COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

2024 - 2028

DEVONPORT

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1 Executive Summary

The Devonport City Council Community Engagement Strategy 2024-2028 aims to enhance the connection between the Council and the residents of Devonport through innovative, inclusive and interactive engagement initiatives. The Strategy seeks to foster active participation in local governance, programs, projects and services to ensure that the voices of residents are heard and considered in the decision-making process. Through collaborative efforts, continual learning, and open dialogue, we will continue to build a more engaged and vibrant community in Devonport.

2 Introduction

Devonport City Council recognises the importance of the community's involvement in making decisions that impact their lives. Council is committed to giving its residents a voice in shaping Devonport's future, as Council firmly believes that collaborative decision making enriches the community and leads to better outcomes.

One of Council's values is "dedication to our customers and community". Council demonstrates this by listening to diverse views and balances those considerations with financial factors, legal obligations and professional advice.

The Community Engagement Strategy guides these actions to ensure that Council is consistently seeking and listening to community input. It sets out specific engagement activities in line with the objectives of Council's Community Engagement Policy and defines roles and responsibilities.

The objectives of the Strategy are to:

- Provide ample opportunities for residents and ratepayers to actively contribute to shaping the strategic direction of the City.
- Foster innovation, inclusion and the ongoing enhancement of community engagement activity.

2.1 Definitions

Devonport City Council: The local government body that governs the municipal area of Devonport.

Community Engagement Toolkit: A comprehensive guide featuring tools and templates designed to assist Council staff in uniformly planning, coordinating and executing community engagement initiatives.

Communication and Engagement Team: A group of personnel, skilled in community engagement techniques, dedicated to helping the organisation execute its engagement activities.

IAP2: International Association for Public Participation is the peak body for the community and stakeholder engagement sector in Australasia.

Public Participation: Another term for community engagement; both are interchangeable.

2.2 Our Community Profile*

Population:	26,970
Median Age:	43
Population over 15 years:	21,720
Identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander:	1,969
People who were born overseas:	11%
People who speak a language other than English at home:	6%
People employed:	11,214

* Correct as at 2023 and published in Council's Term Plan 2022-2026

3 Strategic and Legislative Context:

Under the *Local Government Act 1993*:

Section 20(2) Functions and Powers:

> *"In performing its functions, a council is to consult, involve and be accountable to the community".*

Section 66(3) Strategic Plan:

> *"In preparing a proposed strategic plan, a council is to consult with the community in its municipal area and any authorities and bodies it considers appropriate".*

The State Government released reforms for the Local Government Legislative Framework Review on April 22, 2020, after two years of extensive consultation with the local government sector, stakeholders and the community. One of the key reforms (Reform #17) is that all councils will develop and adopt a community engagement strategy after each election, in collaboration with their communities.

The Strategy will inform how councils will engage, involve, consult and inform their communities on plans, projects and policies. Councils must follow their Community Engagement Strategy when engaging communities on their Strategic Plan, in determining their service delivery priorities, and when setting their budget.

4 Why is Engagement Important:

Community engagement is a systematic and purposeful effort to involve individuals and groups in decisions that affect their lives or are of significant interest to them.
It:

- Fosters a dynamic and knowledgeable dialogue with the community.
- Helps Council gain a deeper insight into the community's perspectives and goals.
- Leverages the extensive knowledge and experience within the local community.
- Enhances decision-making, leading to better outcomes for Devonport.
- Establishes mutually advantageous relationships and collaborations with the local community.
- Strengthens trust in Devonport City Council's governance and decision-making processes.

5 Guiding Principles:

Devonport City Council's approach to community engagement is underpinned by these guiding principles:

5.1 Open and Inclusive

- Recognising community participation as a right of all citizens and an integral component of informed decision making.
- Creating, supporting, and promoting opportunities for the community to actively participate.
- Encouraging involvement from a wide cross section of the community using engagement processes that are accessible and inclusive.
- Being open and committed to ensuring the community is well informed about Council's service delivery and decision-making processes.

