

Draft Communications Strategy

20 February 2008

Strategic Outcome

The objective of this communications strategy is to provide a clear and over-arching strategic direction for the council that will address the significant challenges involved in developing every aspect of effective internal and external communications at Tasman District Council. The strategic outcome is to achieve open, honest and transparent communication that provides equality of access for every stakeholder.

This strategy does not outline the policy, operational procedures or practices to achieve each outcome. The policy, procedure and practices are detailed in supporting documents.

The Vision:

'To achieve effective communication with all stakeholders both within and outside the Council'.

The Aims:

1. Access - 'To support the provision of high quality services by ensuring the widest possible access for stakeholders across any media at any time'

2. Information - 'To ensure that accurate and reliable information that reflects identified customer needs is available to all stakeholders at all times'

The aims are designed to achieve the following **key outcomes** in respect to communication:

- To broaden and strengthen local democracy
- To inform stakeholders about all services and responsibilities
- To achieve a well informed and knowledgeable work force
- To support the delivery of quality services
- To promote the Council's role as a community leader
- To use e-methods in achieving improved services

Strategic Approach

To achieve the strategic outcome the council will develop the following systems and practices:

- Technological and administrative support systems that facilitate internal and external communication
- Training for employees and Councilors so they can deliver effective and efficient communication
- Develop, improve and share good practice in respect of communication throughout the organisation
- An open and transparent approach to communication within and between the council

Internal Communication

The strategic approach will be to share information and knowledge through easily accessible channels. Effective and efficient external communication is dependent upon effective and efficient internal communication. The Management Team is directly responsible for developing internal communication systems and practices that support open and transparent communication.

Effective and efficient internal communication at Tasman District Council will be promoted through an open management style that encourages the free flow of relevant information across and throughout the authority. Employees and elected members will have access to relevant information and internal systems that promote communication and ensure that there is opportunity for open and honest feedback. Internal communication will be built on a philosophy of sharing information and knowledge through easily accessible channels. The storage and retrieval of records will be electronic making it easy to share relevant knowledge internally and in turn externally.

Teams across the council will share information and knowledge using corporate mechanisms such as the intranet, e-mail and briefings.

External Communication

The strategic approach to external communication is to ensure that every customer has equal access to the relevant information and that the council is open, transparent and honest at all times. Customer perception and expectations are determined at every point of contact with the council, through the image portrayed in the media and from the presentation and delivery of council information. Every experience should be a positive experience, even if the customer is complaining, and every piece of information will be presented in a professional manner.

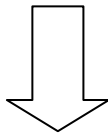
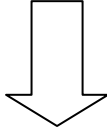
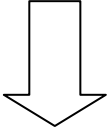
It will be easy for all customers to access council services, whether to complain, to obtain information or to request a service through a range of communication channels which suit the needs of the customer.

The Strategic Elements

Local authorities are required to produce a plethora of strategies that have a strong communication theme. This strategy brings together all the various elements linked to communication and for each element outlines the strategic outcome and strategic approach. Each element of the strategy is linked to the over arching strategic outcome and approach for communications at Tasman District Council.

The various elements brought together in this single strategic document are outlined in the diagram below:

The Communications Strategy
"To achieve cost-effective communication with all stakeholders both within and outside the Council"



The Web Site Strategy

The Intranet Strategy

The Media & Publicity Strategy

The Corporate Branding Strategy

The Customer Service Strategy

Knowledge Management Strategy

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Communications Strategy – The Web Site

Strategic Outcome – The Web Site

An effective website has become an essential means of communication for every organisation across the world. In line with the strategy on communication Tasman District Council is committed to operating an informative and transactional website that provides self-service opportunities in all possible service areas.

The website will be an integral part of the way we deliver services to the community offering access to the council 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It will be promoted as one of the primary means of communicating and doing business with the council.

The Tasman District Council web site aims to provide a 'one stop' resource for anyone who wishes to access services, find information or do business with the Council and its partners. Every council service that can be delivered electronically will be delivered through www.Tasman.govt.nz.

The strategic outcomes will be achieved through appropriate supporting policy and procedures.

Strategic Approach – The Web Site

The strategic approach to the web site at Tasman District Council is centred on customer focus, meeting the needs and expectations of all customers. Expectations have been transformed in recent years with people wanting public services that reflect modern lifestyle.

We live in a culture that expects 24 hour access, instant transactions, convenient services and a wealth of information driven by a knowledge based economy. To be customer focused we must meet these demands and deliver a web site that is accessible, coherent and relevant for everyone. A web site that is easy to use and accessible will open up new markets and opportunities for all council services and provide a strong link with the local and global community.

