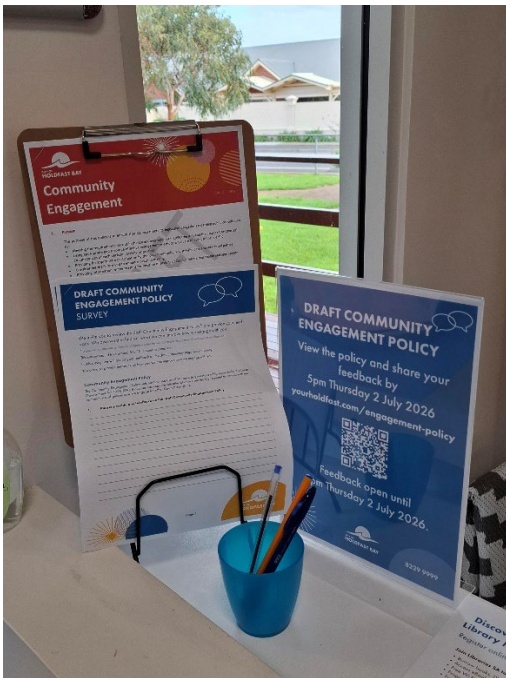
A total of six responses were received, all via online survey submissions.

Promotion of engagement

This engagement was promoted in the following ways:

- Homepage of YourHoldfast.com
- Council website homepage campaign for the duration of the consultation
- Displays at Holdfast Bay Community Centre, Brighton and Glenelg Libraries and the Brighton Civic Centre
- Holdfast News articles on 11 June and 24 June 2026
- Three Facebook posts on 13 June, 29 June and 30 June 2026

Examples of promotions



Community engagement policy



Share your feedback on our draft Community Engagement Policy. Council has drafted a new Community Engagement Policy to align with the updated Local Government Community Engagement Charter, bringing clearer engagement categories, stronger accessibility and better reporting on how your feedback shapes decisions. Share your views on the policy by 2 July 2026.

PROVIDE YOUR FEEDBACK



Draft Community Engagement Policy

Share your feedback on our draft Community Engagement Policy.



Survey Results

The following is a summary of results for the online and hard copy survey combined. Participants were asked to provide feedback on the draft policy

1. Please provide any feedback on the draft Community Engagement Policy

5 participants answered

The feedback generally supports the updated policy and recognises the value of a clear engagement framework. However, there is a strong view that the policy's success will depend on how it is implemented in practice rather than the wording of the document itself.

A key theme is that community members are more concerned with the consultation experience rather than the policy framework. The feedback emphasised the importance of:

- Explaining in plain English why a matter is classified as significant, standard, local or inform only.
- Proactively notifying people who are directly affected by proposals, rather than relying on them to discover information themselves.
- Clearly reporting back on what feedback was received and how it influenced Council's decision-making.

Questions were raised regarding transparency and trust, including:

- How Council will ensure "inform only" classifications
- Who determines the level of engagement for controversial matters and whether the rationale for those decisions will be made public.
- How Council will explain decisions where the outcome differs from most of the feedback received and what other considerations feed into the decision
- How Council will balance participation when consultation is dominated by a small but highly active group, while quieter community members may not partake in consultation.

