Shellharbour
CITY COUNCIL

communications
& engagement
strategy 2020-2024

acknowledgement :

Shellharbour City Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the Dharawal and Yuin Nations as the first Peoples of this region. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and recognise the value and contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to the local community.

contents :

message from the Mayor :

Meaningful communication between Council and the community is essential for our City's growth and success. This two-way process firms our connection, engagement and ability to drive action based on our community's needs.

Shellharbour City Council continually strives towards active, transparent and consistent communication with our community, visitors, staff and other stakeholders.

We want our City to be inclusive for all. This means that communication needs to be clear, accessible and delivered to a standard that effectively meets the requirements of our community.

The Shellharbour City Council Communications & Engagement Strategy has been prepared as a framework to support Council's Community Strategic Plan 2018-2028. It incorporates objectives and key initiatives, providing guidelines to ensure continual improvement of Council's communication and engagement practices.

This strategy is the result of extensive consultation with Council's many stakeholders. This strategy will help Council maintain an environment where the voice of the community is at the heart of the services and infrastructure that Council provides.

Considered communication is a vital element of creating a thriving City and I encourage people of all ages to take any opportunity to communicate with Council.

I am proud to present the Shellharbour City Council Communications & EngagementStrategy and believe that its successful implementation will result in an even stronger relationship between Council and our community.

how we communicate & engage :

face to face

events

focus groups

council meetings

information booth (Display/ exhibit)

drop-in sessions

workshops

social media

advertising
(print, tv, radio, digital)

Outdoor & digital signage

WHAT'S ON

media partnerships
media releases

Online engagement portal

posters
flyers
postcards

Rates notices
Community Strategic Plan
Reporting documents

website
blogs
online forums
surveys

apps

SMS

emails
eNewsletters

Project specific activities
(Photo competition, gamification, dotmocracy, story telling etc)

intranet

direct communication
(phone, letter, email)

encouraging conversations :

Council recognises that views gathered through conversations and engagement should be representative of a broad cross section of the community.

Where possible, Council is committed to ensuring open access through:

- Use of accessible venues
- Promotion of accessibility options
- Ensuring a range of engagement methods are used
- Provision of easy read materials or direct support to interpret documents

In addition, we have identified some specific groups that may require additional considerations when communicating or undertaking engagement.

children

- Use clear, simple and informal language, free from jargon and acronyms
- Avoid potentially intimidating techniques and venues
- Inform young people about what Council does

young people

- Use clear, simple and informal language, free from jargon and acronyms
- Consider incentives
- Choose venues accessible to public transport
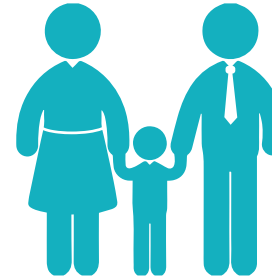- Use existing relationships (eg. Children and Youth Services)

women

- Choose venues that are safe, in visible and public locations and directly accessible
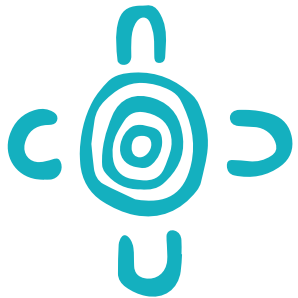
older people

- Use large print
- Choose accessible venues
- Consider transport options
- Use existing relationships

working families

- Consider timing and childcare needs
- Consider venue options that are appropriate for children

aboriginal people

- Invite and encourage involvement of respected elders
- Use clear and simple language, free from jargon and acronyms
- Use existing relationships (eg. Aboriginal Liaison Officer and Aboriginal Community Reference Group)

culturally diverse community

- Use clear and simple language
- Consider use of interpreters
- Translate printed material
- Respect cultural difference
- Invite respected community leader
- Consider dietary requirements

people with a disability

- Use clear and simple language, free from jargon and acronyms
- Avoid activities that require long periods of concentration
- Encourage participants to bring support person
- Consider information format
- Ensure adequate lighting
- Be on the same level
- Avoid or reduce background noise whenever possible
- Repeat and rephrase as required
- Consider Auslan Interpreter Service

our framework :

This strategy is committed to delivering communication and community engagement activities in line with the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum and NSW Government's Social Justice Principles.