To be customer focused it is essential that the website continues to keep pace with ever changing customer requirements. Change is a constant and to continuously improve the web site it is important that we understand what customers think of the website and what they want. The customer will be at heart of any development and change to the web site through the following approach:

- Using survey data to establish who is using the website and what their experience was like.
- Developing links with existing consultation forums, in particular those for people with disabilities, youth groups and older people.
- Using resident surveys to establish what services Tasman District residents would like to see on the web.
- Marketing and promoting the web site as a primary means of access to council services.

Core Principles

Though customer expectations will change over time the strategic approach will remain constant based on the following core principles:

1. All public information that is available in electronic format will be accessible through the web site.
2. Departmental Managers will be responsible for ensuring that information is accurate and up to date.
3. Every form, request for service and application that can be e-enabled will be made transactional through the web site.
4. The web site will offer every possible self service option to the customer at all times.
5. Equality of access and ease of use will be key considerations when developing all elements of the web site.
6. All web pages will be consistent with the corporate branding policy in place at Tasman District Council.
7. Extensive links will be available to local and national organisations.
8. Adherence to nationally agreed standards for content on local authority web sites and local government listings.
9. All content will be in compliance with the council's equality and diversity policy.
10. No content will be published without the authorisation of the Communications Officer or a nominated representative.

Performance Monitoring

Performance will be measured using key performance indicators reported to an appropriate committee at least quarterly. National performance indicators will be used alongside local performance indicators to allow comparison with other local authority web sites. The key measure of performance will be user satisfaction with the web site and accessibility indicators.

Communications Strategy – Media and Publicity

Strategic Outcome – Media and Publicity

Media and public relations are important elements in any business and it is essential that people know what the council does and how we are performing. Publicity related to council policy and process will be managed by the Communications Officer. The key strategic outcomes will include:

- Positive promotion of all council activity in the media
- Increased positive coverage of council activity in the media
- Improved knowledge and understanding of council activity
- Appropriate and prompt response to all media requests
- A co-ordinated and consistent approach to media relations
- Improved relations with the media representatives
- Improved quality of information published in the local community

The strategic outcomes will be achieved through appropriate supporting policy and procedures.

Strategic Approach – Media and Publicity

The strategic approach to media communications will be pro active and customer focused. Appropriate publications and communications will be in place to ensure effective communication of Council activities to stakeholders..

The strategic approach to proactive press releases is to create a constant stream of articles generated by the council for media publication. The articles will champion the strengths of the authority and provide valuable information to stakeholders on the services delivered by the council and the performance of the council.

The strategic approach to media statements is to always provide prompt, accurate and informative comment when requested. All media statements will be from the appropriate formal authority within the council and co-ordinated by the Communications Officer.

Performance Monitoring

Performance reporting will focus on the percentage of media coverage achieved from the proactive releases and the response time to media statements. The Communications Officer is responsible for ensuring that appropriate measures and targets are established and regular reports are submitted as part of the performance management framework at Tasman District Council.

Communications Strategy – Customer Service Strategy

Strategic Outcome – Customer Service Strategy

Customer access impacts on every element of the communications strategy and is an example of the complex relationship between all the elements that have been positioned under the communications banner.

The commitment to equality is an important element in the strategic outcomes for customer access at Tasman District Council. The key strategic outcomes achieved will include:

- Equality of access across all services
- Tailored access to services that reflect the diversity of local needs
- Co-ordination and direction to continually improve access to services
- Increased accessibility to council services through all channels
- Increased take up of services through all access channels and in particular electronic access channels
- A wider range of access channels created for all customers

The strategic outcomes will be achieved through appropriate supporting policy and procedures.

Strategic Approach – Customer Service Access Strategy

A customer focused approach will ensure that the customer is engaged in the development and improvement of access channels. Robust customer service policies and practices will be developed to ensure a minimum high standard of service access for every customer.

Access channels will be tailored to meet customer demand and monitored closely to track changes over time. The Customer Service Team will be the first point of access for the majority of customers and they will aim to handle 80% of contacts at the first point of access. The strategic approach will involve all service areas sharing knowledge and information with the Customer Service Team in a dynamic environment that ensures real time updates.

The Customer Service Team will be trained and receive continuous support to deal with almost all customer contacts becoming the primary 'face' of the council.

Performance Monitoring

All service areas will be responsible for recording contact information through a corporate query management system and reporting the number of contacts against type and resolution figures. The Customer Services Team will develop a set of corporate performance measures that enable the authority to monitor the following as a minimum:

- The number of contacts received
- The type of contacts received
- Anomalies and patterns in contact over time
- Access channel take up figures
- Response times to access by channel type
- Equality of access to services
- Customer satisfaction with accessibility

The Customer Service Manager will develop the appropriate measures and integrate them into the performance management system to ensure effective monitoring and management.