5.2 Mutual Trust, Respect and Accountability

- Treating everyone in the engagement process with respect and dignity.
- Approaching engagement impartially, free from bias toward any stakeholder involved in the process.
- Being accountable, accessible, and ethical in all dealings with the community.

5.3 Engage Early and be Clear

- Seeking early engagement and regularly involving the community in decision making.
- Clearly communicating the objectives of the engagement process and providing all available and relevant information to ensure informed discussions.
- Communicating the parameters of the engagement process with participants from the outset including legislative requirements, Council's sphere of influence, conflicting community views, policy frameworks and context, budget constraints etc.
- Acknowledging that planning is crucial to delivering successful outcomes and that Council is committed to developing and implementing community engagement plans.

5.4 Consideration and feedback

- Being committed to demonstrating that Council has considered all community responses and relevant data before making any decisions that affect the community.
- Being committed to providing participants with feedback at key stages throughout the project/s and on completion, including how community input influenced the decision.

5.5 Skills and Resources

- Striving to allocate sufficient timeframes and resources to engagement processes.
- Where possible, coordinating community engagement processes to get the most from resources and avoid duplication.

6 IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation:

In planning and conducting community engagement, Devonport City Council follows the principles and practices of the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2).

The IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation identifies the appropriate level of participation and Council's commitment to the community.

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL				
To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC				
We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
EXAMPLE METHODS				
• Fact sheets • Newsletters • Exhibitions • Website • Social media	• Public submissions • Surveys • Focus groups • Public meetings • Pop-up information sessions	• Workshops • Round tables • Deliberative polling	• Advisory and reference committees • Project reference groups • Co-design • Participatory decision-making	• Citizen juries • Ballots • Delegated decisions • Elections

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7 How the Strategy was Developed:

7.1 Understanding the Community

Council took a comprehensive approach to understanding who makes up the Devonport community. Acknowledging the rich diversity of its population, including varying ages, cultural backgrounds and accessibility (including digital technology), Council is committed to communication and engagement methods that are inclusive and accessible to all.

7.2 Assessing the Needs and Performance

Council continually assesses what the community requires in terms of communication and engagement. By identifying the types of information residents value most—from Council decisions and local projects to community events and services— Council can tailor its approach to meet these interests. Council also evaluated its existing communication practices to ensure they remain relevant and responsive to community expectations.

7.3 Engaging and Improving

Recognising areas for improvement has been crucial in shaping the Strategy, and in improving engagement activity overall.

Some of the ways Council has improved its existing channels include:

Enhancing digital presence: Expanding the use of social media, Council's website and digital newsletters to provide timely and engaging content.

Strengthening traditional communication: Ensuring traditional methods like community newsletters, posters, brochures and local media remain robust and effective in reaching those not online.

Interactive engagement opportunities: Identify opportunities for public forums, workshops and face to face events where they will assist in fostering direct dialogue and participation.

Continuous feedback loop: Implementing mechanisms to gather ongoing feedback from the community on Council's communication and engagement efforts, allowing for real-time adjustments and improvements.

8 When we Engage

Council will engage with the Devonport community:

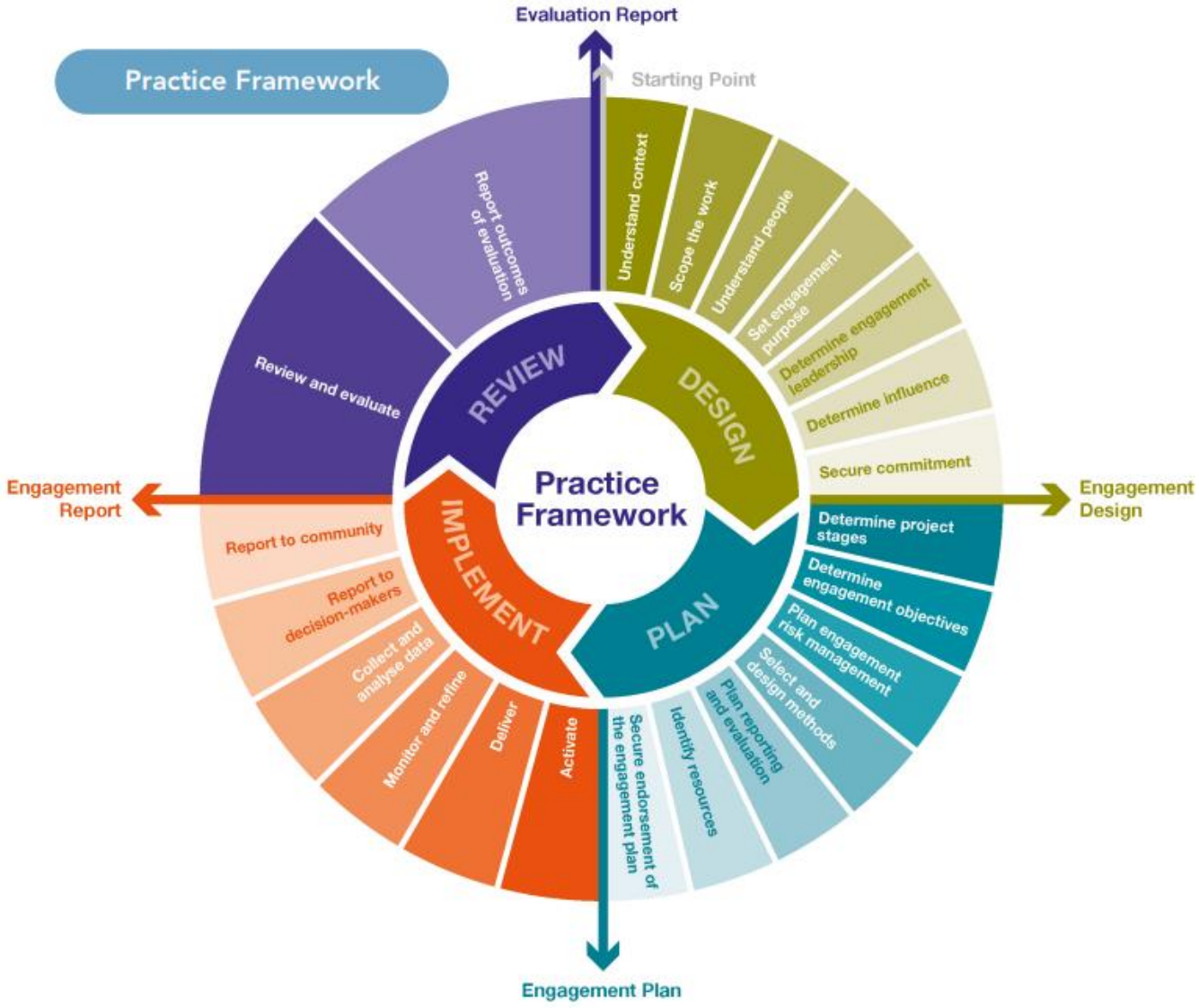
- When a decision is expected to significantly affect services, facilities, and programs.
- To guide the development of long-term and strategic plans, policies and major projects, especially when community interest, potential conflict or sensitivity are likely.
- Whenever there is an opportunity for the community to shape the outcome.
- If a legal obligation requires engagement.

9 How we Engage

Council undertakes a systematic and intentional approach to engagement, tailored to each specific project. Council's engagement initiatives are designed to be comprehensive and broad, while also including marginalised groups and those who may face obstacles to participation.

Council follows the IAP2's Practice Framework (illustrated below), along with a Community Engagement Toolkit which helps staff apply this framework effectively.

See Appendix 1 for the current methods that Devonport City Council uses for community engagement.



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Council uses diverse channels to connect with its residents, stakeholders and staff, ensuring transparency, engagement and accessibility across the community. This approach caters to a wide range of preferences for receiving information, recognising different demographics and technological comfort levels. Channels include:

Digital and social media platforms

Facebook, X (Twitter), LinkedIn and YouTube: These social media platforms are used to share Council updates, news, engaging content and video messages. They serve as interactive spaces for the community to engage with Council initiatives.