The table below sets out the levels of engagement and influence for different decisions. They are not mutually exclusive and, in most cases, Council will use a combination of techniques to ensure the engagement process is successful. We aim to ensure that residents and stakeholders have access to information to understand what Council is doing and the decisions we make.

	inform	consult	involve	collaborate	empower
goal	To provide a balanced and objective information in a timely manner.	To obtain feedback on issues, alternatives and decisions.	To work with stakeholders to make sure that concerns and aspirations are considered and understood.	To partner with stakeholders in each aspect of the decision-making.	To place the final decision-making in the hands of stakeholders.
our role	We will keep you informed.	We will explore options by listening and acknowledging your feedback.	We will work with you to ensure your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the decision made.	We will look to you for advice and innovation and incorporate this in the decisions as much as possible.	We will ensure that the information and tools are available for you to meaningfully participate
your role	Keep in touch.	Contribute ideas and feedback.	Participate in the engagement process by sharing ideas, concerns and aspirations.	Work together to develop solutions.	To collaborate with Council to implement agreed decision.
example tools	Factsheets Digital content	Surveys Public comment Drop in sessions	Workshops Digital engagement	Participatory decision making Advisory Committee	Toolkits Fact sheets Regular updates

Source: International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)

The NSW Government's Social Justice Directions Statement identifies four key principles underpinning social justice.

These principles guide the planning and development of Council's engagement activities.

Equity

There should be fairness in the distribution of resources, particularly for those in need. The planning processes should take particular care to involve and protect the interests of people in vulnerable circumstances. The equity implications of proposed activities include the impact on community well-being, as well as who pays and who benefits.

Access

All people should have fair access to economic resources, services and rights essential to improving their quality of life. All residents should be able to get to and use public facilities and services, regardless of their social and economic circumstances.

Participation

All people should have the maximum opportunity to genuinely participate in decisions that affect their lives. This involves a two-way flow of views and information, generally with a focus on decision making.

Rights

Equality of rights should be established and promoted. Opportunities should be provided for positive participation to accommodate linguistic, cultural and religious diversity within the local government area.

Source: NSW Government Social Justice Directions Statement

our community :

POPULATION OF SHELLHARBOUR IN 2021

76,443

Family Structure

Couples with children
32%

Couples without children
27%

Non-English Speaking
10%

Overseas Born
16%

Median age
39

Largest age group in LGA
35 - 49

Age groups

(0 to 11)	Babies, pre-school, Primary schoolers	15.1%
(12 to 24)	Secondary schoolers, tertiary education and independence	17.5%
(25 to 59)	Young workforce	44%
	Parents and homebuilders	
	Older workers and pre-retirees	
(60 to 85+)	Empty nesters and retirees	24.5%
	Seniors	
	Elderly aged	

One parent families
14%

Lone person household
21%

90% of residents are Australian Citizens

4.7% of residents are Indigenous Australians

Qualifications

Vocational
28%

Bachelor or Higher degree
13.6%

Advanced Diploma or Diploma
10%

Need for assistance with core activities
7.1%

how we got here

Shellharbour City Council has undergone significant organisational change over the past 5 years, while the community we serve has been and will continue to grow.

Our Community

There are 72,240 residents within the Shellharbour local government area (2018 Australian Bureau of Statistics estimate), a figure that is projected to rise by approximately 20,000 over the next 20 years.

Families make up almost three-quarters of our population (50% with children and 25% couples without children), while single person households account for 20% of our people. Our people live primarily in separate houses (79%), followed by 19% in medium density dwellings.

Of the 17,433 people who work in the Shellharbour LGA, 10,336 or 59.3% also live in the area, as do the majority (59%) of Shellharbour City Council staff.

Our Council

We recently undertook an Organisational Reform program, which included improvements to structure, business improvement, and cultural change. As part of the cultural change program, we discovered our organisation's Core Values.

Our values represent who we are and how we see ourselves, shape who we are as an organisation and set expectations about what our community and customers can expect of us.

Council has also developed a Customer Service Charter, which outlines standards we use to deliver professional, reliable and consistent customer service that meets our community and customers' expectations.
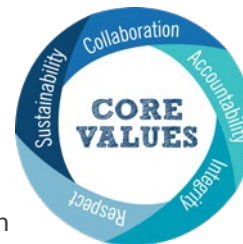
Developing this strategy

This strategy builds on the work achieved from Council's previous framework: The Corporate Communications Strategy 2016-2019.

Over the last 12 months we have opened up a dialogue with many of our key audiences so we could better understand our 4Cs: Community, Customers, Councillors and Council (staff).

Through this process we have connected with hundreds of people who have shared their thoughts, experiences and feelings about Shellharbour City Council. The feedback has been invaluable and has helped us identify communication and engagement needs, what we're doing well and what we can improve, and strategies to meet the needs of our 4Cs.