Communications Strategy – Corporate Branding Strategy

Strategic Outcome – Corporate Branding Strategy

The corporate brand determines the outward looking face of the council. The brand allows all stakeholders to identify with the council and what the council does. The Tasman District Council brand is included in the communication strategy because it is an integral element in establishing the council's reputation. The strategic outcome from the policy and procedures that support the brand will be:

- Clarity about the services that the council provides in the local community
- Recognition of the council's achievements by all stakeholders
- Consistent quality branding of all council assets
- Consistent quality branding of all council services
- Clear approach to branding presented to all stakeholders
- A strong corporate identity that people will easily recognise

The strategic outcomes will be achieved through appropriate supporting policy and procedures.

Strategic Approach – Corporate Branding Strategy

The strategic approach to corporate branding will be one of strong direction and clear instruction. The required outcomes can only be achieved by implementing a consistent approach across the whole authority. All policy and procedure will be corporate and will apply to all employees and stakeholders.

Comprehensive support and guidance will be provided to ensure that the corporate brand is reflected in every activity across the council.

Regular review, feedback and consultation will be carried out in respect of the branding policy that will involve all stakeholders. The branding strategy will cover all communication media in particular the print and electronic media.

Performance Monitoring

The Management Team will be responsible for ensuring compliance with the agreed branding policy and procedures. Performance measures will be established and agreed by the Management Team that test the following:

- Recognition of the brand
- Coverage of the brand across services
- Use of the brand across various media

Communications Strategy – Knowledge Management Strategy

Strategic Outcome – Knowledge Management Strategy

Knowledge management has developed significantly over the last few years driven by the development in electronic channels of communication. The knowledge management strategy is included within the communications strategy because it is at the core of effective communication within and between the council. The key strategic outcomes that will be achieved through knowledge management include:

- Formal and informal sharing of relevant knowledge both internally and externally
- Development of a 'knowledge store' based on best practice
- Recognition of the various elements of knowledge that contribute to business success
- A more knowledgeable workforce that has the right information at the right time
- Effective and efficient mechanisms for storing, retrieving and developing knowledge

The strategic outcomes will be achieved through appropriate supporting policy and procedures.

Strategic Approach – Knowledge Management Strategy

Knowledge management incorporates the gathering, use and access to knowledge within the council. The strategic approach will focus on formal and informal systems of knowledge management. A consistent approach to the management of records that contain information will enable all employees to easily store, access and develop appropriate knowledge stores.

The approach will reduce significantly the risk of record duplication and waste in the formal record system. Knowledge and information that comes into the authority from third party sources will be managed within a structured system to ensure that stakeholders get the right information when they need it.

The sharing of all knowledge and information will be promoted. An open, honest and transparent approach to knowledge management will be applied to all the supporting policy and procedure. Employees will be encouraged to share knowledge across service boundaries to promote a wider understanding of the council and reduce 'silos' that restrict knowledge to employees within service areas.

Performance Monitoring

Output focused measures will be established to monitor the implementation and development of appropriate knowledge management and record systems. The Management Team will be required to continually investigate performance measures that can be used to effectively monitor knowledge management outcomes. Performance reporting will be carried out at least every quarter.

Communications Strategy – Intranet Strategy

Strategic Outcome – Intranet Strategy

The intranet will be a significant channel for internal communication with employees and councillors. The intranet will act as a store for information that is useful to every employee. The key strategic outcomes from the intranet strategy include:

- Increased access to information by all employees
- The intranet recognised as the primary source of information by employees
- Reduction of paper based information within the council
- Increased knowledge amongst council employees
- Greater range of knowledge easily available to employees

The strategic outcomes will be achieved through appropriate supporting policy and procedures.

Strategic Approach – Intranet Strategy

The approach required to achieve the strategic outcomes will focus on everyone using the intranet to store and access information. Employees will be provided with access to the intranet from office based and remote locations.

Content on the intranet will be accurate, dynamic and relevant to encourage greater use across the authority. All the council's policies, procedures and news updates will be posted on the intranet. The posting of informal communications will be continued with dedicated pages for staff news posted by staff for staff.

Performance Monitoring

The key performance indicators used to measure the success of the intranet strategy will be derived from employee feedback. Performance indicators will be developed to measure the following:

- Employee usage of the intranet

The Management Team will report the performance figures to the appropriate community forum at least every quarter.