

JULY 16 2011

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT
SHOALHAVEN COUNCIL COMMUNITY SUB-COMMITTEE**

**REPORT FOR BASIN VILLAGES FORUM
CHRIS GROUNDS**

There have been two meetings of the Community Sub-Committee on the Community Engagement Policy since the last meeting and report to the Forum.

The first was the very next day after the Forum meeting. It was attended by all community reps.[6] and two senior staff [G.M. & A.G.M.] but no Councillors. It was the first meeting of the Sub-Committee and thus the first chance for the community reps. to meet.

This two hour meeting was found to be very productive and positive by all involved and very good progress was made in developing the Draft Policy based on the input of the workshop groups from the community seminar. Discussion was quite rightly confined to the Community Engagement Policy and did not embrace discussion of specific policies as such.

The second meeting was held last week on Tuesday July 12 and was attended by all community reps.[6], one senior staff [A.G.M.], three of the four nominated Sub-Committee Councillors [Guile, Watson & Fergusson], the Mayor Paul Green who had not been previously involved and the freshly appointed Council Media Officer [Richard]. We were notified one hour and ten minutes into the meeting that it would only go for another twenty minutes having expected a two hour meeting. The next and third meeting has likewise been scheduled for an hour and a half. This has been done without consultation and has the effect of closing down twenty five per cent of meeting time for community reps. causing a loss of an hour of meeting time in just two meetings.

The change in personnel and numbers certainly changed the dynamics of this meeting compared to the previous meeting and there are some concerns for community reps. arising from this meeting.

The major development was that a section on Principles of Community Engagement was re-included at community rep. request. Some exemplars of formatting the content, which had previously been text, were considered and well accepted. Some of the extended discussion arising from Councillors concerned members of the community having a chance to engage through voting [Guile], recognizing the cost of engagement [Watson] and the need to accept a positive approach toward the policy wording [Fergusson].

A significant element of discussion between community reps. and Councillors involved issues related to the "Empower" imperative in the Policy, which embraced the concept of letting community make decisions. This took some time, is unresolved and involved some particular differences of attitude.

There were known Policy amendments in the Draft proposed by community reps. which did not receive attention due to the discussions which developed.

The next meeting will be on July 28 and I will provide a further progress report for the next meeting.

Cheers All
Chris Grounds