

## 2. BRIEFING PAPER – MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

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The purpose of this report is to respond to an enquiry from the Director of Human Resources and the Chair of the Communication and Consultation Special Committee regarding the range of media and communication policies/plans which other Councils have in place. Several Councils around the country have been contacted as well as the Communication Manager at Local Government New Zealand. The following provides a general overview based on the feedback from those contacted.

### SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

Most Councils have a written policy or guideline on how to relate with the media. Several have communication plans or strategies with varying levels of detail and content, many of which were being reviewed or work in progress.

Council	Media	Communication
Hurunui District Council	Yes	Very much a draft.
Hamilton City Council	Yes	Being reviewed in November.
Wellington City Council	Yes	Business plan.
Wellington Regional Council	Yes	Three tiers. Parts being worked on.
Auckland Regional Council	Yes	Yes.
Nelson City Council	Yes	
Dunedin City Council		Business plan and style guide.

“ .... Most councils have only a media plan ...to be fair most councils have only realised the value of strategic communication ... fairly recently in their history and so the discipline is still quite new....”  
Elizabeth Hughes, Communication Manager, Local Government New Zealand.

### MEDIA POLICIES

These range from a single page to several pages, from what to do if a reporter calls to principles of media relations. They are designed to assist the media in getting efficiently to the facts they require. Some are stand alone papers while others are incorporated into communication plans:

- **Hurunui District Council**  
A what to do if a reporter calls sheet (rather than policy).
- **Hamilton City Council**  
Media relations in general,  
Principles for media relations,  
Media relations objectives,  
Authority to speak,  
Preparing media information (releases, background info sheets, fact sheets, letters to the edition),  
Speaking to the media,  
Media relations guidelines,  
Designated spokespeople (listed).
- **Wellington City Council**  
CEO message,  
Media policy:
  - How the Council will deal with the media,
  - Designated spokespeople (roles),
  - Proactive planning.

The importance of positive media relations:

- Public image,
- Creation of positive profile,
- Be open and positive.

Answering a media call:

- A journalist approaches you – what now?
- The interview,
- Prepare,
- Word of caution,
- Studio or on camera interviews.

Some other helpful hints,

Media call checklist.

- **Wellington Regional Council**

Working with the media,  
Who should speak to the media (Councillors, staff),  
Responding to media enquiries (dos and don'ts),  
Where to go to for advice.

- **Auckland Regional Council**

Process of producing a media release,  
Sign-off procedures,  
Monitoring,  
Court case,  
Auditing,  
Media monitoring (including process, analysis, action).

- **Nelson City Council**

Media relations facilitate strategic aims of the Council,  
Appropriate spokespeople for the type of information.

- **Auckland Region Council**

Part of communication plan:

- Communication team involvement,
- Response,
- Proactive approaches.

## **COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES/PLANS**

Like the media policies the approach to communication strategies/plans is also varied and plans are often a working document:

- **Hurunui District Council**

Very much in draft form:

- Introduction – to provide vision to build sustainable relationships,
- Policy reference – RMA and Local Government Act, Mission statement,
- Project Outline/Key Issues:
  - Definition of Council communication,
  - Key strategic communication issues,
  - Stakeholders.
- Key Communication Goals,
- Communication values,
- Council key messages,
- Strategies and actions – develop strategy for each target – policies,
- Evaluation audit.

- **Hamilton City Council**

Being reviewed in November.

- **Wellington Regional Council**

Three tiers:

- Brand,
- Working on marketing strategy,
- Divisions have own plans; it is intended to bring these together in the New Year.

- **Auckland Regional Council**

Situation analysis:

- Background,
- Rationale and connection with other communication plans and policies within the ARC,
- Vision,
- Communication objectives.

Current situation:

- SWOT.

Communication strategies:

- Overall approach.

Key target audiences,

Key messages:

- Overall, regional, environmental quality, parks and recreation, heritage, business units, transport.

Activities,

Regular action plan,

Management of ARC Communication strategy:

- Sign-off/approval, media.

Budget,

Monitor/evaluation.

## **WHY SHOULD CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL COMMUNICATE EXTERNALLY?**

While there is no one place which answers this question it is covered in part in a number areas:

- Extract from the City Manager's statement at the front of the media training work book: ...The Council's mission statement commits us to being highly accountable for our actions...
- Mission statement of the Christchurch City Council (précis)  
In achieving the mission the Council will:
  - Be responsive to local needs;
  - Be highly accountable for its actions;
  - Be democratic, effective and efficient;
  - Be highly accountable for its actions;
  - Advocate in the interest of the whole community.
- City Scene editorial policy (section from)  
*What should City Scene do for the Council?*
  - It's primary functions are to instil an understanding of the integral role of the Council within the community and to (positively) influence on key issues where we want to change behaviour and/or attitudes.
  - It should positively reflect value for money for rates.
  - It should give readers a sense of ownership as stakeholders and encourage them to become involved by making the Council more accessible.
  - It should show how the Council is a significant and achieving social and economic driver of a sustainable Christchurch.
  - It should show the values, outputs (benefits) and the integral role of the organisation within the community.
  - It should present key issues and ideas, preferably before other media.
  - It should promote consultation with Council and the building of two-way dialogue/relationships

There is an expectation from the public that the Council will communicate with them and make information accessible.

## **WHAT DOES CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL HAVE?**

- Corporate logo with identity standards,
- City Scene editorial policy (see appendix 1),
- City Manager statement at front of the media training workbook (see appendix 2),
- Draft process for external communication for elected members (see appendix 3),
- Consultation framework.

### **Staff**

**Recommendation:** That the information be received.

### **Chairman's**

**Recommendation:** That staff investigate further the Auckland Regional Council model.