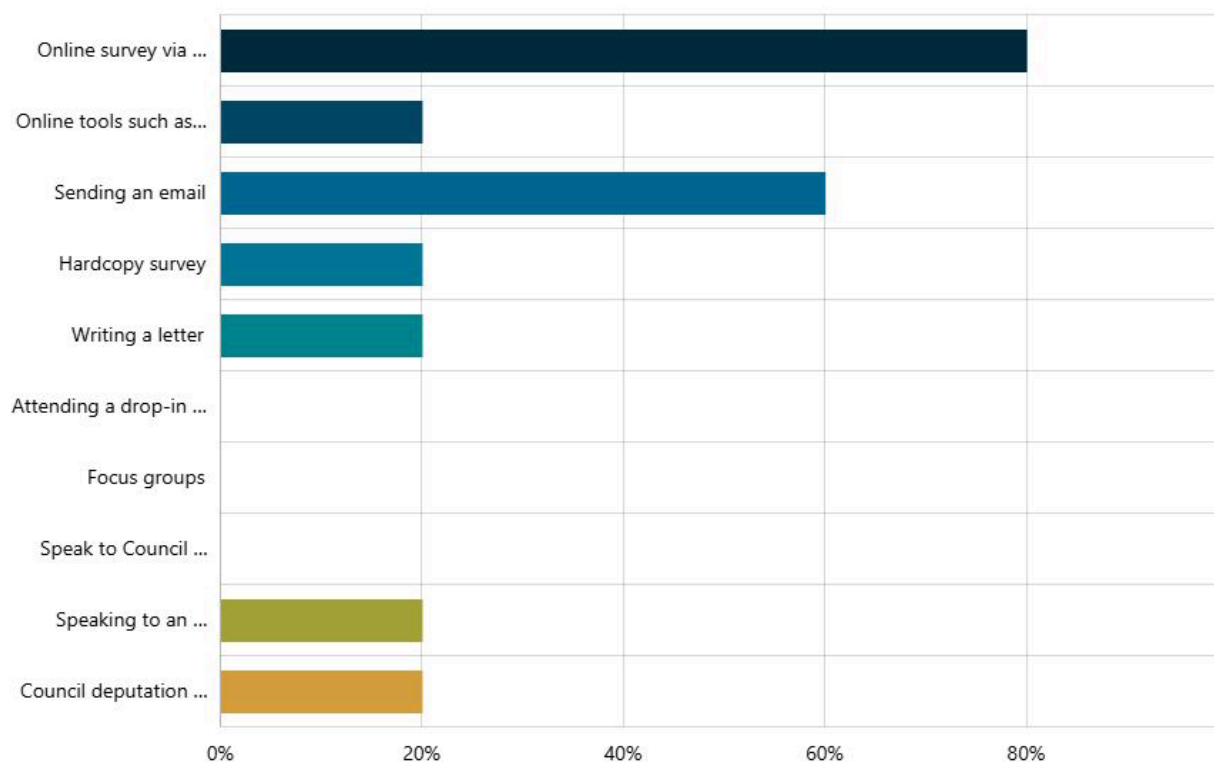
One participant noted that the policy document is difficult to read.

Overall, the feedback considers the policy a positive step but stresses that fairness, clarity, transparency, accessibility and effective follow-through will ultimately determine whether it builds community trust and engagement.

See Appendix – Survey Results Response Data for full responses.

