



SRV Community Engagement Plan

City of Canada Bay

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1 Context

1.1 Background

The City of Canada Bay's ('Council') Long-Term Financial Plan (LTFP), adopted in June 2022, demonstrates a consolidated operating result which moves into increasing surpluses over the ten-year forecast period. However, these results are supported by strong surpluses in the Domestic Waste Fund. The General Fund, from which all services except waste services are funded, shows ongoing deficits resulting from costs increasing faster than revenue and some service increases that were absorbed without commensurate revenue growth. To ensure its ongoing financial sustainability, Council must review options to address these ongoing deficits in the General Fund.

In the 2022-2026 Delivery Program, the City of Canada Bay identified the need to consider a special rate variation (SRV) to increase services and committed to consulting with the community on a potential SRV in late 2022.¹ Additionally, the Council is proposing to increase minimum rates to bring it in line with other similar councils.

In June and July, Council was presented with some option for an SRV included an outline of the service improvements that can be funded with the proposed level of rate increase. At the Council Meeting on 15 August, Council will consider a potential SRV and, if supported, will seek the community's feedback on it and the related service level improvements.

This community engagement plan outlines the approach, key messages and timeline for community consultation on the potential SRV. This plan has been developed to ensure that it meets the SRV assessment criteria set out by the NSW Office of Local Government, who sets policy and oversees the local government industry, and the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART), who will assess any SRV application submitted. It has also been developed in compliance with the City of Canada Bay's Community Engagement Policy and Community Engagement Strategy as well as the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Australasia Quality Assurance Standard.

1.2 Engagement purpose and goals

The purpose of this community engagement is to ensure that the community is adequately informed and consulted about the impact of the proposed special rate variation and the impact of not applying for a special rate variation.

The objectives of this community engagement process include:

- To present the proposed SRV.
- To identify the impact of the SRV on the average and minimum rates across each rating category.
- To exhibit an updated LTFP demonstrating the impact of the proposed SRV options on Council's operating results from 2023-24 for feedback and final endorsement by the Council.
- To communicate to the community the timeline and process for any potential SRV application.
- To gather and consider the community's feedback to inform Council's final decision on whether to move forward with an SRV application.

¹ City of Canada Bay, *2022-2026 Delivery Program*, p.35.

1.3 Stakeholder analysis

The key impacted stakeholders are those that pay rates in the City of Canada Bay Local Government Area (LGA) or are renting property in the City of Canada Bay, where there may be rent increases passed to fully or partly cover the proposed rate increases.

Stakeholder groups have been identified below to ensure that the specific considerations of these groups can be integrated into the community engagement plan. These groupings are not mutually exclusive, that is individuals may fall into a number of different stakeholder groups. For example, individuals who own multiple properties in the LGA may be both resident ratepayers and landlord ratepayers. Minimum ratepayers will also be in one of the other ratepayer stakeholder groups.

Table 1 Stakeholder groupings

Stakeholder group	Who is in the group	Specific considerations
Resident ratepayers	Homeowners who are residents of Canada Bay (LGA)	Proposed rate increases will be directly incurred by these stakeholders.
Renters	Renters who are residents of Canada Bay LGA	It will be a decision of the landlord on whether and when any rate increases are passed on to renters.
Landlord ratepayers	Investment property owners of property within the Canada Bay LGA	It will be a decision of the landlord on whether and when any rate increases are passed on to renters.
Business ratepayers	Business property owners within the Canada Bay LGA	Proposed rate increases will be directly incurred by these stakeholders. Where there are commercial leases in place, it will depend on the contract terms as to whether and when any increase will be passed to tenants.
Minimum ratepayers	Those ratepayers who are currently paying the minimum rate or will potentially pay the minimum rate proposed under the SRV options.	Current minimum ratepayers will receive the full increase in minimum rates. Others may become minimum ratepayers as the minimum rate is increased. As minimum rates are planned to increase over a number of years, specific communication on this should be targeted at this group.

Within each stakeholder group there will be a range of socio-economic factors that will be considered through a capacity-to-pay analysis and report, this will further inform not only the affordability of any SRV, but also may provide further insight to improve the consultation plan and key messages.

