Communications and Engagement

Strategy 2026-29



SUPPORTING THE DELIVERY OF CIRCULAR HEAD VISION 2050

EQUITY • CONNECTION • EXCELLENCE

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and continuing custodians of Northwest Tasmania and honour the sacred connection the 12 Tribes of the Northwest have held to this land for thousands of years.

We pay our respect to Elders past and present, and recognise the contemporary custodians of this Country, along with all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, for their ongoing care, knowledge and cultural leadership.

We acknowledge that this land has always been a place of storytelling, listening, learning, song and shared knowledge.

As a Council, we commit to approaching our work in that same spirit - to listen deeply, to respect all voices, and to engage with community in ways that are open, inclusive and grounded in care for people and place.

We honour the enduring connection to Country and the rich cultural heritage that continues to thrive, and we recognise our responsibility to walk alongside community with respect and intention.



Photo: Robbins Island Passage by Mason Doherty

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Definitions

Community engagement is a a two-way process. It is about listening to our community, sharing information clearly, and involving people in decisions that affect them. It's about building understanding, trust and better outcomes - not just asking for feedback at the end of a process.

Communication is how Council shares information with the community. This includes updates about services, projects, decisions and opportunities to get involved. Good communication is clear, timely, accurate and easy to understand.

Consultation is when Council asks the community for feedback on a proposal, plan or decision before it is finalised. Community input helps inform decisions, and Council will be clear about what can and can't be influenced.

Stakeholders are people, groups or organisations who are affected by, have an interest in, or may influence a decision. This can include residents, businesses, community groups, visitors and government partners.

Closing the feedback loop means letting the community know what we heard, what changed (or didn't), and why a final decision was made.

> This strategy describes how Council plans to communicate, listen and engage with the community in decisions that shape our municipality.

What We Heard. What We'll Do.

Good communication is about more than sharing information. It's about listening, building understanding and creating trust.

Vision 2050 sets the long-term direction for our municipality. This Strategy supports that vision by helping our community understand where we're heading, why decisions are being made, and how people can be involved along the way.

As we developed this Strategy, we asked our community, staff and stakeholders how we could improve the way Council communicates and engages. While people shared many different ideas, several clear themes emerged.

The first was that communication is improving. Many people acknowledged the positive changes Council has made and encouraged us to continue building on this momentum.

We also heard that people value clear, honest and transparent communication. They want to understand how decisions are made, why projects are prioritised, how community feedback has been considered and what happens next. Even when people don't always agree with a decision, they told us they are more likely to support it when they feel heard and understand the reasons behind it.

The consultation also reminded us that one size doesn't fit all. Some people prefer Facebook, others rely on printed information, local media or conversations with Council staff. Our role is to meet people where they are and make it as easy as possible for everyone to stay informed and have their say.

We also heard that once the community has helped shape a direction, people want to see it put into action - and to be kept informed as that work progresses.

This Strategy reflects those conversations. It sets out a practical roadmap to strengthen communication and engagement, improve transparency and continue building trust between Council and our community.

Communication and engagement is not the responsibility of one person or one team. It is a shared responsibility across our organisation. As elected members, we have an important role to play by listening to our community, encouraging respectful conversations, and helping people understand the decisions we make on their behalf.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to share your ideas, experiences and feedback. This Strategy is stronger because of your contribution. We look forward to continuing the conversation, working alongside our community, and building a Council that listens, explains and delivers as we work together towards the future outlined in Vision 2050.



Cr Gerard Blizzard
Mayor

How we Developed this Strategy

This Strategy is the result of listening. It began with the feedback we were already hearing from our community and staff, which prompted us to review how we communicate and engage. We then sought broader feedback through a survey, face-to-face pop ups, community conversations and discussions with stakeholders. The ideas and insights we received have directly shaped the priorities, commitments and actions in this Strategy.

Community feedback wasn't our only source of information. We also reviewed relevant strategies, research, industry trends and best practice to ensure this Strategy reflects both local priorities and leading practice in communication and engagement.

Throughout this Strategy, look for the ideas symbol. It highlights what we learned during the consultation and shows how community feedback has influenced the commitments and actions in this Strategy.

A summary of the consultation findings is included throughout this Strategy. The full consultation results, survey responses and community comments can be found in Appendix A and B.

Who we heard from

Contributions were gathered from:

- 45 online and 2 hard copy surveys
- 2 street chats in Smithton
- Conversations at Council and community events
- 5 face-to-face pop-up sessions with:
  - Office staff
  - Outdoor staff
  - Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation (CHAC)
  - Circular Head Youth Leaders (CHYL)



What You Told Us

The consultation confirmed that our community wants to be involved. People value clear communication, honest conversations and meaningful opportunities to have their say. They also told us there is room to improve how Council shares information, promotes engagement opportunities and explains its decisions. Before the consultation began, Council identified four key benchmarks to help measure the success of this Strategy. Together, these results provide a baseline that future surveys can be compared against as we continue to improve.

1. Keeping our community informed

People rated how informed they feel about Council updates and opportunities to get involved at 5.2 out of 10. This highlights an opportunity to improve awareness of Council activities and make it easier for people to get involved.

2. Barriers to participation

People want to have their say, but many don't know when they have the opportunity.

The biggest barrier was a lack of awareness 35%, followed by not knowing what to say 30%, not having enough time 19%, or not being able to find opportunities to participate despite looking 13%.

3. Where people get their information

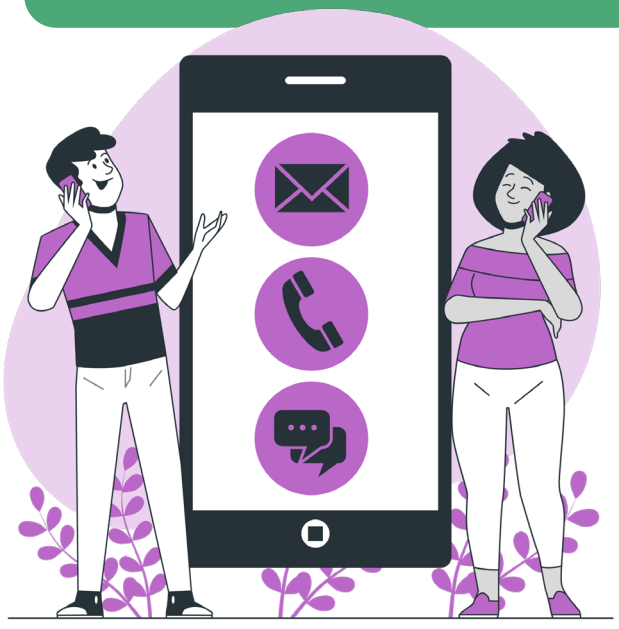
People said **Facebook continues to be Council's most important communication channel, used by 75% of respondents.** The Council website, word of mouth and conversations with Council staff also play an important role in keeping the community informed.

People get information from, in order of popularity:

- Facebook
- Council website
- Word of mouth
- Council staff
- Friends and family
- Email
- Western Echo
- Posters and flyers
- Meetings, groups and workshops
- Online forums and discussion groups
- The Advocate
- Drop-in sessions
- LinkedIn
- Surveys

4. Improving community engagement

People rated the way Council currently engages with the community 4.9 out of 10. This highlights an opportunity to involve the community earlier, more often and in ways that are easier for people to participate.



Our Commitment to the Community

We will be clear about how much influence the community has before engagement begins.

When we engage with you, we commit to:

- Being honest about what decisions are open for input (and what isn't)
- Making it easy to understand what is happening and why
- Providing suitable and accessible ways for people to have their say
- Reporting back on what we heard, what changed (or didn't), and why the final decision was made

Everything we do will be guided by the following principles:

- Accessible
- Inclusive
- Timely
- Fit for purpose
- Transparent and accountable
- Focused on delivering value to our community and continuously improving how we work



What we heard

We asked if these commitments match what people wanted from Council?

Almost every respondent (98%) agreed the proposed communication and engagement commitments reflect what they want from Council.

We also invited people to suggest additional commitments. While only a small number of suggestions were received, they reinforced the importance of following through on our commitments, prioritising inclusive communication, engaging the community early in the decision-making process, and creating opportunities for people to help shape ideas.

These themes have been incorporated throughout this Strategy, particularly through our commitment to Community Activation Groups, inclusive engagement practices, early consultation and transparent communication.

> *"Community engagement groups for brainstorming and local community input early in process. Use of PPI and stakeholder feedback for logical real improvement."*

> *"being committed to these commitments."*

> *"Inclusive communication should be a very high priority."*

> *"No clear process on reporting problems or how to have your say."*

SECTION 1: WHAT IS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

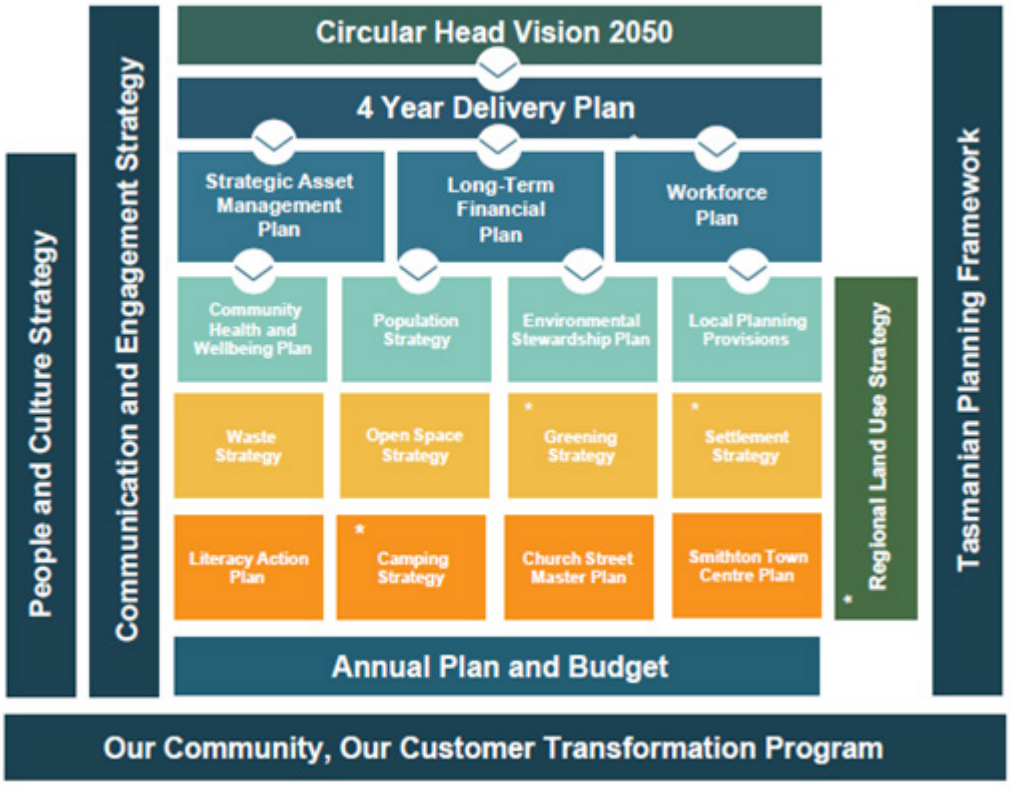
Community engagement is a two-way process. It's about listening to our community, sharing information clearly, and involving people in decisions that affect them. It builds understanding, trust and better outcomes - not just feedback at the end of a process.