This Strategy will sit alongside the Community Engagement Toolkit to work towards meeting your priorities, through developing specific and effective communications and engagement opportunities, creating genuine opportunities to connect, and opportunities to make use of Council services, events and activities.

where we want to be :

This strategy seeks to build on Council's strong foundation of Communication and Engagement. The actions and goals outlined within will help us to deliver innovative and responsive communications to our 4C's..... Community, Customers, Council and Councillors.

The core aims, which sit at the heart of all of our communication and engagement, are as follows:

Our communication is creative, innovative and engaging. We are proactive, while maintaining responsiveness.

Our interactions are genuine and human. We listen to our communities, respect their views and respond openly and transparently.

Our staff and Councillors are informed and empowered to communicate effectively. We strive for continuous improvement.

goals :

This strategy outlines the different service offerings and approaches we will take to ensure proactive and positive information sharing across all of our audiences.

The strategy is a 5 year document, however it will be reviewed annually to ensure that the actions and goals remain relevant and contemporary in a rapidly changing environment.

These are our key goals that will guide us for the next 5 years:

goal 1 Establish a brand that is authentic, relatable and human – a story our audiences want to be part of.

goal 2 Deliver tailored communication and engagement to meet the needs of our diverse communities

goal 3 Strive for innovation and creativity

goal 4 Build robust processes and systems to support our communication and engagement activities

goal 5 Develop a culture of proactive communication

Communication is defined as : the process of exchanging thoughts, ideas, facts, emotions and opinions between two or more than two people.

At Council, we see the overarching role of communications as creating a link with the Community. The success of this is dependent upon Council implementing structured and effective approaches to genuinely engage the community, resulting in a human, open and honest relationship between Council and community.

But 'Communications' is a broad term. To help us guide specific approaches to ensure the needs of all of our 4C's (Community, Customers, Council and Councillors) are met, we have broken down the aspects of 'communications' as follows:

Let's chat
Community Engagement

Let's communicate
External Communications

Let's promote
Marketing and Public Relations

Let's connect
Digital and Online Communities

Let's create
Graphic Design

Let's inform
Media

Let's chat : Community Engagement

Purpose

Create meaningful engagement opportunities that result in an active and connected community.

Continue to strengthen relationships with the community so that engagement activities are ongoing conversations rather than isolated events.

Functions

- Provide the 4Cs with the information they need to participate in decisions about projects, initiatives and activities that Council delivers

- Address the various requirements for community consultation and engagement set out in the Local Government Act and the Community Participation Plan for Shellharbour City Council's planning function

- Facilitate conversations, provide genuine engagement opportunities, and analyse the feedback received

- Advocate for the community's views with internal decision makers

Where we are now:

We have a robust and active program of community engagement, ranging from informal drop-in sessions to regular online projects and consultation. There is an increasing level of support and active engagement with our community. The Community Engagement Policy, Community Engagement Toolkit and IAP2 Public Participation Principles underpin our engagement activities.

Where we want to be:

We will provide consistent and meaningful access to information so that community and customers have the opportunity to contribute to and/or understand the decision-making process. We will design and implement creative and innovative engagement practices that increase opportunities for all stakeholders. We will model best practice, and be flexible and proactive.

Actions for improvement	Goals	TIMEFRAME
• Review the Community Engagement Policy and Toolkit to be more reflective of the increasing role of social and digital engagement	(Goal 4)	By Dec 2020
• Build stronger relationships with hard to reach communities and develop a tailored approach to ensure transparent and open access across the community	(Goal 2)	ONGOING
• Provide a variety of methods for audiences to participate at a time, and in a way, that suits them	(Goal 2)	ONGOING
• Monitor and evaluate emerging engagement trends to ensure that our engagement is always meeting the needs of our community in and relevant ways	(Goal 3)	ONGOING

Let's communicate : External Communication

Purpose

Deliver planned and effective communications, using innovative and cost-effective channels.

Seek out opportunities to communicate all of Council's services, events and initiatives and to raise awareness with all of Council's stakeholders.

Functions

- Plan, deliver and advise on clear and consistent communication across multiple channels

- Contribute to an informed and empowered community

- Increase awareness and knowledge of Council's activities, decisions and services

- Meet legal obligations as set out in the Local Government Act

- Report regularly and honestly on Council's performance to the community

- Provide ongoing analysis and reporting on effectiveness of communications

Where we are now:

We regularly communicate the many services, events, and initiatives that Council provides. We use multiple tools to reach our community and customers, from Facebook to direct mail. Actions from Council's Corporate Communication Strategy 2016-2019 are almost complete and some of the overarching themes that drive best practice communications will be carried forward in to this new plan.