2 Approach


2.1 Engagement complexity

The level of complexity for this engagement activity is defined as ‘high impact – city wide’ under the Council’s Community Engagement Strategy. That means that the issues will have a real or perceived impact across the whole city. The issue has the potential to create controversy and has a high level of potential community interest.

2.2 Levels of engagement

The level of engagement is defined from the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation in the figure below, also included in the Council’s Community Engagement Strategy. This spectrum outlines the level of engagement required depending on the purpose and desired outcome of the project.

Figure 1 IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation²

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 					
	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.

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To meet the assessment criteria for an SRV application, Council must:

1. Demonstrate that the **need and purpose** of a different rate path for the council’s General Fund is clearly articulated and identified in council’s Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) documents.
2. Evidence that the **community is aware** of the need for and the extend of a rate rise.
3. Show that the **impact on affected ratepayers** is reasonable
4. Exhibit, approve and adopt the relevant **IP&R documents**.
5. Explain and quantify the **productivity improvements and cost containment** strategies in its IP&R documents and/or application.
6. Addressed any other matter that IPART considers relevant.

² International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Australasia, 2018. *IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation*. Retrieved from: https://iap2.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/2018_IAP2_Spectrum.pdf.

To meet criterion two, Council would only need to undertake engagement at the “inform” level, but a “consult” level would ensure it more fully meets criteria one and four.

The LTFP adopted in June 2022 does include some sensitivity analysis of the impact on General Fund demonstrating persistent deficits, but it did not model any SRV options. The 2022-26 Delivery Program indicates Council’s intention to model and consult on potential SRV options at the end of 2022. These steps are expected to partly meet criteria one and four of the SRV assessment criteria. To more fully meet these criteria, it is proposed that an updated LTFP model, which includes the SRV options and base case from 2023-24, be exhibited, approved and adopted by Council in parallel to this community engagement process.

As a result, this community engagement plan is drafted to meet both the **inform** and **consult** levels of engagement. This means that Council will provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, and preferred solution, and to obtain the public’s feedback on analysis and alternatives. Council will keep the public informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision made by Council.

2.3 Engagement mechanisms

Given the complexity of the project and proposed level of engagement, the Council’s Community Engagement Strategy outlines the following as possible mechanisms for community engagement:

- designated telephone hotline
- e-newsletters and other email campaigns (CCB E-news, Rhodes E-news, and Business Update)
- printed communication collateral
- computer-based polling
- telephone surveys/polls
- internet surveys
- events
- social media.

This community engagement will operate in two phases:

1. Inform: to raise awareness and inform all stakeholder groups of the options being considered
2. Consult: to seek considered community feedback on these options to inform the Council in their final deliberations on a potential SRV application.

It will also seek to include both push and pull engagement mechanisms in each phase:

- Push mechanisms will actively get information from the Council into the public, for example – media releases, e-newsletters, newspaper notices, surveys.
- Pull mechanisms will provide places and resources that members of the public can seek out to further inform themselves or provide feedback, for example – websites, telephone hotlines, events.

The proposed mechanisms to be used for this engagement are outlined in the table below.

Table 2 Engagement mechanisms

Mechanism	Phase of consultation	Push or pull mechanism	Reach (stakeholder groups)
Translated information on Collaborate pages using Localize	Inform	Push	Stakeholders from all groups with ESL
Canada Bay Newsletter - September and October 2022	Inform	Push	All
Postcards in all Council venues	Inform	Push	All
E-mail to – Collaborate database and Business Newsletter	Inform	Push	Separate communications for residents and businesses.
E-newsletters: CCB news online (Sept & Oct) Rhodes enews (Sept & Oct) What's On enews (Sept & Oct) Library enews (Oct)	Inform	Push	All
Translated advertisements in CALD newspapers La Fiamma (Sept & Oct) Daily Chinese Herald (Sept & Oct) Sydney Korean Herald (Sept & Oct)	Inform	Push	CALD community
Media interviews	Inform	Push (where requested by local media)	All
Collaborate Canada Bay page (host survey and feedback options)	Inform and consult	Pull	All
Reference materials for Council call centre and customer service teams	Inform	Pull	All
Online forums – business and community sessions	Consult	Push	All
Councillor information sessions	Inform	Push	Councillors
Face-to-face forum	Consult	Push	All

These external community engagement mechanisms will be coupled with internal communications to inform all staff about the proposed SRV options and process and provide them with information to direct questions from members of the public that may arise in their day-to-day interactions. This will include:

- a manager's briefing pack
- updates in staff e-news.