Community engagement helps bring Council's long-term vision to life. By listening with intent, communicating clearly and creating accessible opportunities to participate, we can better reflect the needs, aspirations and diversity of our community. This strategy sets a consistent and trusted approach to how we communicate and engage.

How this links to our Strategic Framework

Our region is shaped by its natural environment, rural character and strong community. Council plays a role in telling that story and supporting our future through clear and meaningful communication.

Vision 2050 is our long-term plan for Circular Head. It guides all Council's plans, its budget and decision-making and helps ensure our work reflects what matters most to our community. This strategy supports that vision by strengthening how we listen, communicate and engage, so community voices continue to shape the future of Circular Head.



Circular Head Council Strategic Framework

Understanding our Community and how Engagement works

Circular Head Demographics

**Demographics are the basic characteristics of a population, such as age, gender, location, culture, and income, that help describe who makes up a community.*

When considering who we need to engage with, it is important to have a clear understanding of the demographics of our community in the Circular Head region.

- Population – 8,117
- Median Age – 41
- 17.3% identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (compared to 5.4% Tas)
- There are 4037 houses in Circular Head
- Houshold Median Weekly Income is $1,270 (compared to $1,720 Tas)
- There are 2.4 persons per household
- There are about 3900 people employed in Circular Head
- Labour Force Participation 57.9%
- The largest employment services (% of jobs) are Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (24.3%), Manufacturing (17.0%), Education and Training (7.8%)
- Council is planning for a population of 10,000 by 2050

Who do we engage with?

Identifying and understanding key stakeholders is vital to the community engagement process. Stakeholders are people, groups or organisations who are affected by, have an interest in, or may influence a decision. This can include residents, businesses, community groups, visitors and government partners. Council aims to reach those who are affected by the project as well as the broader community wherever possible.

Stakeholders can be identified in relation to place - such as a particular site, street, or town. They may share a particular interest such as local businesses, or a similar characteristic, or life experience such as young people, people living with a disability, or First Nations peoples. By seeking a range of perspectives, values, needs and ideas, our engagement process ensures that the community is informed about projects, plans and initiatives.

Our stakeholders

Our stakeholders include but are not limited to:

- Residents
- Ratepayers
- Councillors
- Interest groups
- Schools
- Council staff
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Children, young people and families
- LGBTQIA+ community
- People with disability
- Older people
- Council Groups and Committee members
- Culturally diverse community members
- State and federal members of parliament
- Chamber of Commerce
- TAS Government agencies
- Businesses
- Investors
- Volunteer Groups
- Tourists (local, intrastate, interstate, international)
- Sporting organisations and other groups



Barriers to participation

Council recognises that some people face barriers to participating. It is our responsibility to make the engagement process as accessible and inclusive as possible. We need to ensure that less powerful voices and groups are engaged and not marginalised.

We acknowledge that there are a range of factors that may affect an individual's ability to participate including:

- General literacy
- Location and accessibility (internet, computer access)
- Mental or physical health issues
- Physical or intellectual disability
- Time constraints
- Cultural Consideration
- Lack of transport
- Late notice affects participation
- Staff and community relations

The actions in this strategy address and reduce some of the barriers, in order to make Council's engagement practices more accessible and inclusive.



What we heard

We asked the community if there were any other barriers that make it difficult to have their say.

Most responses supported the barriers Council had already identified. Community members also shared some additional ideas, which have been considered in this Strategy.

We've included a selection of comments here. All responses can be found in Appendix A and B.

> *I've watched council meetings and think it would be very intimidating to stand up and discuss an issue.*

> *No internet or email, people just tell me stuff.*

> *Plenty of warning so people can organise how to work through their barriers to participate.*

> *Multiple events on the same day may draw more people to attend and provide feedback.*

> *Have more online ways of voicing your preferences, such as this survey.*

> *Outreach to places that people are already at.*

> *Providing drop in sessions outside Smithton & Stanley.*

> *Language barriers working with organisations or professionals to support those with language barriers - big employees, library programs and CALD groups can support.*

> *Allowing for people who work.*

> *Answer emails when there are inquiries promptly and offer a resolution, not be told you'll have to talk to someone else as not my department.*

> *Try make a way for people all around circular head be able to get to the event.*

Choosing the right way to engage

Identifying the right approach to engagement requires early planning. Council's work ranges from day-to-day services and events to major projects like waste strategies and town masterplans, and these can have different levels of impact on our community.

We use a consistent approach to decide how to engage on each project. Different projects need different types of engagement, depending on the level of impact and how much the community can influence the outcome.

When we don't consult

There are some instances where the community and stakeholders may not be involved in a decision-making process. This may include operational matters where public input is not able to influence an activity or where Council is legally or contractually obligated to take certain action.

We also recognise that consultation should be meaningful, not repetitive. Where Council has already undertaken extensive engagement, or where an adopted strategy, master plan or previous consultation has clearly identified the community's views, we will use that feedback to inform future decisions rather than asking the same questions again.

Even when consultation isn't required, we will continue to keep the community informed wherever possible.

When deciding how to engage, Council will ensure the approach is fit for purpose and reflects the level of community interest and impact.

Council's Engagement Framework

How we'll work together
As engagement becomes more in-depth, it usually involves more time, more conversation, and more resources. While this can lead to better outcomes, it may not always be needed or practical for every project.

We will be clear upfront about the level of engagement for each project and balance this with timeframes and available resources.

Project type	What it looks like	How we might engage	A current Council example
Low impact / Informing	Day-to-day works, events, minor changes, service updates	Website updates, social media, signage, media	Changes to waste services due to a public holiday
Seeking feedback	Plans or changes where community input can help shape the outcome	Surveys, online feedback, written submissions	Consultation on Communications and Engagement Strategy
Working together	Projects that affect a place or group of people and benefit from shared ideas	Workshops, drop-in sessions, pop-ups, meetings	Church Street Masterplan
Co-designing solutions	Complex or long-term projects where community knowledge is important. Ideas may come directly from the community.	Community Activation Groups, reference groups, ongoing discussions	We hope there will be more examples in the future



What we heard

We asked people if they supported this framework to determine the level of engagement needed for each project.

Most respondents supported using a framework to determine the appropriate level of engagement for different projects.

The feedback also reinforced the importance of being clear and transparent. People told us they want to understand how decisions are made, why a particular level of engagement has been chosen, and how their feedback has influenced the outcome.

Another strong message was that consultation should be meaningful, not repetitive. Where Council has already undertaken extensive engagement or has an adopted strategy or plan, the community wants to see that work used to inform decisions rather than starting the conversation from scratch each time.

We've included a selection of comments here. All responses can be found in Appendix A and B.

> *Everything should be transparent, regardless of community engagement. Whether or not the community engagement is needed. As this shows lack of trust.*

> *I think that it can only be positive if the community feels it has more of a say with that happens in our local areas.*

> *As long as there has been initial engagement re the major project to begin with.*

> *Be upfront and transparent early - it doesn't matter if we don't have all the information yet.*

> *Absolutley, People just want clear & honest communication.*

> *Communication needs to be far more proactive.*

> *Transparency is critical and stake holder impact isn't always easy to gauge.*

> *Totally agree.. otherwise everyone becomes an expert and nothing gets done!*

> *Council need to be more transparent. Council need to tell the community why a roads being repaired whilst a playground is not. That the money comes out of a different budget or from a different stakeholder. Otherwise its very ambiguous and open for the spinning of mistakes information.*

How People Want to Hear From Us

We also asked people which communication and engagement tools they would use if they were introduced in the future.

The strongest support was for more opportunities to have a say online. Almost three in four respondents (73%) said they would use online surveys, polls and ideas boards. This was followed by Have Your Say pop-up sessions with Council staff (57%) and a 24-hour website chat function (50%).

The remaining options, in order of preference, were:

- Printed newsletter
- Coast FM radio
- 7BU and SeaFM radio



What we heard

We asked if there was anything else Council could do to make communication and engagement easier and more accessible.

The feedback reinforced the importance of using a mix of communication channels to reach different parts of the community. People encouraged Council to strengthen its online presence with more educational content that explains how Council works, while also ensuring communication remains inclusive and accessible to everyone. Some respondents also suggested using ABC Radio alongside local media to help reach a broader audience.

> *Council needs to demonstrate a commitment to inclusive communication.*

> *ABC radio.*

> *More online presence. Maybe some 'did u know' type posts, and explain a bit more about how council works.*

> *Have an ongoing ability, such as this (paper survey) for people to have a say.*

> *Councillors and exec staff should come to pop-ups.*

> *A page on your website listing the positive changes occuring.*

> *Marrawah info board would be good.*



SECTION 2: HOW COUNCIL SUPPORTS GOOD COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

Who is responsible for communication and engagement

Communication and engagement is a shared responsibility across Council.