Where we want to be:

We will have a proactive, strategic approach to delivering effective, wide-reaching communications using a balance of traditional and emerging channels. We will continue to develop and strengthen relationships with our community by considering unique communications needs and preferences among different audiences.

This strategy will help us achieve the objectives set out in the Community Strategic Plan and foster a strong value proposition. Council staff will proactively and openly share news and information across the 4C's.

Actions for improvement	Goals	TIMEFRAME
• Ensure adequate communication resources are planned for, and included, in all of Council's project, event and activity planning	(Goal 4) (Goal 5)	By June 2021
• Shift internal culture to embrace alternative methods/channels of communication to meet the growing demand for information and interaction online	(Goal 5)	By Dec 2022
• Communicate transparently and honestly about the role of Council, our decisions and activities	(Goal 5)	ONGOING
• Develop a communications toolkit	(Goal 2) (Goal 4) (Goal 5)	By Dec 2020

Let's promote : Marketing and Public Relations

Purpose

Promote the strengths that form the city's character – our events and activities, as well as our heritage, built and natural environment.

Celebrate and create the stories that build a positive image of Council, our City and our Region.

Promote and maximise the opportunity of Council's business functions and units.

Functions

- Actively market the projects, initiatives and events that Council delivers
- Actively market the services of Council's associated business units
- Increase pride in the City
- Maximise participation in Council's programs and services

Where we are now:

Council's activities, events and services are regularly shared through established communication channels. We are open and honest that marketing and PR are our key areas for improvement. Council has a small communications team and resources to achieve the level of direct marketing required are scarce. As a result, marketing plans are developed on an ad hoc basis and we lack a cohesive and coordinated strategy to effectively connect our community with the many services and programs we offer.

Where we want to be:

We will have an active and strategic marketing approach to deliver innovative campaigns that go beyond sharing information. We will tell the stories that capture the strengths of the City's character, build a positive image of Council and enhance City pride. Our strengthened promotional capabilities will maximise the participation and success of Council's programs, events and services.

| Actions for improvement	Goals	TIMEFRAME
• Advocate for a specialist marketing officer position to drive all key functions and strategies related to marketing and promotion	(Goal 1) (Goal 2) (Goal 3) (Goal 4) (Goal 5)	By Aug 2020
• Develop a strong value proposition for Council and the City	(Goal 1)	ONGOING
• Strengthen our reputation and identity through consistent messaging and an engaging visual presence	(Goal 1)	By Dec 2021
• Undertake market segmentation to develop a deeper understanding of our key audiences and to ensure effective resource allocation	(Goal 2)	By Dec 2021

Let's connect : Digital and Online Communities
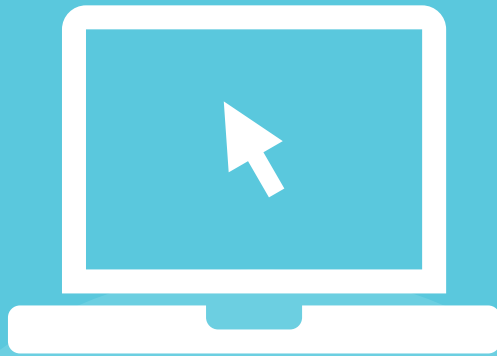
Purpose

Foster meaningful and engaging relationships with Council's online community.

Guide consistency, style and voice for all of Council's associated channels and sub-brands.

Functions

- Share information about Council's services, events, information, policies and processes

- Develop and manage Council's website, digital and social media platforms

- Respond to questions and comments from our audiences

- Foster an accessible, honest and meaningful connect between Council and our audiences

- Provide training and ongoing support to all staff and Councillors involved in social media activities

- Develop a consistent style, tone and personality for digital communications

Where we are now:

We regularly share information about Council Services, events, information, policies and procedures on social and digital media platforms, using a friendly tone and engaging, accessible language. We have a timely response rate to audience questions and are continually growing our online community. We are proactive and work hard to keep abreast of best practice and social media trends. Our online presence is a key area of strength for Council.

Where we want to be:

We will continue to refine and develop a consistent voice and flow of information across Council social and digital media platforms, as well as Council sub-brands so we can continue to build a positive image of Council and its reputation as a key source of information for the community. We will create high quality, engaging visual content for our community and customers. A budget for social media will deliver a wider range of high quality content that is accessible, engaging and maximise our online community following.

