

CORPORATE
COMMUNICATION
STRATEGIC PLAN
2016 - 2019



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INTRODUCTION

The Corporate Communication Strategic Plan (the Plan) provides a framework for how Council communicates with its audiences. The Plan strongly aligns to the Community Engagement Policy and Toolkit, together demonstrating how Council's many forms of communication link together to best connect to our community.

It also highlights the key projects Council will develop over the next three years to ensure clear, consistent messaging, the best use of communication resources and the timely, effective distribution of key information.

STRATEGIC LINKS

The Plan helps to deliver the objectives of the Shellharbour Community Strategic Plan (CSP) by ensuring the community has the information needed to access Council's programs, processes and decisions. Specifically, the Plan helps to:

Facilitate good communication and relationships with our community

(CSP objective 4.1.2)

Utilise effective communication methods and technology to share information and provide services

(CSP objective 4.2.4)

The Plan closely aligns to Council's vision, values and principles set out in the CSP.

To achieve these objectives, the Plan aims to ensure that:

- 1. Council actively shares information about all key decisions, projects, events and issues.**
- 2. Information links to the CSP and community priorities.**
- 3. Councillors and staff have the information, tools and skills they need to be the organisation's "reputation ambassadors".**



Council's Community Engagement Policy and Toolkit further strengthens Council's commitment to building partnerships with a range of stakeholders, and seeking greater community involvement in the activities and decision making process of Council.

WHO ARE OUR AUDIENCES

THE COMMUNITY

is Council's main audience group, it has many different dimensions and these must be taken into account when planning communication. There is no "one size fits all" approach.

Shellharbour is growing rapidly and has one of the youngest populations in NSW with a high proportion of young families. At the same time, the number of people over the age of 65 in Shellharbour is set to double over the next 20 years. Almost one-fifth of residents were born overseas.

Other factors that segment the broader community into more defined audiences include general interests, sport, socio-economic groups, cultural heritage, education and many others.

As well as "the community", Council communicates with many other audiences, including:

BUSINESSES

- likely to be keenly interested in economic development, business growth opportunities;

VISITORS

- attracted to the many attributes of the City including the lake and beaches;

STAFF

- many of whom also live in the LGA;

FUTURE STAFF

- opportunities to promote Council as an employer of choice, and the lifestyle attributes of the City;

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES/MPS

- important stakeholders in Council decision-making and service provision;

NON-RESIDENTIAL RATEPAYERS

- they may have a particular interest in decisions affecting the value of their property;

SUPPLIERS

- interested in information that might impact their business with Council or offer new opportunities.

WHAT ARE OUR KEY MESSAGES?

Council operates across diverse service areas and communicates in many ways - having some agreed key messages helps to keep information consistent and coherent, regardless of the channel or subject matter.

SHELLHARBOUR CITY COUNCIL:

- 1.** Delivers services for you and your area, all year round
- 2.** Is always looking for ways to do things better
- 3.** Is committed to a thriving economy with more local jobs
- 4.** Works with other agencies to help keep the community connected and safe
- 5.** Is committed to preserving our natural environment
- 6.** Leads a city of vision where development is carefully planned
- 7.** Is providing new facilities to cater for our growing population
- 8.** Supports creative and cultural programs to make Shellharbour a dynamic and vibrant place
- 9.** Represents the whole community and makes responsible decisions in everyone's best interest.

TOOLS WE USE TO COMMUNICATE

Council uses many communication channels to reach its target audiences. When choosing the best channel or method of communication, the focus should always be on the audience; what do we know about them, and how are they most likely to want to access this information?

OUR TOOLS INCLUDE:



events displays
advertising/media columns newsletters
social media including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Vimeo
websites council meetings
posters/banners/signage
media releases & interviews emails
Have your Say Shellharbour
telephone calls committees & group or individual meetings working parties
Speeches & presentations council reports
interpreter services letters

OUR OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

Council has a strong program of communication activities, there are opportunities to build relationships with key audiences and increase the coherence of communication across the organisation. To do this, Council will pursue three objectives and associated strategies over the life of this plan.

OBJECTIVE

1

Council actively shares information about all key decisions, projects, events and issues.

OBJECTIVE

2

Information links to the Community Strategic Plan and community priorities.

OBJECTIVE

3

Councillors and staff have the information, tools and skills they need to be Council's "reputation ambassadors".