- Mayor – acts as Council's spokesperson and promotes a culture of engagement
- Councillors – participate in engagement activities and support community connection
- General Manager / Directors – ensure this strategy is implemented across Council
- Managers and Coordinators – embed engagement into projects and services
- All staff – play a role in communicating clearly and respectfully
- Communications team – support planning, tools and advice as well as strategy, media and content
- Customer Service - Frontline community contact

Why Internal communication matters

Our community has helped shape Vision 2050 and Council's Annual Plan. Delivering on those commitments requires every team across the organisation to understand the same priorities and work towards the same goals.

Effective internal communication ensures staff are informed, aligned with organisational priorities, and connected to the broader work of the organisation. It supports collaboration, consistent messaging and a positive workplace culture, helping ensure the community receives accurate and reliable information regardless of who they speak with.

To support this, Council publishes a monthly staff newsletter that all employees are encouraged to contribute to and is implementing a new staff intranet to strengthen communication and information sharing across the organisation.

What we heard

Council staff reinforced that effective external communication starts with effective internal communication. They identified opportunities to improve information sharing across departments, strengthen communication about Council decisions, provide more consistent messaging, and better support staff when responding to community enquiries.

As a result of this feedback, the Strategy includes an action to strengthen internal communication through Council's Transformation Integration Group (TIG). This will help ensure staff remain informed, aligned and well equipped to deliver consistent information and customer service across the organisation.



SECTION 3: ACCOUNTABILITY AND ACTION

Reporting back (Closing the loop)

After engagement, we will tell you:

- What we heard
- What changed (or didn't)
- Why the final decision was made
- What happens next



What we heard

We asked what more Council could do to build trust.

Almost all respondents (98%) agreed that Council's proposed communication and engagement commitments reflected what they wanted. While many felt there wasn't much more Council could do, others shared practical suggestions that have helped strengthen this Strategy.

The feedback reinforced the importance of:

- explaining why decisions are made
- providing more detailed feedback after consultation
- helping people understand how Council works, what Council is responsible for, and how to raise issues or provide feedback through the right channels
- communicating earlier in the decision-making process
- ensuring people feel heard, even when the outcome isn't what they hoped for.

These ideas have been incorporated throughout the Strategy, particularly through our Closing the Loop commitment, actions to improve community education and awareness, and a stronger focus on transparent, proactive communication.

> *What has happened with all the feedback you have received in the last 2 years?*

> *Just more education as to how council works and a bit of behind the scenes info.*

> *Be trustworthy and want to understand.*

> *Just being transparent, truthful and upfront would benefit everyone. Not leaving things last minute, this leads to disappointment and lack of confidence in the council...Having an appropriate, professional, appointed person to be the spokesperson would help. Because getting the run around, being passed off to several people.. is off putting and leads to distrust, confusion and frustration.*

> *Your Facebook page is good and could be used more.*

> *People are more willing to listen and be on board when they feel heard, even if the outcome isn't what they wanted.*

> *This would be good but feedback could be more wide spread so the community knows.*

> *No—your good judgment in the need for this survey —indicates to me that you realise there are flaws in the system that need rectifying.*

What we are Working Toward

Participatory decision making

Participatory decision making means involving the community in decisions that affect them - not just asking for feedback but working together to shape ideas and solutions.

At Circular Head Council, we are building towards this approach. Our Community Activation Groups are a first step, bringing community members and Council together to share ideas, talk through challenges and co-design future opportunities.

Communications and Engagement Goals

This strategy is supported by a small number of clear communication and engagement goals. These goals help guide our work, focus our effort, and ensure we are improving how we connect with our community over time.

GOAL 1: Building trust and understanding

We want our people to have a clear understanding of what Council does, why decisions are made, and how our work contributes to the municipality now and into the future.

We will know this is working when:

- Council information is visible and easy to find
- Community stories, projects and achievements are shared clearly and consistently
- Celebrate Council projects and community achievements more regularly
- We hear positive feedback from community members, partners and staff

GOAL 2: Encouraging meaningful participation

We want people to feel informed, confident and encouraged to engage with Council in ways that suit them.

We will know this is working when:

- More people interact with Council through a range of communication channels
- Community members are engaging with content online and in person
- Usage of our engagement platforms and tools continue to grow and reach new audiences

GOAL 3: Communicating clearly and consistently

We aim to provide information that is timely, accurate and relevant, so people know what's happening and what it means for them.

We will know this is working when:

- Information is shared in a consistent and coordinated way
- Key projects and initiatives are communicated clearly across different channels
- Staff and Councillors feel well informed and aligned

GOAL 4: Using our website as a trusted source of information

Our website is a vital source of truth that people access to find out information about Council. We want it to be easy to use, accessible, and up to date.

We will know this is working when:

- People can find information quickly and easily
- The website is accessible and user friendly
- Community feedback about the website is positive

GOAL 5: Supporting Council's priorities and direction

Communication and engagement should support Council's broader goals, priorities and community outcomes, not sit alongside them.

We will know this is working when:

- Communication and engagement activities align with Council plans and strategies
- Major projects and initiatives are well supported by clear communication
- Engagement helps inform better decision making and outcomes

How we will measure success

Engagement is successful when people feel heard, understand decisions and trust the process – even if they don't always agree with the outcome.

To measure the success of this Strategy, Council will monitor:

- Participation in engagement activities
- Website and social media analytics
- Diversity of participants
- Community satisfaction
- Evidence that community feedback influenced decisions
- Community awareness of Council projects
- Media coverage and sentiment
- Feedback received through engagement activities

Together, these measures will help Council understand not just how many people are engaging, but how effective and trusted our communication and engagement is.

> *People feeling that the process was respectful, worthwhile, and something they would recommend or take part in again.*

> *These dot points are great, as long as you do them.*

> *We start using all the strategies that have been developed and actually get something done.*

> *Community awareness of projects, and confidence to have their say on them through official channels, rather than in neighbourhood grapevines.*

> *Success looks like visible action.*



What we heard

We asked whether these measures made sense and what success would look like to the community.

Most respondents agreed with the way Council proposed to measure success. They also reminded us that success isn't just about participation—it's about building understanding, trust and confidence.

People told us that success means:

- people feeling heard and respected
- understanding why decisions are made
- seeing Council deliver on its commitments
- greater awareness of Council projects and achievements
- people feeling confident to participate through official channels
- communication that people value enough to engage with again.

These ideas have strengthened this Strategy by reinforcing our focus on transparency, reporting back, celebrating achievements and building lasting relationships with our community.

> *High response rate from a variety of age groups, not just older people - young people too.*

> *A vibrant and engaged community.*

> *There are people participating and having fun.*

> *You're on a purposeful trail.*



What else did people tell us?

We aksed people if there are any other ways to improve communication, consultation, and engagement? And if there are any actions to avoid?

The feedback reinforced many of the principles already included in this Strategy. People told us they value clear, honest and transparent communication, and want to understand not only what decisions have been made, but why they were made.

Respondents also highlighted the importance of using a mix of communication channels to ensure everyone can participate. While online tools are important, they should be supported by printed information and face-to-face opportunities so that people who are less comfortable with technology are not left behind.

Several people encouraged Council to continue using plain English, provide simple summaries alongside more detailed documents and communicate proactively rather than waiting for people to seek out information.

Finally, respondents encouraged Council to keep listening, keep improving and where appropriate, move from consultation to action. They recognised recent improvements in Council's communication and encouraged this momentum to continue.

We've included a selection of comments here. All responses can be found in Appendix A and B.

> *Explain how public question time works and empower people to participate. How do we know if our questions are appropriate? Promote the meetings.*

> *The old fashioned way of paper is much better. The older generation are generally not inclined to engage with technology...The Western Echo is filling a void after the demise of the Chronicle but is only once a month. The Newsletter is a good idea.*

> *Meaningful, transparent, and inclusive engagement—where people can see their input genuinely matters—is key to building trust and achieving better outcomes.*

> *Less talk and more action.*

> *I'm loving the new council newsletter, a great start!*

> *I think proposals and documents need a simplified version and a longer version for those who have the time to read. The simplified version just has key bullet points and needs to be advertised online, social media, and in physical copies in our local community (cafes etc).*

> *Social media has its trolls. But you can turn off commenting and educate people more on the why rather than just telling them what.*

> *Just keep honest & up-to-date communication flowing freely.*

> *Its the best its ever been from council...including updates from state growth.*

> *Update signage.*

Actions for this Strategy

We asked the community which actions they thought Council should prioritise to improve communication and engagement.

Improving the Council website was identified as the highest priority, followed by establishing Community Activation Groups to strengthen ongoing community involvement.

As a result of the consultation, we've also added new actions and refined others to better reflect what we heard.

Look for the ideas icon throughout the Action Plan. It highlights actions that have been added or significantly updated as a direct result of community feedback.

Action	Details	Status
Council website	Redevelop Council's website to make it easier to find information, access services and participate in community engagement through modern, easy-to-use online tools. Investigate 24-hour website chat function.	To be completed this financial year.
Community Activation Groups	Introduce Community Activation Groups to bring community members and Council together to share ideas, talk through challenges and co-design future opportunities.	Started
Embed Communications in Project Planning	Ensure reports seeking Council approval for new projects include a communications and/or engagement plan appropriate to the project.	Started
Communications calendar	Develop a communications calendar for recurring projects that require Communication and Engagement.	Planned
Intranet	Implement a new staff intranet to improve internal communications.	Planned
Voice Response phone system	Install an Interactive Voice Response phone system for incoming calls to improve customer service experience.	Planned
Social Media	Strengthen Council's social media approach to encourage respectful two-way communication with the community. Review Council's Social Media and Customer Service policies to support improved customer service.	Started
Internal Communication Improvements	Use feedback from this consultation to inform internal communication improvements through the Transformation Integration Group (TIG) and continue the staff e-newsletter.	Started
Education on the role of Council	Develop content that explains how Council works, how decisions are made, where funding comes from and showcases projects and services.	Started
Customer Service Charter and How to Contact Council	Review the Customer Service Charter to clearly explain how to contact Council, lodge requests, provide feedback and what happens next. Support staff with consistent processes and information to deliver a positive and reliable customer experience.	Planned
Embed engagement throughout the organisation	Build a culture where communication and engagement is embedded across the organisation. Provide staff with the tools, guidance and support they need to communicate consistently and engage effectively.	Started
Replace Style Guide with a Communications Guide	Expand Council's existing Style Guide into a Communications Guide that combines branding and style standards with guidance on plain English, accessibility and inclusive communication.	Started
Review and Reporting	Undertake an annual review of this Strategy and publicly report on progress against its actions.	Planned

Appendix A

Communications and Engagement Strategy Survey

July 23, 2026

1 How informed do you feel about Council updates and ways to get involved?

41 out of 43 people answered this question.