2.4 Roles and responsibilities

The roles of councillors, Council officers and Morrison Low in the engagement process are defined in the table below.

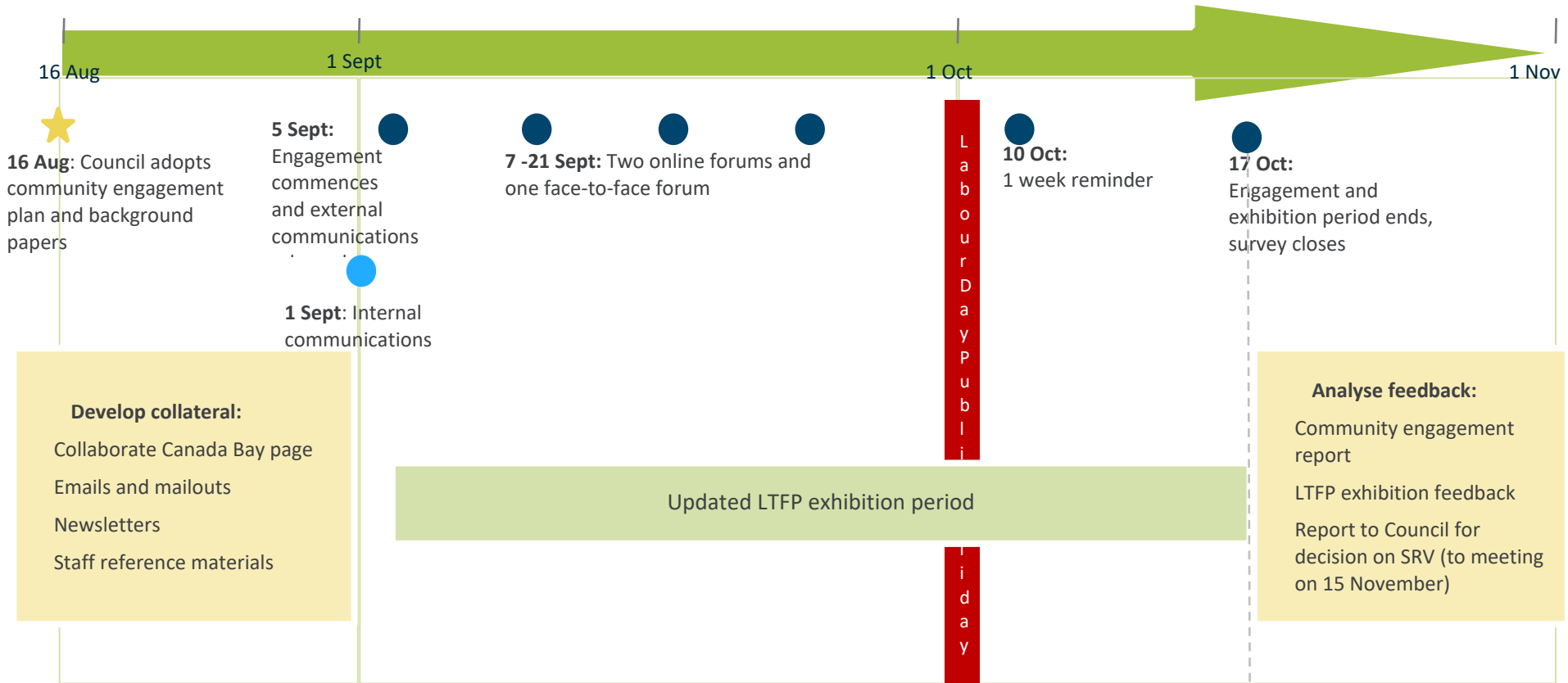
Table 3 Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Morrison Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop background papers Facilitate public forums Project manage the community engagement process Prepare report on community engagement outcomes
Canada Bay communications and engagement team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop collateral for the various written mechanism Publish and release materials in line with this community engagement plan, including internal communications Monitor and review community engagement outcomes, recommend adjustments to the plan as required
Canada Bay CFO and finance team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the development of background papers and other collateral with financial analysis and modelling Manage the exhibition process and finalisation of the updated 2023-24 LTFP (which includes SRV options)
Canada Bay executive and management team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brief staff on SRV options, process and community engagement activities
Canada Bay councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approve community engagement plan Participate in media interviews and public forums, where required
Canada Bay Chief Executive Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Endorse community engagement plan, approve any adjustments to community engagement process as required Participate in media interviews and public forums, where required
Canada Bay Director Corporate Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Endorse community engagement plan Monitor community engagement process and approve adjustments as required.