Actions for improvement	Goals	TIMEFRAME
• Develop a consistent and accessible social media brand, style, tone and language	(Goal 4)	By June 2021
• Ensure all Council content is AA rated according to WCAG2.0 guidelines	(Goal 2) (Goal 4)	ONGOING
• Review and rationalise sub-brands, work with content owners to ensure relevant and consistent information	(Goal 1) (Goal 2) (Goal 3) (Goal 4) (Goal 5)	By Dec 2020
• Review social media toolkit	(Goal 4) (Goal 5)	By Dec 2020

Let's create : Graphic Design

Purpose

Promote a positive image of Council and strengthen our brand through creative, engaging and informative designs.

Functions

- Provide graphic design services and advice to all Council areas for print and online publications

- Promote Council's services, events and initiatives through high quality graphic design

- Ensure Council's visual communications are clear, consistent and maintain a positive image of Council

- Strengthen Council's brand through consistent use of logos, colours and fonts

- Monitor and make recommendations on Council's corporate brand and associated brands

Where we are now:

The 'Shellharbour' brand was created to be used as a City wide brand by Council and its affiliate brands; Tourism Shellharbour, City Libraries, City Stadium, Shellharbour Marina and Shellharbour Airport.

We have created a strong and recognisable Council brand, with consistent visual styling used across corporate and promotional materials. Our brand is simple, modern and contemporary.

Where we want to be:

Through the development of templates, comprehensive branding guidelines and a shared use media library, we will further strengthen Council's brand and visual identity online, in publications and promotional materials. We will have strong, consistent and engaging marketing assets to ensure wide participation and awareness of Council events, programs and services.

Actions for improvement	Goals	TIMEFRAME
• Develop a Council branding guide with templates and examples	(Goal 1) (Goal 4) (Goal 5)	By Oct 2021
• Audit and catalogue images used across the organisation to ensure consistent level of quality and style	(Goal 1) (Goal 4)	By Dec 2021
• Categorise and promote a collection of high quality, approved images that can be used by Council staff, Councillors and associated business units	(Goal 1) (Goal 4) (Goal 5)	By July 2021
• Develop design guidelines for sub-brands, including how the Council logo will be integrated into materials and assets	(Goal 1) (Goal 4)	By Feb 2021

Let's inform : Media

Purpose

Deliver clear, consistent and factual information to the media that will facilitate positive and accurate coverage of Council decision and activities.

Functions

- Inform the 4C's by sharing timely and relevant news stories and updates

- Maintain strong relationships with journalists and media outlets

- Ensure Council media representatives are equipped with information and resources

- Timely and accurate response to enquiries

Where we are now:

In an increasingly digital age, we understand and accommodate our community's varying needs, balancing the need for sections of our community still reliant on traditional media channels (newspaper, radio, television) with those that would prefer to receive their news in digital form.

The use of proactive media releases ensures we can promote our events, initiatives and projects and keep our community up to date and informed.

Where we want to be:

Our messaging will be strategic and proactive, generating positive news and media opportunities and further enhancing Councils image as that of an organisation that is innovative, valued and trusted. We will be abreast of consumer habits and we will be innovative and relevant.

Our media engagement will be reflective of a modern world; expanded to include targeted distribution across diverse and alternative media and other opportunities.

Actions for improvement	Goals	🕐 TIMEFRAME
• Review, update and implement new Media Policy	(Goal 4)	🕐 By Jan 2021
• Develop Media Guide and training for newly-elected Councillors	(Goal 4) (Goal 5)	🕐 By Sept 2020
• Investigate options for Council to develop its own channels for innovative communication of media information	(Goal 2) (Goal 3)	🕐 By June 2021
• Equip media room with appropriate resources to create and manage innovative content	(Goal 1) (Goal 2) (Goal 3) (Goal 4)	🕐 By Dec 2021
• Develop crisis management media protocol	(Goal 4)	🕐 By Feb 2021

how we will measure success :

Goals		Measures
goal 1	**Establish a brand that is authentic, relatable and human – a story our audiences want to be part of**	• Increased brand awareness measured through community survey • Increased visual narratives measured through social analytics • Number of videos produced
goal 2	**Deliver tailored communication and engagement to meet the needs of our diverse communities**	• Increased participation measured through: • Community survey • Let's Chat Membership
goal 3	**Strive for innovation and creativity**	• Benchmark against best practice case studies • Number of initiatives trialled
goal 4	**Build robust processes and systems to support our communication and engagement activities**	• Number of projects that complete the Communications Template • Number of new templates developed and implemented that support communication and engagement • Development of communications toolkit
goal 5	**Develop a culture of proactive communication**	• Number of staff trained in communication and engagement • Increased awareness of communication as part of everyone's role measured through Culture Survey

Shellharbour
CITY COUNCIL

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