Overview Trends

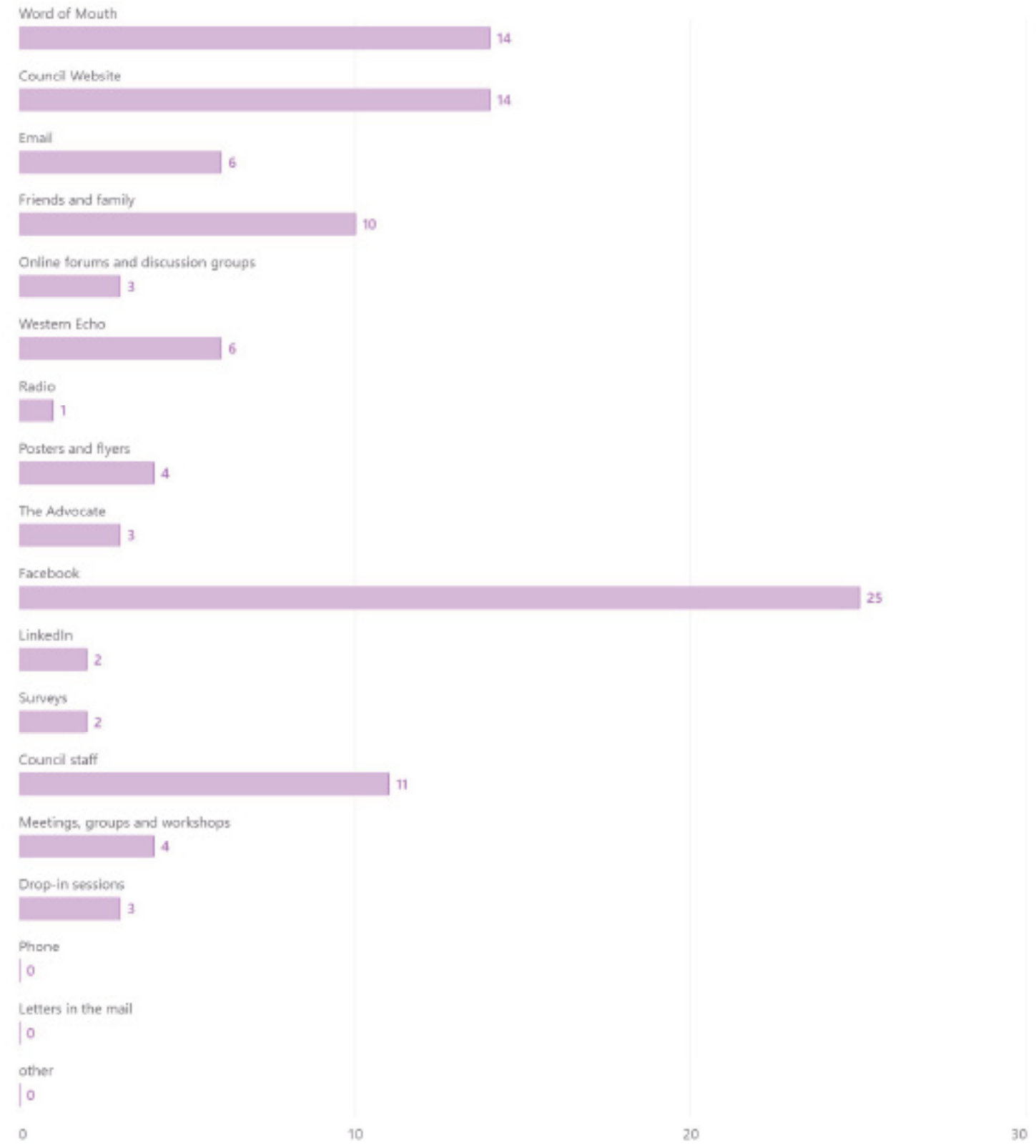
5.2	6	2.68
Mean	Median	Standard deviation



2 How do you get information about Council now?

33 out of 43 people answered this question.

Overview Trends



3 How would you rate the way Council currently engages with the community?

41 out of 43 people answered this question.

Overview Trends

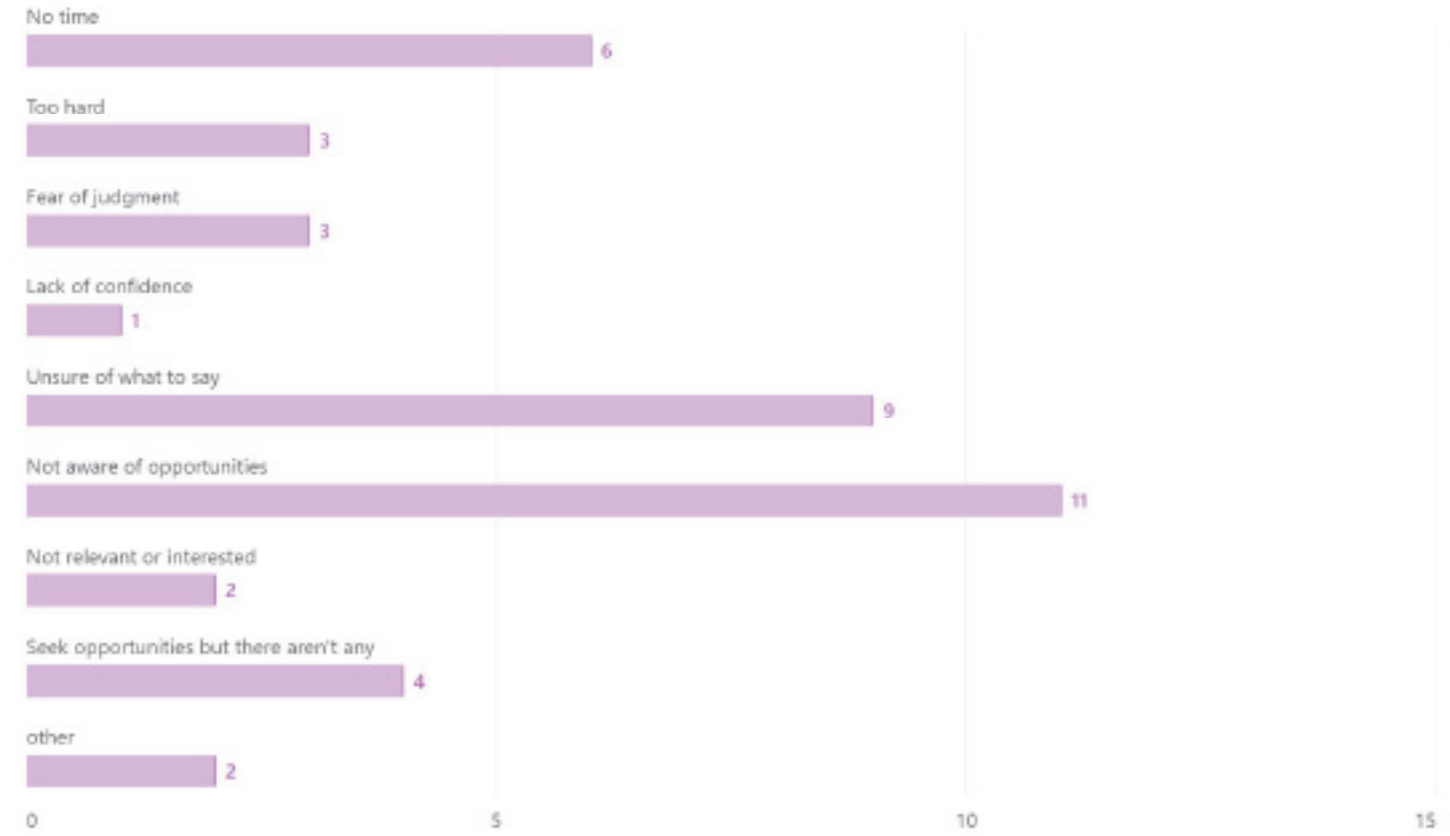
4.93	5	2.48
Mean	Median	Standard deviation



4 At the moment, what prevents you from having your say?

31 out of 43 people answered this question.

Overview | Trends



Responses for "Other"

Search "Other" responses

31 results

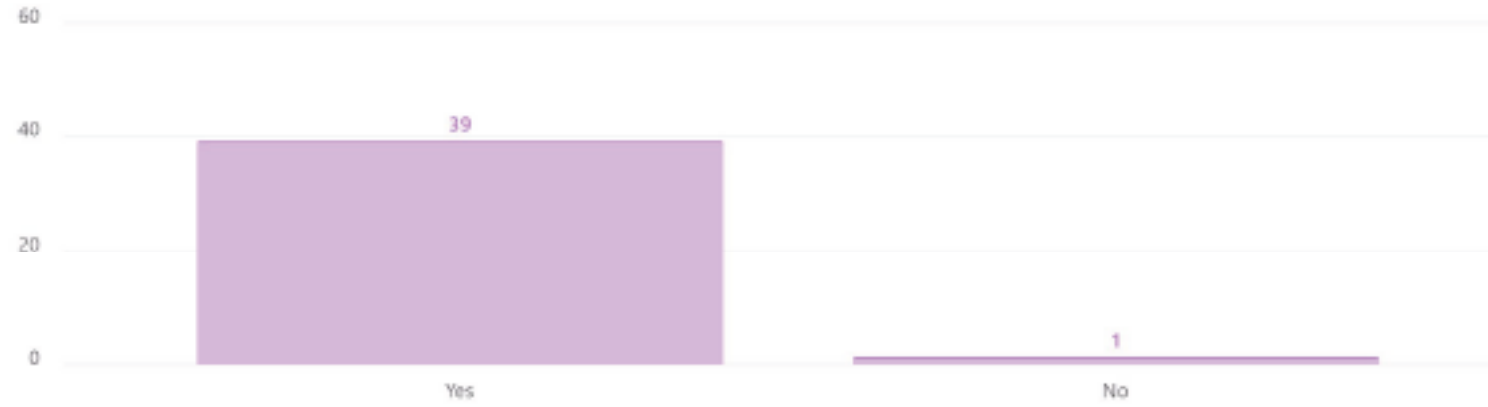
> I'm not sure about how council wants to engage with the community
>
> 2 months ago

> Council staff not wiling to listen to a law unto themselves
>
> 2 months ago

5a Do these commitments match what you want from Council?