2. How would you like to participate in community consultations? Tick all that apply

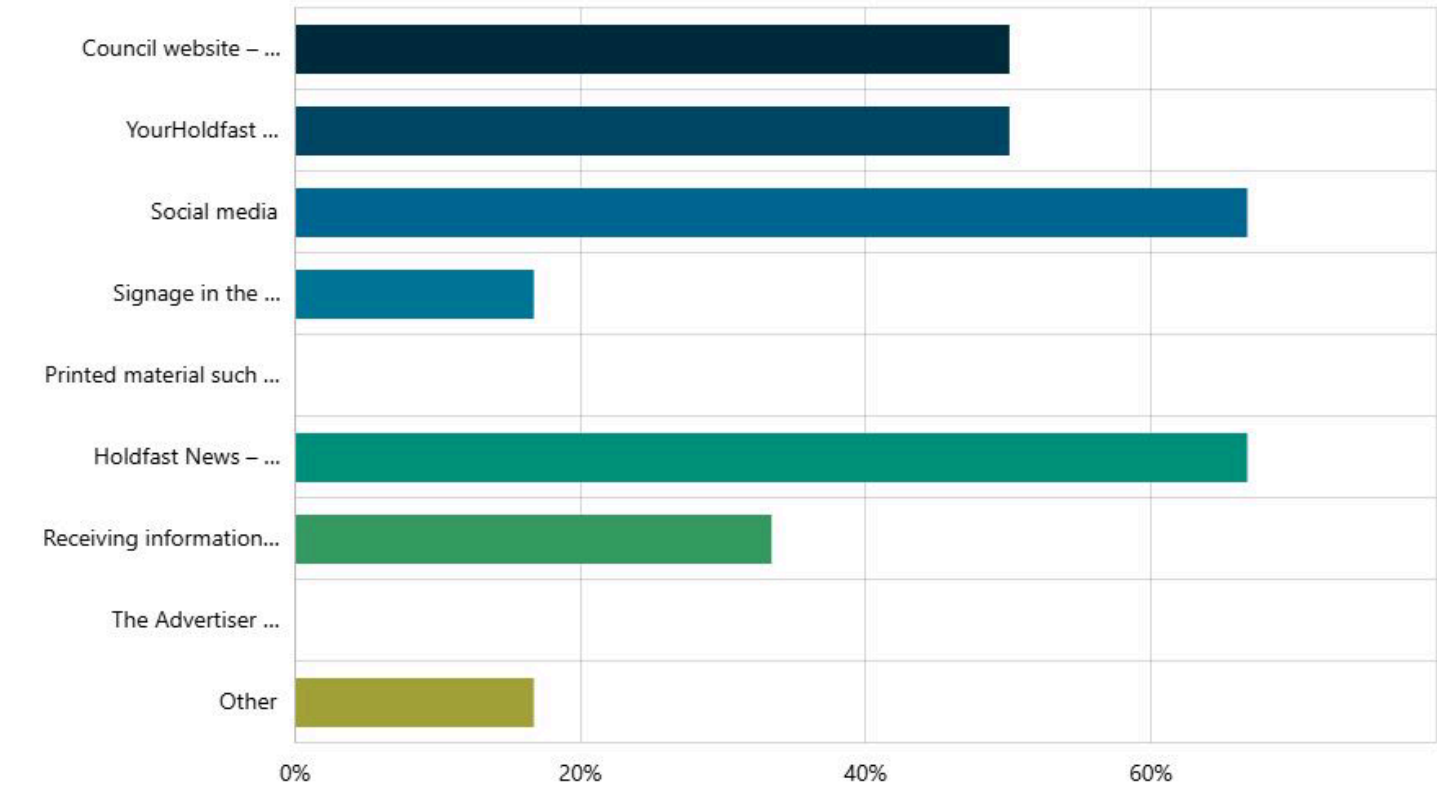
5 participants answered



Answer	Percent	Count
Online survey via YourHoldfast.com	80%	4
Online tools: forums, map pinning, ideas generators	20%	1
Email	60%	3
Hardcopy survey	20%	1
Letter	20%	1
Drop-in session with Council staff	0%	0
Focus groups	0%	0
Telephone call with Council staff	0%	0
Speaking to an Elected Member	20%	1
Council deputation	20%	1
Total	100%	5

3. How would you like to be informed about community consultations? (tick all that apply)

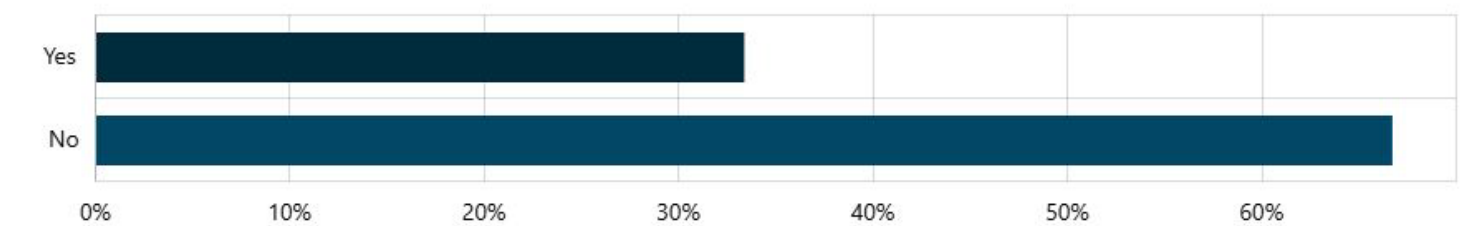
6 participants answered



Answer	Percent	Count
Council website – holdfast.sa.gov.au	50%	3
YourHoldfast engagement website – Yourholdfast.com	50%	3
Social media	66.67%	4
Signage in the community e.g. in parks, reserves and the coast path	16.67%	1
Printed material such as fact sheets or flyers available in council buildings	0%	0
Holdfast News – Council fortnightly e newsletter	66.67%	4
Receiving information direct in your letterbox	33.33%	2
The Advertiser newspaper - Public notice	0%	0
Other - Did not specify	16.67%	1
Total	100%	6

4a. Have you ever found it hard to provide feedback?