OBJECTIVE

1

Council actively shares information about all key decisions, projects, events and issues.

STRATEGIES

1a Develop and deliver specific communication plans

The Communications team will work with Council staff to develop a communication plan for any key decision, project, event or issue that requires external communication (other than general correspondence, phone calls or over-the-counter interaction).

The plan will be based on Council's communication plan template, and will define the purpose of the activity, key audiences, best channels, timeframes, outcomes and responsibilities. A communication plan must be developed early in the life of any project or activity, and must be approved by the Executive Manager/Public Officer.

1b Implement clear processes for website communication

Council's website provides many opportunities for effective communication, and this relies on information being engaging, current and easy to access. Working with website "champions" across the organisation, the Communications team will implement clear processes for updating and maintaining the website.

1c Maintain a proactive social media voice

As social media platforms continue to grow in usage, Council will maintain a strong and positive presence on a select number of platforms. Currently these are: Facebook, Twitter and Vimeo. All communication via these channels will be coordinated by the Communications team, except in specific cases where permission has been given to sections of Council to communicate directly with their target audiences. All staff are bound by Council's Social Media Policy.

1d Consistent and proactive media liaison

While local media resources are shrinking, the traditional media is still an important channel in communicating Council information to the community and addressing issues of concern. Media activities will continue to be a key part of communication plans, with Council's Media Policy setting clear guidelines on who is authorised to speak to the media on Council's behalf.

1e Continue to investigate new channels and implement where appropriate

The communication landscape will continue to rapidly evolve. Technology will present new opportunities and Council will be flexible and open to incorporating new methods into its communication plans.

1f Support continuous improvement in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communications

Focus and support staff to be aware of CALD communities and appropriate communication methods. Define and create communication processes, tools and messages to meet the needs of CALD groups. Develop innovation and drive commitment to CALD communication.

OBJECTIVE

2

Information links to the Community Strategic Plan and community priorities.

STRATEGIES

2a Adopt key messages for Council communication

The key messages outlined earlier in the Plan reflect the community's aspirations and issues of concern. As Council is already working hard to meet these aspirations and address the issues, any communication is an opportunity to remind the community that Council is listening and taking action.

2b Introduce "talking points" on key issues

For larger issues and significant projects, the Communications team will work with relevant staff to develop "talking points" for any communication about those matters. These will be helpful for Councillors/staff when speaking to media, customer service staff and anyone needing up-to-date and accurate information on the issue or project.

2c Enforce the branding guidelines

Council has put considerable effort into rolling out its branding and developing guidelines for use of the logo. The Communications team will continue to ensure the guidelines are adhered to, and provide advice on any applications of the branding not covered by the guidelines.

2d Restrict the number of Council "sub-brands"

As well as its over-arching corporate brand, Council allows some sections of its operations to have their own branding for marketing purposes. These are cases where an area has demonstrated that it has a very specific target audience and message, or where a project needs a particularly strong identity. Council's current sub-brands are:

- Tourism Shellharbour
- Shellharbour City Libraries
- The Links Shell Cove
- Illawarra Regional Airport
- Shellharbour Civic Centre

It's important that Council does not dilute the strength of its brand by allowing a large number of sub-brands. All sections of Council, other than those listed above, must communicate under the Shellharbour City Council brand, in line with the brand and logo guidelines.

2e Communicate in plain language

Council's Corporate Communication Guidelines set out the principles of plain language communication and provide many examples of how they can be applied in everyday writing.

OBJECTIVE

3

Councillors and staff have the information, tools and skills they need to be Council’s “reputation ambassadors”.

STRATEGIES

3a Make internal communication a priority, including activating the intranet

Many organisations focus on communicating with their outside audiences, and leave internal communication to chance. It’s important that Council does not fall into this category, particularly given the number of staff who also live in the LGA and form part of the Shellharbour community.

3b Ensure Councillors have the information they need to be effective elected representatives

Information is conveyed to Councillors through channels including formal reports, briefings and meetings, and a weekly newsletter. This must be accurate, up to date and align with any information being released to the community by Council staff.

3c Help staff understand that effective communication is part of their job

It’s important that communication continues to be part of the staff induction process, including explanation of the style guide and the Plan. Longer-term actions include building communication skills into recruitment processes and performance reviews.