40 out of 43 people answered this question.

Overview Trends



QUESTION 5b

being committed to these commitments	2 months ago
Community engagement groups for brainstorming and local community input early in process. Use of PPI and stakeholder feedback for logical real improvement	2 months ago
Na	2 months ago
Inclusive communication should be a very high priority	2 months ago
Communicate more with community prior to poor decisions	2 months ago
No	3 months ago
providing food :)	3 months ago

QUESTION 6

No	2 months ago
Business local regional national	2 months ago
Health department	2 months ago
Greenies	2 months ago
It's a mistake to even try to list stakeholders for a LGA.	2 months ago
Migrant workers	2 months ago
No	2 months ago
Maybe some info for local small business.	3 months ago
No	2 months ago
Politicians	2 months ago
No you haven't missed anyone.	2 months ago
sporting organisations, industry reps	2 months ago

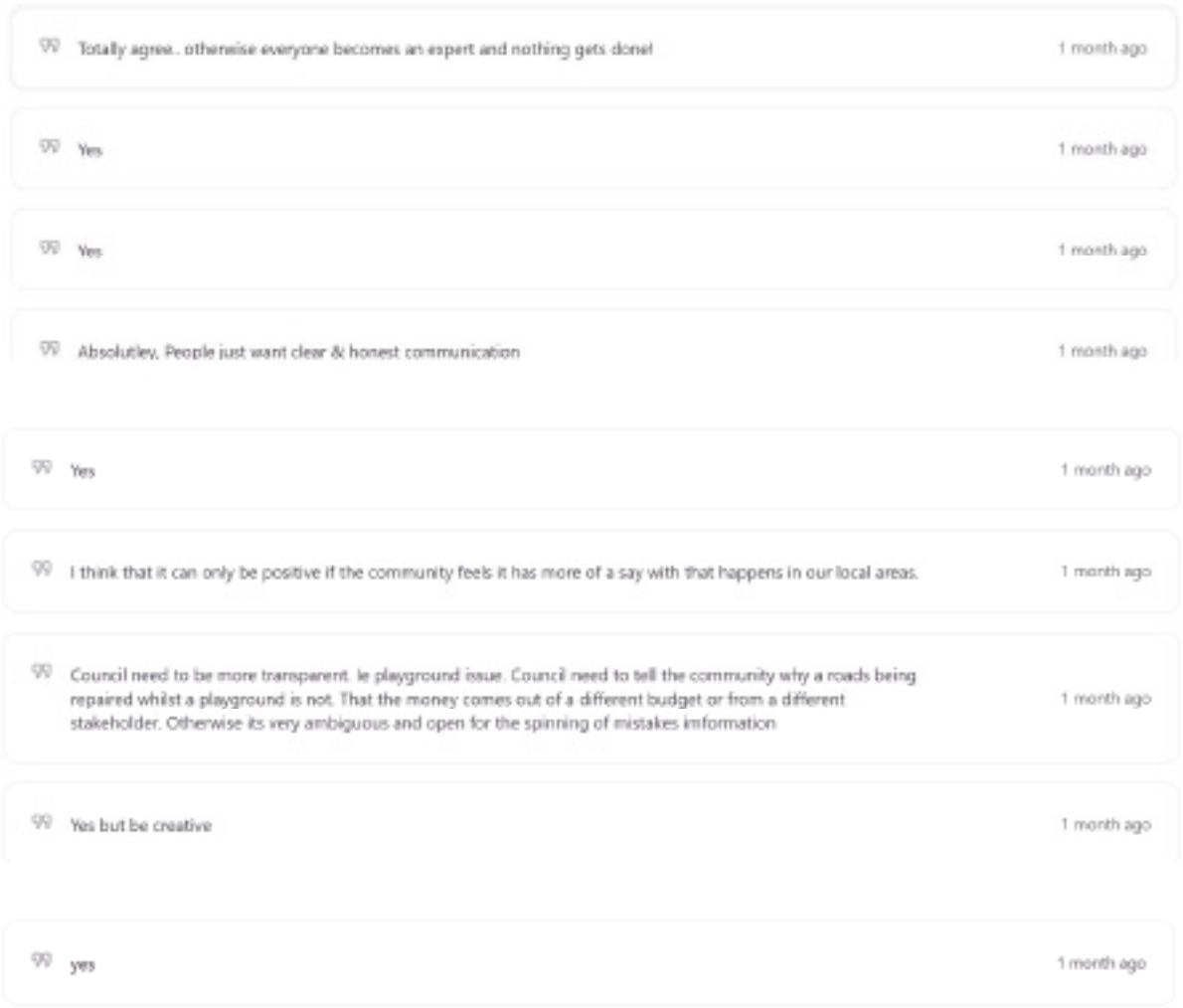
QUESTION 7

Have more online ways of voicing your preferences such as this survey	6 days ago
Multiple events on the same day may draw more people to attend and provide feedback	8 days ago
being in places that are accessible, like outside a popular shopping area	10 days ago
Online sessions allowing remote access	24 days ago
Try make a way for people all around circular head be able to get to the event	25 days ago
To actually feel that your input is valid	27 days ago
Physical interaction is good especially allowing for people who work	28 days ago
Visiting particular places etc emmerton park	29 days ago
Plenty of warning so people can organise how to work through their barriers to participate. More viable options for those with barriers to be able to participate.	29 days ago
Providing drop in sessions outside Smithton & Stanley	29 days ago
Don't hold consultations at Hugo's!	29 days ago
Transportation,	29 days ago
Develop a better attitude between your staff and the community	30 days ago
Be up the street more so people can talk to you	1 month ago
Making any responses to questions voice response through Ai, so that answers can be written automatically.	1 month ago
Answer emails when there are inquiries promptly and offer a resolution, not be told by people that work for the council "you'll have to talk to someone else as not my department	1 month ago

Develop a better attitude between your staff and the community	30 days ago
Be up the street more so people can talk to you	1 month ago
Making any responses to questions voice response through Ai, so that answers can be written automatically.	1 month ago
Answer emails when there are inquiries promptly and offer a resolution, not be told by people that work for the council "you'll have to talk to someone else as not my department	1 month ago
Hard copies	1 month ago
Be out in the community a lot more (perhaps in local cafes or hubs) maybe once a month or so (or when there will be big decisions to be made) with a drop in table session for those who aren't confident in approaching the council. Have an anonymous box or boxes placed throughout the community (not just smithton but all of CH) where issues and concerns can be raised by people who don't want to put their name down. These need to be checked frequently. For those who live in the rural areas, (Togari, redpar etc) something needs to be done to make them feel more part of this community.	1 month ago
More social media presence. I understand why you dont want to publicly engage, but you could send a private message from the appropriate dept. Or reply asking for an email and then pass the question on for an email response. Some of us cant attend public community spaces for mental health reasons, transport, timing if running a business or age.	1 month ago
Engage at places where people already are (the footy, festivals) - don't wait for people to research what's happening and come to you - get out in the community to tell them what's happening, and invite their feedback & participation. Engage online with audiences that wouldn't typically participate in politics - make engaging/entertaining viral style tiktok videos with community updates	1 month ago
outreach to places that people are already at	1 month ago