Council website: This acts as the central hub for comprehensive information about services, projects, events and Council initiatives. It includes detailed sections for public notices, upcoming events and access to Council documents and forms. It also offers community members the ability to provide feedback directly to Council.

Traditional media

Media releases: Distributed across print, radio and television channels, media releases ensure that important announcements and updates reach a broad audience, including those who might not be online.

Local radio: Collaborations with local radio stations allow live updates, interviews with Elected Members and key staff and announcements to be broadcast, reaching listeners during their daily routines.

Direct communications

Community newsletters: Published regularly, these newsletters are available online and via email subscription, offering insights into Council activities, community projects and local events.

Posters, brochures and flyers: These traditional forms of communication are used for events, initiatives or public consultations. They are displayed in public spaces or distributed at community events, ensuring visibility for valuable information.

Engaging with the community

YouTube: This platform is used for broadcasting Council meetings, and also for sharing informative videos about Council projects and initiatives, providing a visual and engaging way to inform and involve the community.

10 Who we Engage With

Devonport's vibrant and varied community includes residents, students, workers and visitors.

The groups Council engage with vary depending on the nature of the project, its impact and how much interest the community has shown. Some of the groups Council may reach out to include:

- Interest-based communities who have a common interest or concern for specific topics like arts, sports, environmental issues, business and community activism.
- Place-based communities united by their affinity for or use of a certain area.
- Identity-based communities formed around cultural and religious beliefs, age groups, life experiences and social requirements.
- Government bodies and key stakeholders, which include other councils, different government levels, significant institutions and other relevant parties.
- Future generations, encompassing youth and those who will become part of Devonport's community in the years to come.

11 Key Stakeholders

Council's diverse array of key stakeholders each play a crucial role in the City's governance, development and community well-being. These stakeholders are categorised into three main groups: Our community, influencers and internal stakeholders - each with distinct roles, expectations and contributions.

Our community

The foundation of Devonport's vibrancy and the primary focus of the Council's efforts:

Residents: The lifeblood of the City, whose daily lives and well-being are directly impacted by Council's decisions and services. Engaging with residents ensures that policies and projects reflect the community's needs and aspirations.

Community groups: Including non-profits, social service organisations, sports clubs and cultural associations, these groups enrich Devonport's social fabric and are vital in mobilising community engagement and volunteerism.

Service users: Individuals and families who rely on Council's range of services, from public amenities and libraries to community centres and parks. Their feedback is crucial for improving service quality and accessibility.

Businesses: From local startups to established enterprises, businesses contribute to the economic strength and employment opportunities in Devonport. Council works closely with them to foster a supportive environment for economic growth and innovation.

Visitors: Tourists and visitors add to the economic and cultural diversity of Devonport. Their experiences and perceptions of the City can influence its reputation and attractiveness as a destination.

Influencers

Entities and individuals who shape the broader context within which Council operates:

State and federal government: These levels of government influence funding, regulatory frameworks and strategic priorities. Their policies and decisions can significantly impact local governance and community projects.

Media: Local and national media outlets play a critical role in information dissemination, public perception and accountability. A constructive relationship with the media supports transparent and effective communication with the community.

Leadership organisations: The Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) and similar organisations provide a platform for advocacy, resource sharing and collective action among Tasmania's councils. They are instrumental in shaping policy discussions and best practices in local governance.

Internal stakeholders

The individuals and teams working directly under or with Council to deliver services and projects:

Councillors: Elected officials who represent the community's interests, make decisions and provide leadership. Their vision and governance set the direction for Council's activities and community engagement.

Council staff: The administrative and operational arm of the Council, responsible for implementing policies, managing services and engaging with the community. Their expertise and dedication are essential for Council's success.

Contractors and volunteers: External contractors provide specialised services and support for various projects, while volunteers contribute their time and skills to community programs and events. Both groups augment the Council's capacity to serve the community effectively.

