

Auckland Council Communications Department

Overview

Public trust and confidence is vital to Auckland Council's ability to deliver the services and investment Auckland needs. Effective and proactive communication plays a critical role in building and maintaining trust by ensuring that Aucklanders:

- Perceive Auckland Council delivers good value for money.
- Are aware of and understand council and its services.
- Feel they have an opportunity to have a say in key decisions and changes that affect them.
- See evidence of accountability and transparency on behalf of council and its Council Controlled Organisations (CCOs).

The role of communications in Council

There are many areas where Auckland Council has a clear responsibility to communicate effectively with Aucklanders. A significant portion of our communications work is due to our statutory responsibility under the Local Government Act 2002 and our obligations under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act (LGOIMA) 1987 and Privacy Act 1993 to make information available to members of the public when requested.

However, the communications function also fulfils non-statutory needs across the organisation including:

1. *Enhancing the reputation of council* across all Aucklanders and stakeholders by proactively promoting the vision, plans and services of council
2. *Supporting our leaders to be the visible faces of council and CCOs* so Aucklanders have confidence in the decisions and leadership of our organisations
3. *Raising awareness of and promoting the council's services, programmes and policies* so Aucklanders understand them and benefit from them
4. Supporting the effective operation of council services through *clear, relevant and timely information*
5. *Supporting effective engagement and consultation* with the community on policies, plans and proposals to give voice to Aucklanders
6. *Meeting statutory or legal requirements* to provide public information
7. *Informing, supporting and reassuring* Aucklanders, including during major incidents, civil defence emergencies and times of crisis.

Our roles and responsibilities

The Communications department delivers a broad range of communication services on behalf of Auckland Council. This includes:

- Promotion of all council services and businesses, including leisure centres, waste management, regional parks, public events, resource and building consents, libraries, animal management, leisure centre lifeguards, and the rural fire service.
- Provision of information to the public, news media and stakeholders on council activities, including decision-making, public consultation and engagement, changes in council services, management of statutory processes, financial performance, and civil defence and emergency management.
- Internal communications across the Council's 8,450 staff
- Support for the 21 Local Boards to consult, develop and communicate, including on local board plans
- Specialist research and insights to support work across a broad range of areas, including provision of services, engagement with communities, and committee decision-making
- Supporting engagement and consultation activities with Aucklanders, including the Long-term Plan and Annual Plan consultations
- Managing the many online and print channels council uses to communicate with Aucklanders, including OurAuckland news - provided online and print (monthly to all households) - and social media channels
- Facilitating the design and production of all publicity material, reports, signage and other council branded communications, mostly via an in-house design team and studio.

Our people

As at 01 July 2018 the Communications Department employed 68.1 full time equivalent (FTE) staff¹.

FTE numbers can vary slightly throughout the financial year due to seasonal campaigns and short-term projects requiring communication support. For example, temporary staff are employed to provide design support and copywriting services during peak periods. Employment of temporary staff enables the Communications Department to meet fluctuating demand without needing to outsource to agency suppliers, while ensuring that we have suppliers who are experienced in working with council.

Our business units deliver the roles and responsibilities of the Communications Department:

- Content and Channel - manages and supports council's core communication channels including OurAuckland and social media, to inform and engage Aucklanders.

¹ The Citizen Engagement & Insight business unit and Citizen Value & Engagement project team transferred from the Communications Department to the Governance Division as at 30 June 2018.

- Brand and Studio – our in-house design studio was established in 2014 to reduce the cost of routine design services from external agencies. The Brand team is responsible for brand management to ensure accurate and widespread attribution of council services.
- Marketing & Publicity – develops integrated communications for all council services and businesses.
- Media – deals with media enquiries, requests and issues on behalf of council and engages with the appropriate department and subject matter experts to ensure the correct information is provided and best practice communication messages are delivered.
- Internal Communications – works to connect all council employees to the common purpose of the organisation and makes sure everyone has the information they need to do their job.
- Corporate Communications – protects and enhances the trust and confidence in council through a focus on council decision-making and how Aucklanders' understanding of democracy can be increased by communicating the decisions made by our elected members and supporting committee chairs.
- Local Communications – provides communications support to Auckland's 21 local boards with a focus on raising understanding and awareness of the boards and their activities. Communications support is also provided to the 20 Ward Councillors when required.
- Audience Strategy & Business Performance - helps align the Communications Department's delivery to the needs of Aucklanders, organisation strategies and policies, and annual and long-term plans and budgets. Also responsible for championing and facilitating the Trust & Confidence programme throughout Auckland Council.

Our channels

The Communications Department has many channels available to deliver on our roles and responsibilities on behalf of the council:

- Owned channels are OurAuckland, Kotahi, digital screens, and social media including Twitter and Facebook
- Earned channels are media journalists and stories, shares and retweets
- Paid channels are media bought in print, radio, digital, outdoor and other channels.

Our goals are to use owned and earned channels whenever possible, so we are maximising the channels we have built and can access most cost-effectively, and achieve more reach and have a more targeted impact for the same budget. This is a challenging goal given the increasing growth and diversity of Auckland's population.

In Q1 FY19 Auckland Council entered into a partnership with New Zealand's largest magazine publisher, Bauer Media Group, to produce and distribute the OurAuckland magazine at a reduced cost to ratepayers. This partnership enables a refreshed design, more in-depth content, wider distribution, an increase in pages from 16 to 32 and will save the council around \$300,000 over the next three years

Expenditure

The table below outlines the estimated communications, marketing and research related spending from the Council. Figures are drawn from the Marketing and Advertising General Ledger.

The Communications Department has oversight of the majority of the marketing and advertising related expenditure across Council. Prior to July 2014, this had been the responsibility of individual business units. This increased oversight has led to spending being more effective and efficient.

The budget for FY18 was lower than the previous year, continuing a trend of reducing expenditure. This is an environment of increasing demand for our services as Auckland's population continues to grow; there were 32,000 more people living in Auckland for the 12 months to 30 June 2018. Communication & Engagement therefore worked hard in FY18 to deliver to Aucklanders better communications outcomes for less.

	FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18
Budget	12,021,095	11,597,163	10,943,822	12,596,345	8,773,881	7,357,237	6,190,803
Actuals	12,506,007	13,074,937	10,617,521	9,819,594	10,824,916	8,751,504	6,747,719

External suppliers

From 01 October 2017 the Auckland Council Group's new creative and media panel was established. The panel comprises .99/OMD (Clemenger Group), Federation MBM and Ogilvy & Mather and they provide their creative and media services to Auckland Council; Auckland Transport; and Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development (ATEED).

Further information about recent spend with key suppliers can be found in the [Performance and transparency](#) section of the Auckland Council website. Contract information is located under 'Auckland Council contracts and supplier spend' – [Awarded contracts](#).