QUESTION 8

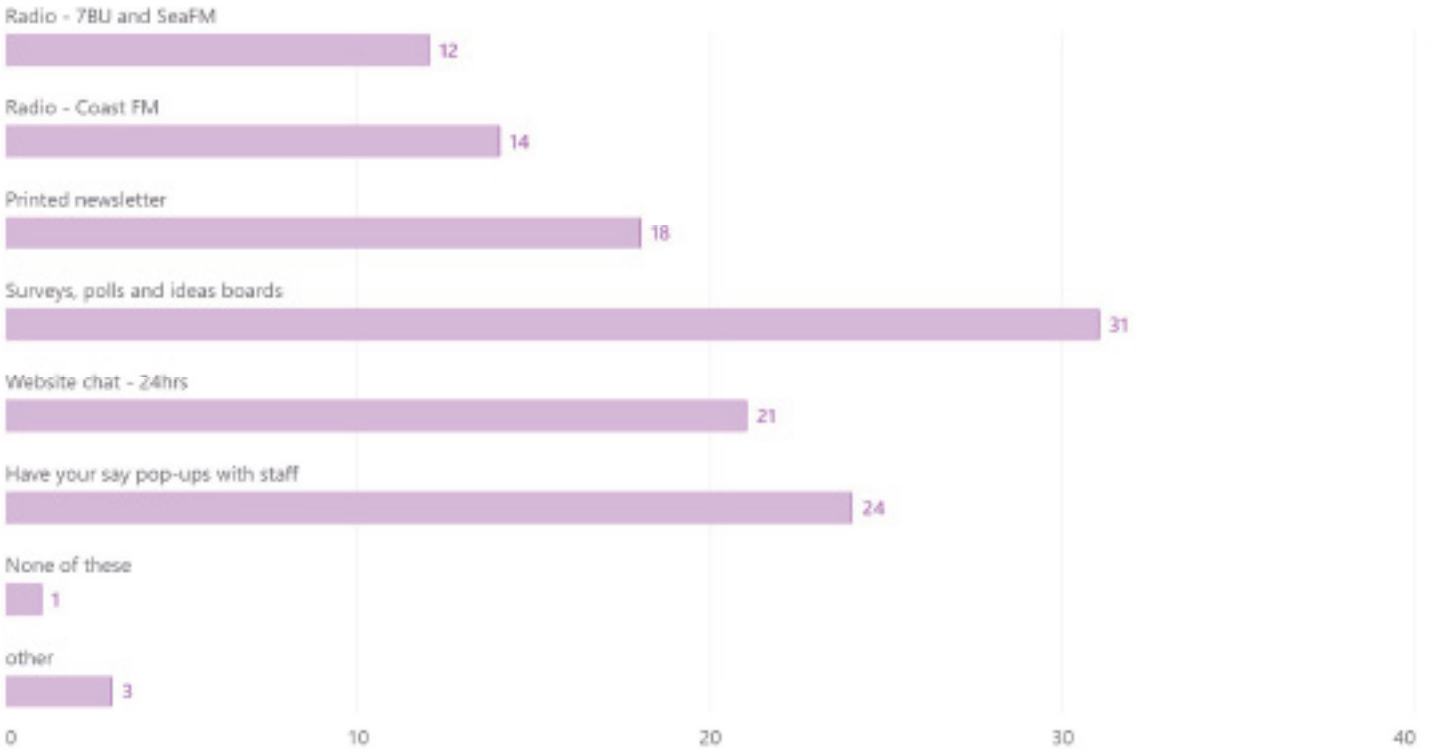
Yes	6 days ago
Yes	8 days ago
Yes	11 days ago
Transparency is critical and stake holder impact isn't always easy to gauge	24 days ago
Yes	27 days ago
As long as there has been initial engagement re the major project to begin with	28 days ago
Yes	29 days ago
Everything should be transparent, regardless of community engagement. Whether or not the community engagement is needed. As this shows lack of trust.	29 days ago
Yes	29 days ago
Yes	29 days ago
Communication needs to be far more proactive.	29 days ago
Yes,	29 days ago
Totally agree. Some staff are too self-centred to listen to outside ideasj	30 days ago
yes	1 month ago
Yes	1 month ago
Yes	1 month ago


Totally agree.. otherwise everyone becomes an expert and nothing gets done!
1 month ago
Yes
1 month ago
Yes
1 month ago
Absolutley. People just want clear & honest communication
1 month ago
Yes
1 month ago
I think that it can only be positive if the community feels it has more of a say with that happens in our local areas.
1 month ago
Council need to be more transparent. Ie playground issue. Council need to tell the community why a roads being repaired whilst a playground is not. That the money comes out of a different budget or from a different stakeholder. Otherwise its very ambiguous and open for the spinning of mistakes information
1 month ago
Yes but be creative
1 month ago
yes
1 month ago

9 We may introduce some new communication tools in the future. Which of these would you like us to start using?

42 out of 43 people answered this question.

Overview | Trends



Responses for "Other"

Search "Other" responses

42 results

- ABC radio — 2 months ago
- Council needs to demonstrate a commitment to inclusive communication — 2 months ago
- More online presence. Maybe some 'did u know' type posts, and explain a bit more about how council works — 3 months ago

QUESTION 10

No	2 days ago
acknowledgement	10 days ago
Not that I know of	25 days ago
No	27 days ago
This would be good but feedback could be more wide spread so the community knows.	28 days ago
No	29 days ago
Just being transparent, truthful and upfront would benefit everyone. Not leaving things last minute, this leads to disappointment and lack of confidence in the council. Making the community feel seen and heard. Having a media liaison would help. Having an appropriate, professional, appointed person to be the spokesperson would help. Because getting the run around, being passed off to several people, is off putting and leads to distrust, confusion and frustration.	29 days ago
Be trustworthy and want to understand	29 days ago
No—your good judgment in the need for this survey —indicates to me that you realise there are flaws in the system that need rectifying	30 days ago
Reply to letter and email sent in	1 month ago
Your Facebook page is good and could be used more	1 month ago

Overall service from staff really lacks quality and enthusiasm, some of you are even rude to be honest	1 month ago
E mEnvirontmental action Robbins Island	1 month ago
When explaining WHY something happened, or not, more detail the better. People are more willing to listen and be on board when they feel heard, even if the outcome isn't what they wanted.	1 month ago
Just more education as to how cou cil works and a bit of behind the scenes i fo	1 month ago
Acknowledge all feedback received publicly (while respecting the privacy of those who have given it)	1 month ago
no, you're doing great :)	1 month ago

QUESTION 11

People feeling that the process was respectful, worthwhile, and something they would recommend or take part in again.	11 days ago
Quarterly reports from 1 goals and outcomes, peer reviewed from stakeholders and neighbouring councils	25 days ago
There people participating and having fun	25 days ago
The above	27 days ago
All of the above	28 days ago
Participation numbers	29 days ago
Being open minded, transparent and honesty leads to success.	29 days ago
High response rate from a variety of age groups, not just older people - young people too	29 days ago
A vibrant and engaged community	29 days ago
These dot points are great, as long as you do them	29 days ago
You;re on a purposfull trail	30 days ago
We start using all the strategies that have been developed and actually get something done	1 month ago
Understanding	1 month ago
I wonder why the council logo is not on everything, eg street sign's, bins..it's good brand awareness	1 month ago
Engagement	1 month ago
In regards to diversity of participants, as long as it's not being forced. Ie, CH is predominantly a white community	

More community engagement and involvement	1 month ago
Community awareness of projects, and confidence to have their say on them through official channels, rather than in neighbourhood grapevines	1 month ago
more smiles in the street :)	1 month ago

What should happen first?These are the actions we believe should be the priority right now to improve communication and engagement across Circular Head. We'd like your help to understand what should happen first and what matters most to you.

12

36 out of 43 people answered this question.

Overview | Trends

Highest ranked

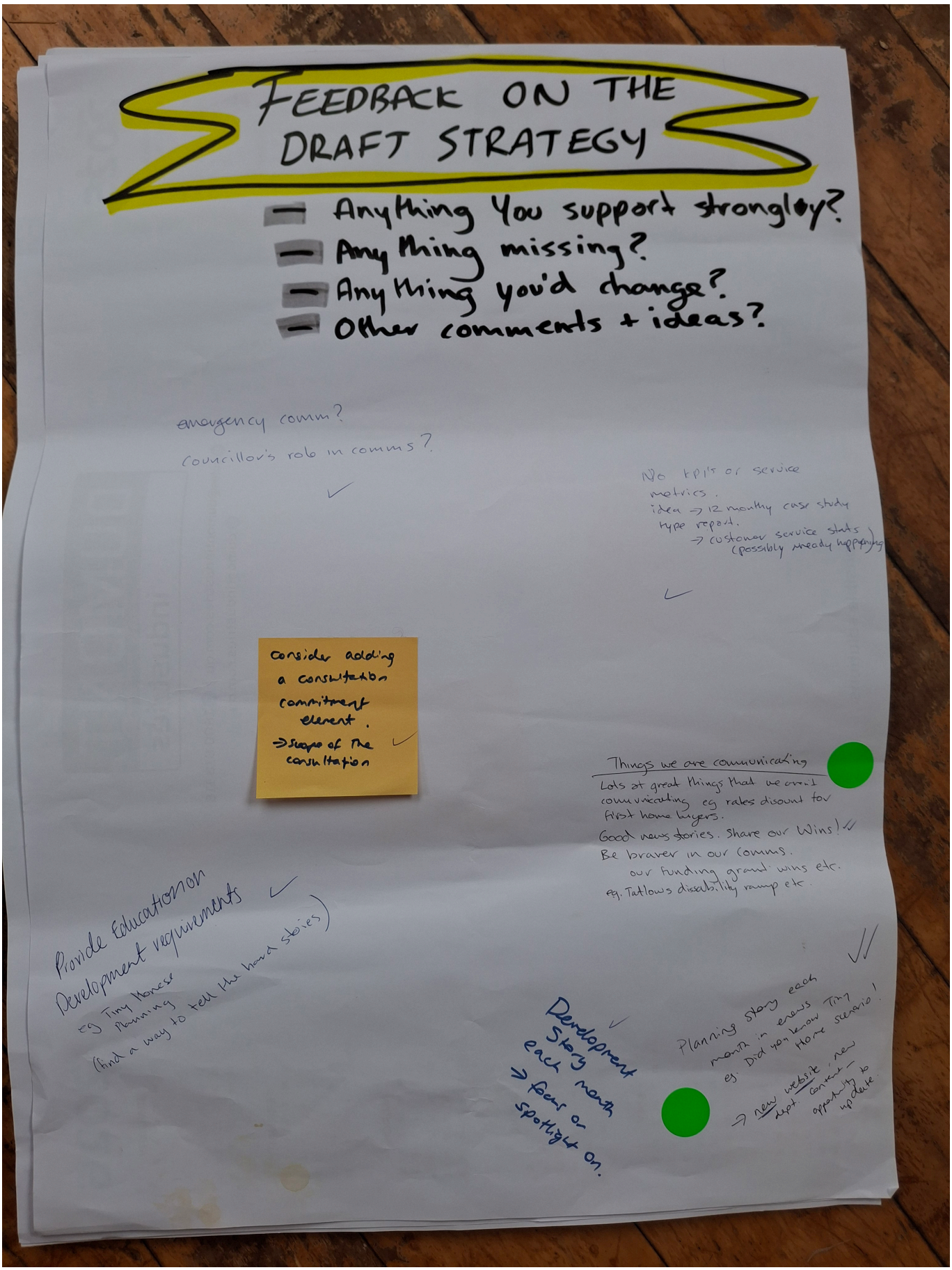
#1	Make the Council website easier to use, easier to access and better at sharing up to date, useful information with the community and stakeholders.	2.58 Mean
#2	Introduce Community Activation Groups to bring community members and Council together to share ideas, talk through challenges and co-design future opportunities.	2.78 Mean
#3	Develop communications and/or engagement plans that will go to Council for approval.	3.58 Mean
#4	Develop a communications calendar for recurring projects that require Communication and Engagement.	3.97 Mean
#5	Implement a new staff intranet to improve internal communications.	4.86 Mean