12 Roles and Responsibilities

Both the community and Devonport City Council share responsibilities and play important roles in initiating, implementing and participating in community engagement activities.

Community members

- Engage in activities designed for community input.

- Contribute insights, principles and experiences unique to the City.
- Encourage participation within their networks and local community.

Elected Members

- Advocate for the City's engagement efforts through leadership and informed decisions.
- Reflect on the feedback received from community engagement in their decision-making.

Senior leadership and management

- Cultivate an environment that prioritises engagement practices, guided by this Strategy.
- Provide staff with the necessary resources, support and training to facilitate effective and consistent engagement with the community.

Communication and engagement staff

- Manage the execution of the Community Engagement Strategy and Policy.
- Enhance organisational capability through offering advice, education and supplying resources and tools.
- Assist in organising, conducting and assessing community engagement activities.

Employees of Devonport City Council

- Organise and implement community engagement initiatives in line with the Strategy and Policy.

13 Our Community Engagement Priorities

Devonport City Council remains committed to involving the community in discussions about proposed maintenance activities, infrastructure projects, planning initiatives, strategies, services, policy modifications and any other factors that might affect the quality of life or local amenities for residents of Devonport.

Community engagement activities reflect and amplify Council's values and mission, ensuring our approach is inclusive, effective and forward-thinking.

14 Upholding our Values through Communication

Dedication to customers and community: Council's communication efforts are rooted in a deep understanding of the community's needs. Council aims to establish clear, open channels of communication that not only disseminate information but also facilitate meaningful discussions. By doing so, Council can connect its residents and stakeholders to the solutions and services that matter most to them.

Championing and Respecting One Another:
Effective communication and engagement within the community hinge on a foundation of mutual respect and support. By championing and respecting one another, Council fosters an environment where diverse voices are heard and valued. This approach not only strengthens collective bonds but also enhances the ability to address community needs and aspirations. Through open dialogue, active listening, and genuine empathy, Council ensures that every individual feels seen and understood. By embodying these principles, Council paves the way for more inclusive, responsive, and empowered community interactions, ultimately leading to a more cohesive and vibrant community life.

Pioneering Positive Improvement: In Council's quest to continuously improve, innovative communication technologies and strategies are employed. From digital engagement platforms to community forums, the goal is to make information more accessible and participation more engaging for everyone.

15 Enhancing customer service through effective communication

Consistent with Council's commitment to improving customer service, community engagement strategies are designed to be as informative and responsive as possible.

Training for Council staff emphasises the importance of clear, courteous and timely communication, ensuring all interactions with Council meet the standards set in Council's Customer Service Charter.

16 Realising our Mission with Every Message

Council's mission, a commitment to excellence in leadership and service, guides adopted communication engagement goals. By embodying Council's values in every message and interaction, Council aims to not only inform and engage, but also inspire and empower the community. Through effective communication, Council can lead by example, demonstrating dedication to serving the community with integrity, innovation and excellence.

17 Evaluation of the Strategy

This Strategy reflects insights gained from an internal examination of engagement methods, comparing current engagement standards with leading examples of community engagement.

To ensure ongoing enhancement, Devonport City Council commits to revisiting this Strategy in five years, with the next review scheduled for 2028.

18 Appendices & Associated Documents:

- Appendix 1: Engagement Methods
- Appendix 2: Community Engagement Matrix
- Community Engagement Policy - https://www.devonport.tas.gov.au/wpfd_file/community-engagement-policy/
- Devonport City Council Strategic Plan - https://www.devonport.tas.gov.au/council/governance/strategies-reports-publications/council-plans-strategies/
- Public Question Time Policy - Council Policies | Devonport City Council
- Place and Assets Naming Policy - Council Policies | Devonport City Council

APPENDIX 1: ENGAGEMENT METHODS

This is a selection of strategies Devonport City Council uses to involve the community and stakeholders in making decisions. This list is not exhaustive or prescriptive, as the approach to engagement may change depending on its size, context and goals. Council is committed to enhancing engagement practices and will continuously seek out and test innovative engagement methods and tools.