2.5 Timeline

The high-level timeline, with key milestones, is mapped out in the figure on the following page. Further detail on tasks and dependencies is provided in the supporting action plan.

Figure 2 Community engagement timeline



3 Action plan

Table 4 Action plan

Ref	Action	Responsible	By when	Dependency
1	Draft content for CCB news (physical newsletter) ³	Communications team	24 Aug2022	
2	Prepare FAQ document	Communications team	16 Aug 2022	
3	Prepare Service, Delivery and Infrastructure Improvement document	Communications team	19 Aug 2022	
4	Establish Collaborate Canada Bay page with basic information (to be made available to the public pending Council Meeting outcome)	Engagement team	16 Aug 2022	
5	Develop basic information for call centre and customer service staff (to be circulated pending Council Meeting outcome)	Engagement team	16 Aug 2022	
6	Council resolves to proceed to community consultation on an SRV	Council	16 Aug 2022	
7	Approve SRV CCB content for release into production	CEO/Director Corp Services	17 Aug 2022	1, 2
8	Draft copy for website(s), infographic, newsletters, e-mails, briefing packs, and physical collateral	Communications team	24 Aug 2022	2
9	Develop reference material for call centre and customer service staff	Communications team	24 Aug 2022	2
10	Update Collaborate Canada Bay page with consultation information	Engagement team	24 Aug 2022	2
11	Schedule three public forums (one face-to-face, two online, one of which with a focus on business stakeholders)	Engagement team	24 Aug 2022	2
12	Approve all content for community engagement	CEO/Director Corp Services	26 Aug 2022	4, 5, 6, 7
13	Brief managers on SRV process	CEO/Director Corp Services/CFO	29 Aug 2022	9

³ CCB News content deadline 8 Aug 2022 for the newsletter distributed from 29 Aug 2022. As Council will not have approved to proceed to community engagement for a potential SRV until 15 Aug 2022, this plan recommends a draft is developed for this newsletter in advance of the council meeting, but final approval will only be given for the SRV content to be included in the CCB News after the council meeting and only if Council resolve to proceed to community engagement stage.

Ref	Action	Responsible	By when	Dependency
14	Release internal communications via Staff News	Communications team	1 Sep 2022	10
15	Brief call centre and customer service staff (providing reference materials)	Communications team	1 Sep 2022	10
16	SRV page on Collaborate Canada Bay available to the public (or updated with consultation information)	Communications team	5 Sep 2022	7, 9
17	Publish community newsletters with SRV details: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rhodes E-news ● CCB E-news ● Business News ● CCB News print newsletter ● Sustainable Living ● Collaborate database 	Communications team	5 Sep 2022 13 Sep 2022 5 Sep 2022 18 Aug 2022 5 Sep 2022 5 Sep 2022	9
	Postcards printed and delivered to all Council venues	Engagement and communications team	12 – 16 Sep 2022	
18	Schedule and manage any media interviews requests	Communications team	5 Sep - 17 Oct 2022	14
19	Facilitate forums	Morrison Low	7-21 Sep	8
20	Reminder of SRV community engagement (closing 18 Oct): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rhodes E-news ● CCB E-news ● Business Update ● CCB News print newsletter 	Communications team	10 Oct 2022 11 Oct 2022 10 Oct 2022	9
21	Close engagement, exhibition of updated LTFP and gather all community feedback	Communications team	18 Oct 2022	
22	Analyse public exhibition feedback and draft community engagement report	Morrison Low	18 Oct - 31 Oct 2022	19
23	Finalise updated LTFP based on feedback over exhibition period	Finance team	18 Oct - 31 Oct 2022	19

3.1 Measures of success

A final community engagement report will be produced to document the outcomes of the engagement process, but also to clarify the extent to which the community engagement activities reached all relevant stakeholder groups. Measures to understand the level of reach and participation in the engagement process will include:

- SRV-related inquiries through the call centre and customer service teams
- number of submissions to the Long Term Financial Plan public exhibition
- number of page 'clicks' to the Collaborate Canada Bay site.