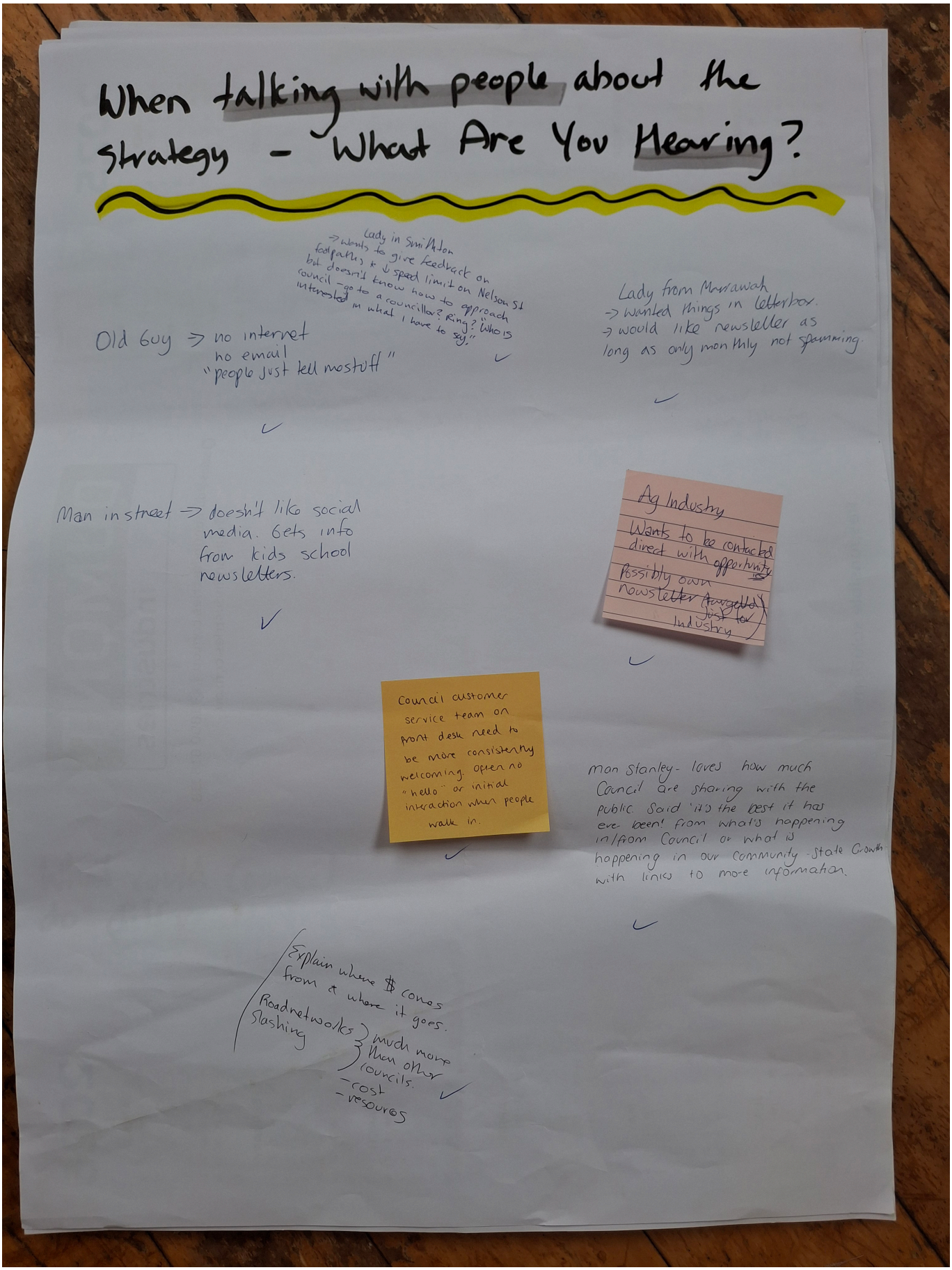
QUESTION 13

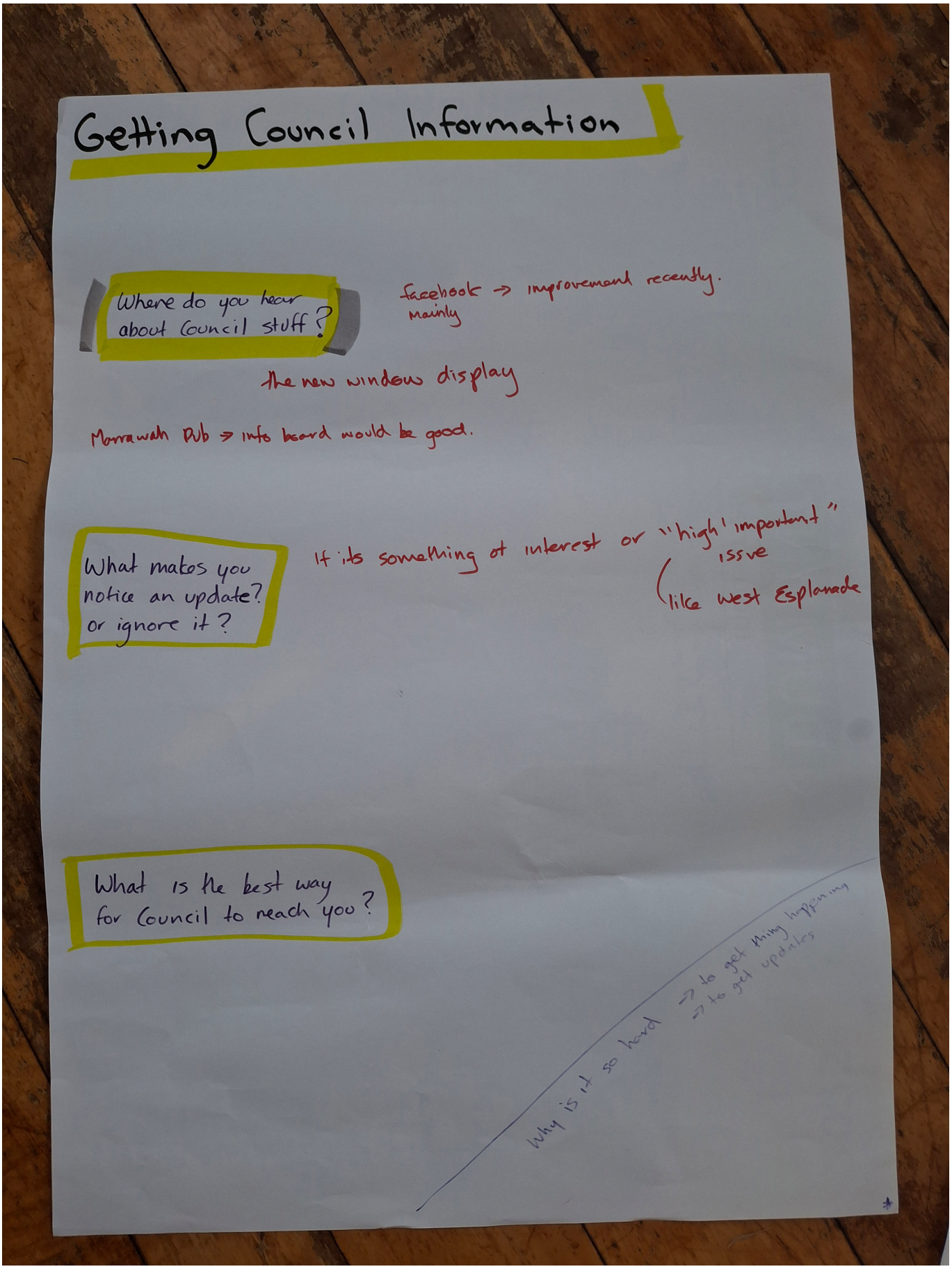
None	8 days ago
Meaningful, transparent, and inclusive engagement—where people can see their input genuinely matters—is key to building trust and achieving better outcomes.	11 days ago
I don't know	25 days ago
To be more transparent with councillor	27 days ago
Please do not use QR codes as a way of receiving feedback or rely on on line surveys alone. The old fashioned way of paper is much better. The older generation are generally not inclined to engage with technology outside what they are comfortable with. Similar situation re receiving Council news. The Western Echo is filling a void after the demise of the Chronicle but is only once a month. The Newsletter is a good idea.	28 days ago
Target groups that we specifically want a response from. During the open space strategy development we targeted specific people, they were flattered and gave really good feedback	29 days ago
Have a look at the last question- there's your answer.	29 days ago
With respect I feel that councils asset management staff Need to show more respect to community members	30 days ago
I often see the mayor and get to talk to him as he's about in the community but have never seen the deputy mayor about talking to the public	1 month ago
Try not to put the rates up this year:)	1 month ago
Be more engaged and have people that work for council with people skills. Less talk and more action	1 month ago
Be more engaged and have people that work for council with people skills. Less talk and more action	1 month ago
Just keep honest & up-to-date communication flowing freely	1 month ago
I think proposals and documents need a simplified version and a longer version for those who have the time to read. The simplified version just has key bullet points and needs to be advertised online, social media, and in physical copies in our local community (cafes etc)	1 month ago