Speak Up Devonport
Speak Up Devonport at www.speakupdevonport.com.au is a digital community engagement platform. It serves as a hub for disseminating information about engagement initiatives and offers the community the option to provide input. Through online resources, such as surveys, it facilitates the collection of community feedback.

Pop-up listening events
Regularly scheduled pop-up listening events take place in community neighbourhoods and key locations, offering residents the chance to engage directly with Council staff and Elected Members. These sessions provide an avenue for the public to learn about ongoing projects and voice their feedback in a personal, face-to-face setting.

Advisory groups, working groups, special interest groups and reference panels
Advisory and reference panels consist of community members who bring specific perspectives, lived experiences or specialised knowledge to the table. These groups offer continual guidance on matters impacting particular segments of the community or specific topics of interest.

Face-to-face engagement
In-person engagement activities, such as community forums, workshops and panel discussions, provide a platform for presenting information and enabling the community to exchange ideas, explore potential solutions and pose questions.

Placemaking
Placemaking brings people together to create positive changes in a place or area. It's a collaborative process for creating public spaces that people love and feel connected to.

Co-design
This approach brings Council and the community together to co-create new programs, services and policies. It involves collaboratively exploring challenges and crafting solutions that take into account the community's needs and consideration of any constraints.

Deliberative engagement
This puts community members at the core of the decision-making process, especially on complex issues. A diverse group is brought together to consider relevant information from different perspectives. Group members weigh up various options and collectively arrive at a decision or recommendation.

Engagement with Elected Members
Councillors are elected to serve and advocate for the community's best interests while also providing a link between the Council and its ratepayers and residents. Community members can reach out to Councillors to discuss any matters of interest or concern.

Council meetings
Community members are welcome to participate in open Council sessions and can ask questions with or without notice. They can also table petitions through a prescribed process.

Council's Public Question Time Policy details the process for the asking of questions with or without notice, and is available on Council's website, along with Guidelines for the tabling of Petitions.

Contact details for Councillors are also available on Council's website.

Specialised committees
Committees made up of community representatives who bring a rich background of knowledge and experience offer guidance to Council on major initiatives and strategies.

APPENDIX 2: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MATRIX

What we do		When we do it				
A = Always **U = Usually – if not conducted, provide rationale** **O = Occasionally – as required** **R = Rarely – in specific circumstances only**		**Strategic issues** **Major projects** **Resourcing**	**Policy development**	**Statutory obligations**	**Program or service planning**	**Improvement projects**
Informing	Social media	A	U	O	A	A
	Website	A	A	U	A	A
	Media releases	U	U	O	A	A
	Local radio	U	O	O	U	U
	Exhibitions	O	O	O	O	U
	Community newsletters	U	U	O	U	U
	Posters, flyers and brochures	O	O	O	U	U
	Letters and email notification	O	O	O	U	O
	Outdoor signage	O	O	O	U	O
	Rates notice	O	O	O	U	O
Consulting	Staff communication/engagement	A	A	U	A	A
	Councillor communication/engagement	A	A	O	A	A
	Council meetings	U	A	O	U	A
	Pop-up listening events	U	O	R	O	O
	Public meetings/face to face engagement	U	O	R	O	O
	Surveys	O	O	R	O	O
	Public submissions	A	U	R	A	A
Involving	Speak Up Devonport	A	U	R	U	A
	Deliberative engagement/workshops	O	O	R	O	O
Collaborating	Advisory groups Working groups Special interest groups Reference panels Specialised committees	U	O	R	U	U
	Placemaking/co-design	U	O	R	U	O
Empowering	Elections	Not within Council's control – set as per legislation				

Definitions:

Strategic Issue, Major Projects or Resourcing: Large-scale initiatives or significant changes affecting the city.

Policy Development: Creating or revising Council policies or high-level documents.

Statutory Obligations: Legal requirements including town planning and by-laws.

Program or Service Planning: Developing or enhancing services with significant changes in service levels impacting the city.

Improvement Projects: Substantial projects affecting the city's budget, infrastructure, and long-term planning.