6 participants answered



Answer	Percent	Count
Yes	33.33%	2
No	66.67%	4
Total	100%	6

4b. If yes, what made it hard?

2 participants answered

The feedback from two participants expressed that postal mail can be a more effective way to reach some residents, as they do not regularly use social media. While providing feedback is considered easy, there is a concern that community members do not always feel their feedback is genuinely heard or acted upon.

See Appendix – Survey Results Response Data for full responses.

5.What could Council do to make engagement more accessible and inclusive?

4 participants answered

It was requested that consultation feedback continues to ensure a variety of methodologies are available including letters, digital notifications and face-to-face engagement.

That people directly affected by a proposal should be contacted directly (i.e. letterbox) rather than expected to find information themselves. It also emphasises the importance of Council reporting back on what it heard during consultation and how feedback influenced decisions, helping community members feel genuinely included in the process.

One respondent provided feedback on a previous consultation - *Draft By-Laws* where concerns were raised about Council appearing not to act on feedback relating to community safety, highlighting the importance of demonstrating that community input is genuinely considered.

See Appendix – Survey Results Response Data for full responses.

6. Do you have any further comments?

5 participants answered

While five submissions were received, four respondents provided feedback relating to a previous community consultation on *Draft By-laws*. These comments have been noted and included in the appendix but are not summarised in this report as they fall outside the scope of the Community Engagement Policy consultation.

One submission specifically addressed the Community Engagement Policy. The respondent supported the proposed updated policy and highlighted the importance of clear communication, early engagement with affected community members, and transparent reporting on how community feedback is considered and influences decision-making.

See Appendix – Survey Results Response Data for full responses

Survey Participant Demographic Information

Age Group

6 participants answered. Below are the age groups of survey participants.

Answer	Percent	Count
14 and under	0%	0
15-24	0%	0
25-44	50.00%	3
44-64	50.00%	3
65 and over	0%	0
Total	100.00%	6

Suburb

All submissions were received from City of Holdfast residents

Suburb	Percent	Count
Brighton	16.67%	1
Glenelg	16.67%	1
Glenelg East	16.67%	1
Glenelg North	33.33%	2
Glenelg South	0%	0
Hove	16.67%	1
Kingston Park	0%	0
North Brighton	0%	0
Seacliff	0%	0
Seacliff Park	0%	0
Somerton Park	0%	0
South Brighton	0%	0
Other	0%	0
Total	100%	6

Website Statistics

Below is the information regarding how people accessed and viewed the project page.

196 views	172 visits	150 visitors
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- Views** – The number of times a visitor views any page on a site.
- Visits** – The number of end-user sessions associated with a single visitor.
- Visitors** – The number of unique public or end-users to a site. A visitor is only counted once, even if they visit a Site several times in one day.

How people accessed the website

Below shows how people accessed the website.

Access source	Visits
Direct	54 (31.4%)
Social media	82 (47.7%)
Websites	31 (18%)
Search engines	5 (2.9%)



114 Total Downloads

Document	Downloads
Draft_Community_Engagement_Policy.pdf	79
Draft_Community_Engagement_Policy_survey_printable.pdf	12
Community-Engagement-Charter-11-December-2025 (2).pdf	11
Council-Policy-Community-Consultation-and-Engagement-Policy.pdf	12
Total	114

Appendix 1 – Survey Results Response Data

Please note all comments are written verbatim. All personal details have been redacted.