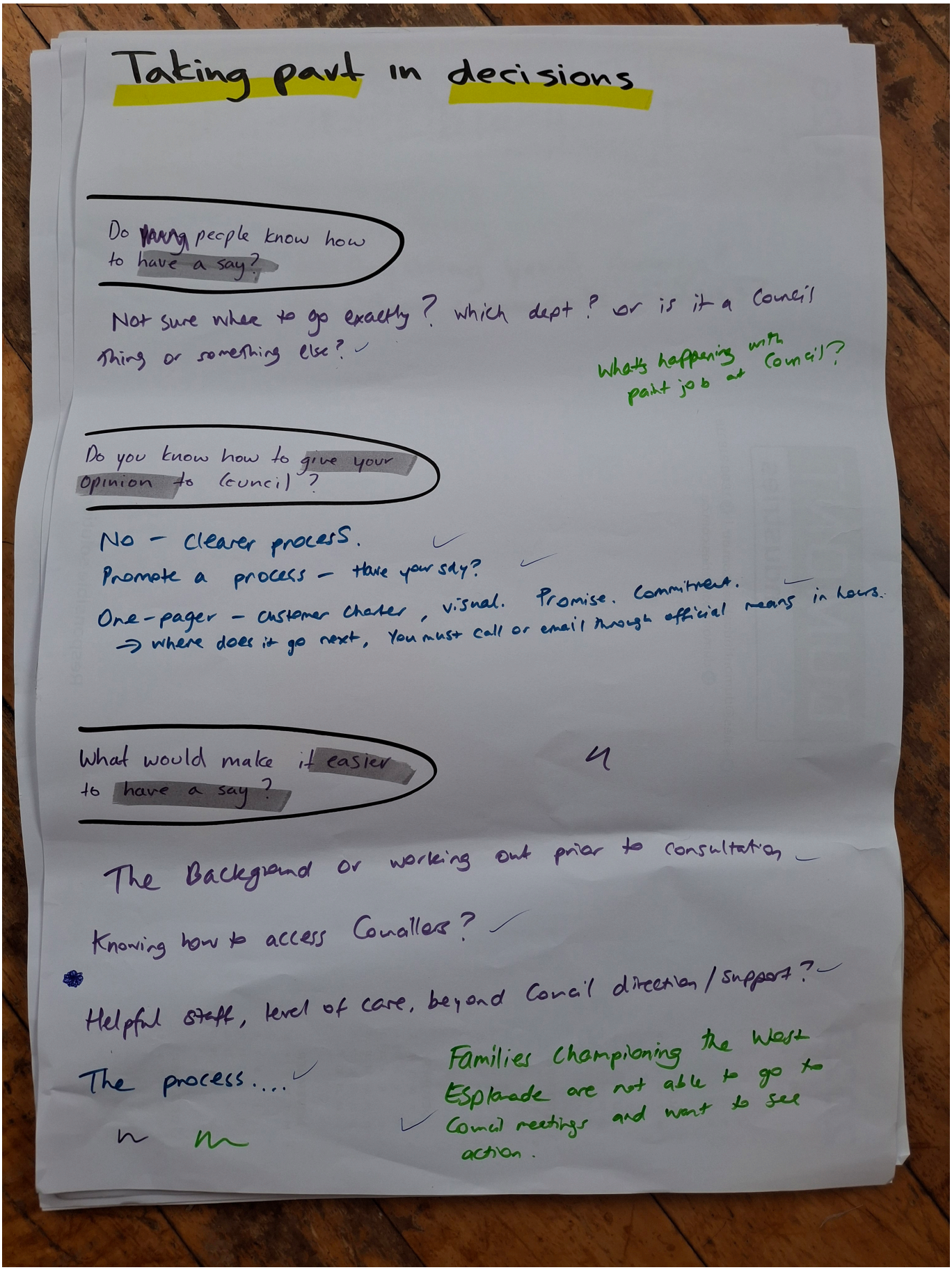
I understand social media has its trolls. But you can turn off commenting and educate people more on the why rather than just telling them what	1 month ago
I'm loving the new council newsletter, a great start!	1 month ago
Avoid posting everything on the book	1 month ago

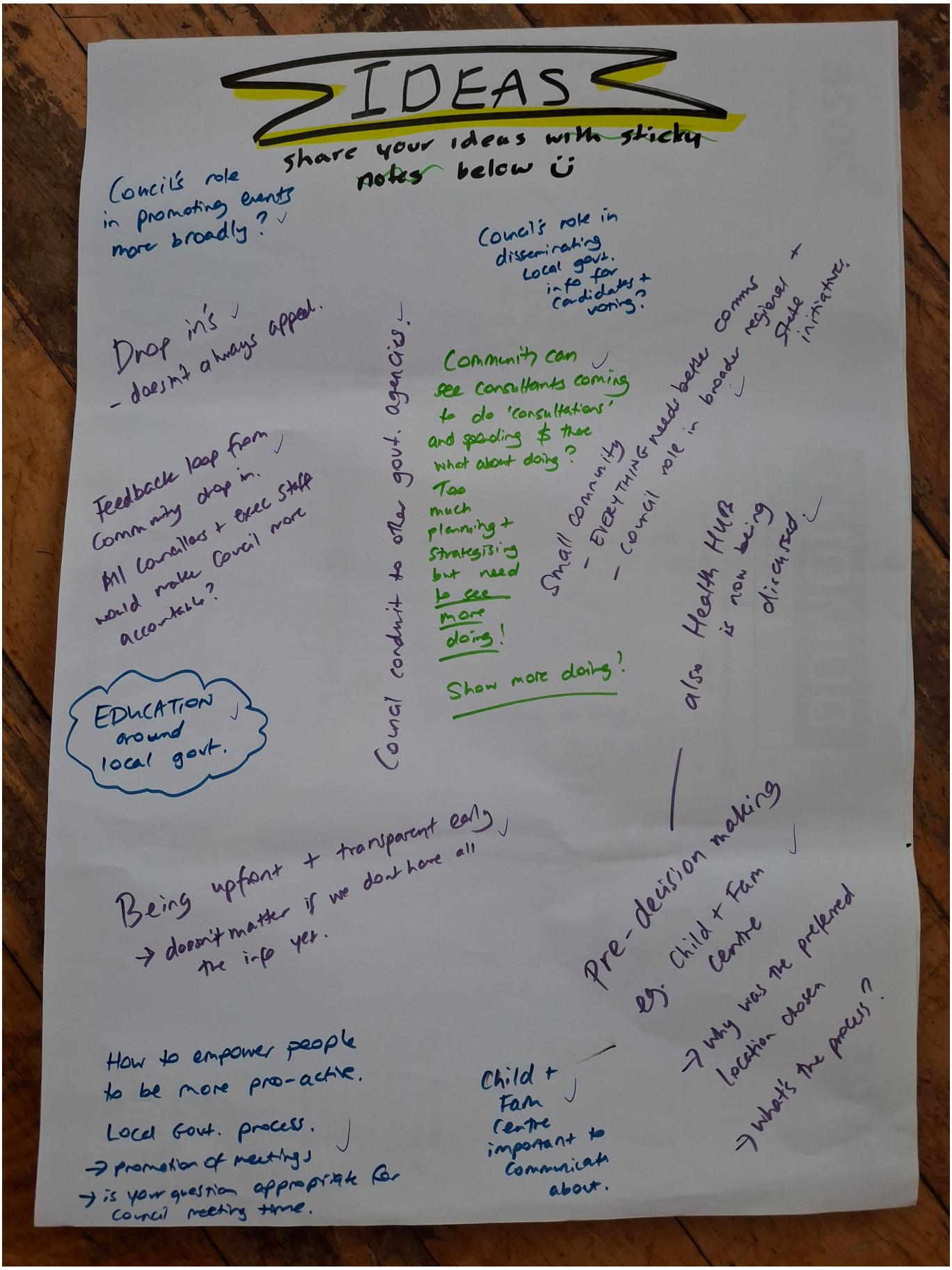
Appendix B - Feedback from face-to-face pop-ups




When talking with people about the strategy - What Are You Hearing?
Lady in Smithton
→ wants to give feedback on footpaths & ↓ speed limit on Nelson St but doesn't know how to approach Council – go to a councillor? Ring? "Who is interested in what I have to say."
Old Guy → no internet
no email
"people just tell me stuff"
Lady from Marrawah
→ wanted things in letterbox.
→ would like newsletter as long as only monthly not spamming.
Man in street → doesn't like social media. Gets info from kids school newsletters.
Ag Industry
Wants to be contacted direct with opportunity
Possibly own newsletter
Industry
Council customer service team on front desk need to be more consistently welcoming. Open no "hello" or initial interaction when people walk in.
Man Stanley - loves how much Council are sharing with the public. Said "it's the best it has ever been! from what's happening in/from Council or what is happening in our community - State Growth with links to more information.
Explain where $ comes from & where it goes.
Roadnetworks Slashing
much more than other councils.
- cost
- resources


Getting Council Information
Where do you hear about Council stuff?
facebook → improvement recently. mainly
the new window display
Morrawah Pub → info board would be good.
What makes you notice an update? or ignore it?
If its something of interest or "high' important" issue
(like west Esplanade
What is the best way for Council to reach you?
why is it so hard → to get thing happening → to get updates


Taking part in decisions
Do people know how to have a say?
Not sure where to go exactly? which dept? or is it a Council thing or something else?
What's happening with Council? paint job at
Do you know how to give your opinion to Council?
No - clearer process.
Promote a process - have your say?
One-pager - customer charter, visual. Promise. Commitment.
→ where does it go next, You must call or email through official means in hours.
What would make it easier to have a say?
The Background or working out prior to consultation
Knowing how to access Councillors?
Helpful staff, level of care, beyond Council direction / support?
The process....
Families championing the West Esplanade are not able to go to Council meetings and want to see action.


IDEAS
Share your ideas with sticky notes below ü
Council's role in promoting events more broadly?
Drop in's
- doesn't always appeal.
Feedback loop from Community drop in. All Councillors + exec staff would make Council more accountable?
EDUCATION around local govt.
Council conduit to other govt. agencies.
Community can see consultants coming to do 'consultations' and spending $ then what about doing? Too much planning + strategising but need to see more doing!
Show more doing!
Council's role in disseminating local govt. info for candidates + voting?
Small community
- EVERYTHING needs better comms
- Council role in broader regional + State initiatives
also Health HUB is now being discussed.
Being upfront + transparent early
→ doesn't matter if we don't have all the info yet.
Pre-decision making
eg. Child + Fam Centre
→ why was the preferred location chosen
→ what's the process?
How to empower people to be more pro-active.
Local Govt. process.
→ promotion of meetings
→ is your question appropriate for Council meeting time.
Child + Fam Centre important to communicate about.



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