3d Increase awareness about the Communications team’s services

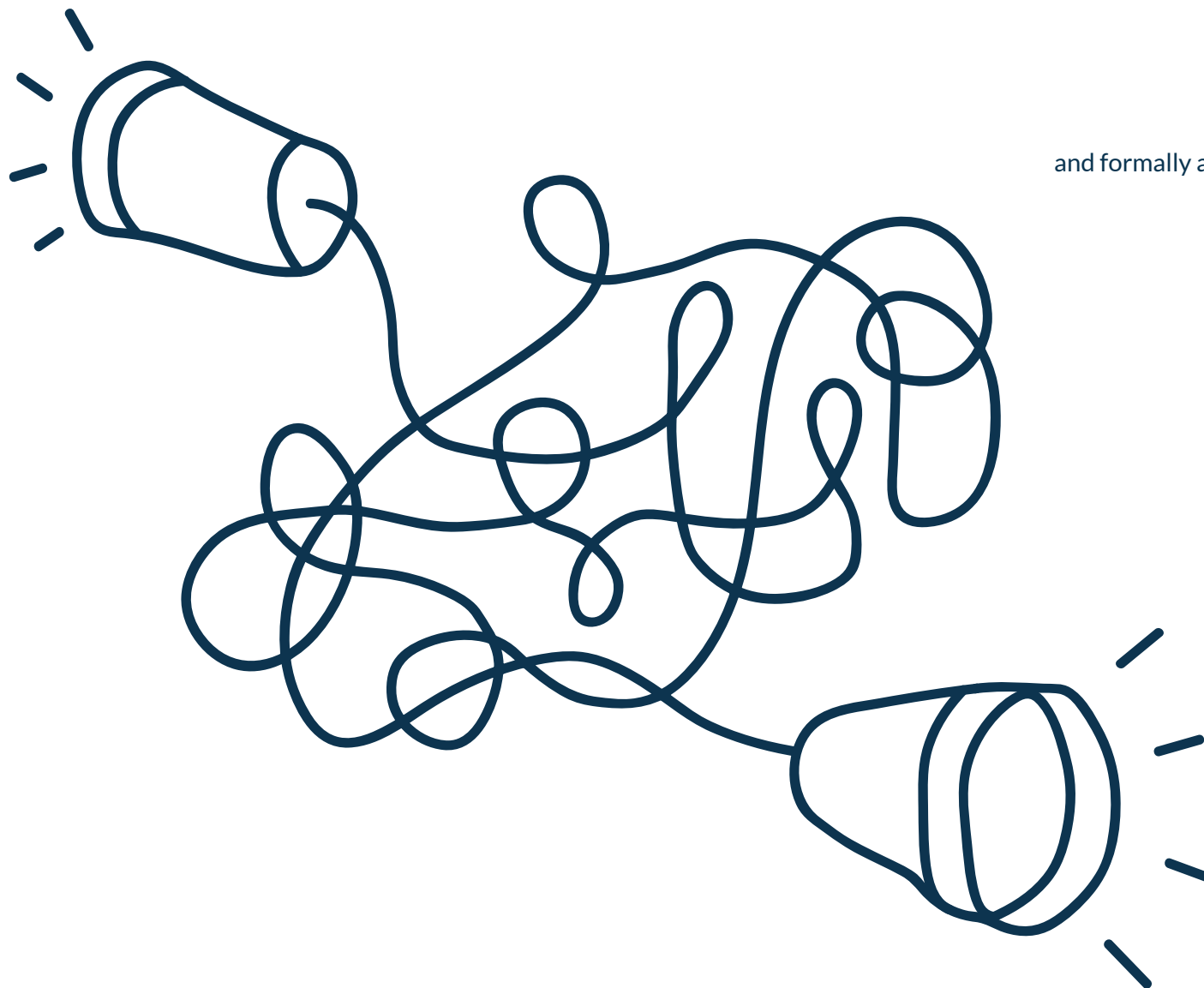
The Communications team will continue to build its profile in the organisation, so staff understand team members are available to provide strategic advice and specific assistance.

3e Give staff the skills they need to be outstanding communicators

Ensure key staff are trained in core communication skills including presentations, high-stakes conversations, clear writing and media skills where appropriate.

EVALUATION

The Plan will be reviewed annually and formally assessed three years after its adoption.





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