



1. Intent of Policy

Oberon Council recognises that the key to building positive and lasting partnerships with the community requires effective two-way communication. The intent of this policy is to inform how Council proposes to:

- Inform the community of key Council decisions, services, programs and initiatives,
- Promote transparency and accountability of Council's decision making processes,
- Promote opportunities for public consultation, engagement and participation in Council activities,
- Promote accessibility by the community to Oberon Councillor's and staff,
- Build pride and community capacity through a positive image of Oberon Council.

2. Scope of Policy

In all forms of communication, including verbal, printed or electronic, Oberon Councillors and staff are expected to adhere to the highest standards of ethical practice and professional competence.

3. Guidelines

Media

All media comments of a politically sensitive nature are to be made by the Mayor of the day, and in the Mayor's absence, such comments can be made by the Deputy Mayor.

Visitor Information Centre, Library and Community Technology Centre staff can continue to provide information via regular radio programs, newsletters and media releases, promoting the benefits of the region and to keep the public informed.

Factual media comments can be made by the General Manager or if the General Manager is not available then by the Acting General Manager, and if the Acting General Manager is not available, then by the most appropriate senior staff member who has knowledge and responsibility for the matter raised by the media.

Advertising

To ensure maximum coverage within the Council area, Council's public advertisements must, at a minimum, be placed in the local newspaper, 'Oberon Review'. All public advertisements are to include the Oberon Council Logo.

The Oberon Council logo is to appear on all Council communication mediums including correspondence, publications, forms, facsimiles, advertisements, displays, signage, etc.

Access to Council Information

Members of the public are entitled to have access to the majority of Council documents. Inspection of Council documents is free, if a copy is required the photocopying rate in Council's Fees & Charges will be charged.

Section 12 of the Local Government Act 1993 specifies which Council documents must be available free of charge for people to inspect at Council offices during business hours.

An application for information through the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (GIPA Act) can also be submitted to obtain documents that cannot be obtained under Section 12 of the Local Government Act. However, the Privacy and Personal Information Protection (PPIP) Act 1998, which helps to protect personal information and the privacy of individuals, must also be considered.

Community Notice Boards

Council has Community Notice Boards within the Local Government Area. The notice boards are to be locked and access is only to be controlled by Council staff.

Acceptable uses are, but are not limited to, the following:

- . Information about community events and/or programs
- . Available health services
- . Child care facilities
- . Migrant support
- . Family welfare
- . Emergency services
- . Council services
- . Maps of the area
- . Schools, sporting and recreational facilities, and
- . Visitor information.

Unacceptable uses include, but are not limited to, the following:

- . Information about lost dogs
- . Items for sale or garage sales
- . Advertising
- . Commercial activities.

The Council retains the right to add or remove any items from the notice boards at any time. The General Manager will make these decisions.

Website and Facebook

Council will maintain its website, www.oberon.nsw.gov.au and Facebook page.

Oberon Council is committed to a quality service and makes every attempt to ensure accuracy, currency and reliability of the data contained in these documents. However, changes in circumstances after time of publication may impact the quality of this information. It is the responsibility of the user to make his or her own decisions about the correctness of information found. Confirmation of the information may be sought from originating authors or organisations providing the information.

Oberon Council has no control over the content of material accessible on any site cross-referenced. It is the responsibility of the Internet User to make his or her own decision about the relevance, currency and reliability of information found on Council sites.

In addition, Oberon Council does not necessarily endorse or support the views, opinions, standards or information expressed at linked sites. They have been set up as information sources only.

Distribution of Council Meeting Business Papers

The distribution of business papers for the Ordinary Council Meetings is to be arranged so that elected members receive the business paper before it is released to the general public.

Agendas, business papers and minutes from Council and Committee meetings, except for any parts of the meeting that are closed to the public, are available free of charge for people to inspect at Council offices during business hours.

Council will issue a public notice that the complete business paper will be available for inspection at Council's offices, Library and website. If people wish to receive a paper copy, it will be charged at the rate in Council's Fees and Charges.

Community Consultation

Council will help the community build capacity by providing vehicles for local people to express and act on existing concerns. These vehicles may include but are not limited to:

- Focus Groups
- Community Forums
- Community surveys
- Review of customer feedback and complaints
- Neighbourhood, precinct, community committees or working parties
- Research into service trends
- Informal assessment through networking
- Structured community involvement through advisory committees (Section 355 Committees) or representative appointments to panels that mediate community input.

In providing these vehicles for local concerns, Council can interact with communities in different cycles of contact. Council will avoid top down approaches which often engage communities and agencies in a self-reinforcing "vicious cycles".

With a more community orientated approach, agencies and communities can build a constructive "virtuous" cycle of contact. As people begin to express and act on their concerns, they meet other stakeholders and community sectors cooperate.

Gradually, emotional and reactive thinking become more constructive and strategic. Council finds it easier to listen and act on community concerns, building trust between staff and local participant.

These processes are not intended to reduce in importance Council's role and responsibility in decision making. It is intended that local people will provide information and opinions with the objective of building wisdom that facilitates sound decision making.

Internal Communication

The General Manager will be responsible for the development and implementation of efficient and effective internal (staff) communication policies and procedures.

Approving Authority	Oberon Council
Contact	Finance & Community Services Director
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