Where feasible, measures of success would also include documenting key demographics of participants to ensure that it is both representative of the Canada Bay community and engagement activities have reached groups that can sometimes be hard to reach, such as young people, seniors, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), people with disabilities and LGBTQI+.

4 Key messages

The key messages for the community should clearly communicate what is not negotiable and what aspects are open for community feedback to inform the decision-making process.

Non-negotiables include:

- the legislative requirement for the Council to employ sound financial management principals
- the current core deficits in the General Fund need to be addressed, targeting small surpluses over time to ensure the ongoing financial sustainability of the Council.

Community feedback is sought to understand:

- the level of service increases the community expects from the Council and the level of rate increase that the community is willing to absorb to fund these increases
- the level of minimum rates increase that would meet expectation of equity in distribution of the rates burden across the LGA.

In order to support these key messages and the development of collateral for the community engagement activities, two background papers will be developed:

1. Background paper on the SRV, outline the need and analysis.
2. A capacity to pay report which will investigate, analyse and report on the community's capacity to pay against Council's rating categories and proposed SRV. This includes research of specific residential/business/industry across the LGA and will undertake a range of comparisons and assessments of information for areas/locations within the LGA, and associated land use.
3. An updated LTFP and financial sustainability analysis that will demonstrate the impact of the SRV options on the ongoing financial sustainability of the Council.

In addition to these background papers, key messages in any community communications and collateral will include:

- how community members can seek further information or have their questions answered
- how community members can provide their feedback on the SRV and minimum rate increases proposed
- what to expect after the community engagement activity is completed, including IPART's public submission and assessment process.

4.1 Frequently asked questions

A set of frequently asked questions (FAQs) and their responses will be developed for this engagement process. While every effort is made to ensure that this is a complete list of FAQs at the commencement, these questions will be regularly reviewed and updated throughout the engagement process.

The below is a starting list of the questions we expect to develop for the FAQs:

- IPART releases 2023-24 base rate peg (added in following release on 29 September 2022)
- What will the proposed variation cost for residents and businesses?
- Why does Council need to apply for a Special Rate Variation?
- What services and improvements will the SRV fund
- Does this SRV impact rates for businesses or residents or both?
- How significant is this rise compared to other Councils?
- What do other Councils pay in rates?
- Will my rates rise in increments or all at once?
- Why increase minimum rates?
- What are my rates spent on?
- What is the total annual variation proposed?

5 Monitoring and risk

5.1 Monitoring

During the consultation process, the level of engagement will be monitored by Morrison Low and the Council's communications and engagement team.

Any proposed adjustments to the plan will be approved by Director Corporate Services and CEO before implementation.

5.2 Risk assessment

The table below documents the key risks associated with this community engagement. The risk ratings are assessments of the residual risk after the documented risk responses are implemented.

Table 5 Risk assessment

Risk	Risk response	Residual likelihood	Residual consequence	Residual risk rating
Engagement doesn't meet IPART assessment criteria.	Engagement plan and activities analyse and integrate requirements to meet criteria.	Low	Medium	Low
Community conflate current ICAC investigation with need for an SRV.	Key messages and FAQs to clarify that these are NOT related.	Medium	Medium	Medium
Impact on ratepayers of raising rates at a time of increasing inflation and cost of living pressures.	Capacity to pay analysis to understand the impacts of rate increase on community. Key messages around Canada Bay delaying SRV to do efficiency improvement first and comparison of increased rates with other councils. Key messages to understand service increases that will be maintained/implemented with rates funding.	Medium	Medium	Medium
Timing of rates increase close to next local government election.	Key messages on the Council's obligation for sound financial management principles and need for the SRV.	Medium	Medium	Medium