1. Please provide any feedback you have on the draft community engagement policy

Contribution ID	Comment
15145	Too hard to read!
15143	No dogs unleashed around parks plz .
15149	<p>I support Council updating this policy and getting it in line with the new Charter. That part makes sense and I think having a clearer framework is a good thing.</p> <p>From a communications point of view though, the real test will not be the policy itself. It will be how it feels to the public when Council actually uses it.</p> <p>Most people do not care what a policy says in formal language. They care about whether they were told early enough, whether the right people were asked, whether the issue was explained properly, and whether Council came back afterwards and said what it heard and what it did with that feedback.</p> <p>So for me, the easy questions for Council are these. How will Council explain in plain English why something is classed as significant, standard, local or inform only. How will Council make sure people directly affected by a proposal hear about it without having to accidentally find it online. How will Council report back in a way that an ordinary person can follow, rather than just filing away a summary somewhere.</p> <p>The stickier questions are the ones that go to trust.</p> <p>How will Council stop “inform only” being seen by the public as a way of avoiding proper consultation.</p> <p>If a matter is controversial, who decides the level of engagement and will the reason for that decision be published.</p> <p>If the majority of feedback goes one way and Council goes the other way, how will that be explained so people do not just conclude the consultation was for show.</p> <p>What will Council do when consultation is dominated by a small but very active group, while quieter residents, traders or ratepayers do not engage until the very end.</p> <p>I think the policy is a worthwhile step, but the public will judge it on fairness, clarity and follow through, not on whether it meets legislative wording. If Council gets those practical parts right, this policy will help build trust. If it does not, people will just see another consultation process and switch off.</p>
15147	<p>I believe that the “silent majority” should be accounted for in community consultation, and council empowered to make decisions based on best practice, not the squeaky wheels.</p> <p>I actually can’t believe the council listened to the minority of loud complainers, and the proposed dog leash by-law was removed. Other Councils have had this by-law for years, why do Holdfast residents need to let their dogs play near playgrounds off leash? I am a dog owner myself as well as a mother to human children. I don’t often get involved or complain but this absolutely gutless of</p>

	Council. If safety, common sense, best practice were applied, this by-law would have been passed. It appears too much weight is given to those who complain loudly.
15146	Dogs must be on leashes. Please do not allow people more flexibility around this. As a parent I always have to ask dog owners at our local park to put their dog on the leash because some dogs harass us and the dog owners do nothing about it. This happens in so many public places and is scary sometimes to have dogs coming up to you and jumping on you and charging at you. If there isn't an ongoing requirement that dog owners have their dogs on leashes in all public places including playgrounds how will kids actually play safely? If anything we need more partoling of dog owners to make sure that they are actually following the rules. As someone who has had my dog bitten by other dogs off leash (while I followed the rules and kept my dog on the leash) and had dog owners ignore any opportunities to control their pets even when jumping on kids who are not their own and who are clearly distressed we need tighter dog laws. Please don't remove the requirements to have dogs on leads, especially in public spaces and playgrounds. These are meant to be places for everyone, not just entitled dog owners who choose not to control their dogs!

4b. Have you ever found it hard to provide feedback? If yes what made it hard

2 responses

Contribution ID	If yes what made it hard?
15143	V rarely we will get a letter in the post the social media stuff is too much we hardly go there anyways.
15146	I've found that providing feedback is easy, but being listened to is hard.

5.What could Council do to make Engagement more accessible and inclusive

4 responses

Contribution ID	Feedback
15143	Write us , send us letters.
15146	Provide information without hidden agendas and actually listening to the reasons feedback is given. For example around dog laws, it's a genuine safety issue and I've raised concerns about how dog owners don't obey leash laws in the past and raised specific examples of the safety of other dogs, passers by and children being put at risk because dog owners don't put their dogs on leashes, and so it was so incredibly disappointing to see a facebook post explaining that leash around playgrounds will no longer be required. As a dog owner with a child who puts their dog on a leash, it's a genuine safety concern if leashes are no longer needed. The fact that the council is disregarding safety in this area is honestly scary.
15149	<p>Make it easier for ordinary people to understand and take part. That means plain English, shorter summaries, and being clearer about what is changing and why people should care.</p> <p>Not everyone wants to engage the same way either. Some people are fine online, others are more likely to respond to a letter, a phone call, a hard copy survey or a face to face option. Council should keep using a mix of methods.</p> <p>For issues that affect a particular street, suburb or business area, the people most affected should be told directly, not left to discover it by accident.</p>