

2022-2026



This Communication Strategy has been prepared to support our commitment to open, trusted relationships and two-way communication between the City and our community. It sets out our approach to communicating with residents, ratepayers, businesses, visitors, community groups, partners, staff, councillors and other members of our community.



### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land upon which we stand, work and play.

We acknowledge the Aboriginal People as the First Nations

People and their connection to the land and waters, as the land and waters are a part of them; spiritually and culturally.

We acknowledge their ancestors, the Elders past and present, who have led the way for us to follow in their footsteps.



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## Mayor's Foreword



## I am pleased to introduce you to the City of Armadale's Communication Strategy 2022-2026.

Communication is about giving people the opportunity to express their views and opinions as well as providing information. Good communications leads to better services, a stronger reputation and positive relationships.

Internal and external communications affect all aspects of our day to day business: from businesses talking to City employees about planning issues; families enjoying leisure activities; Elected Members advocating on behalf of their residents; and information about City services and programs.

There are clear relationships between how well-informed people are about the services their local government provides and how satisfied they are overall.

This Strategy is key in supporting delivery of the City's vision and priorities. It provides a framework to ensure that the City delivers clear, consistent and coordinated communications, that offer good value for money.

Together, City staff, Elected Members, residents, businesses and other stakeholders, can use this Strategy to make sure we communicate clearly, consistently and through appropriate and accessible channels.

As a resident you can use the Strategy to help:

- Understand what channels of communication are available and which are most suitable and convenient for you.
- Measure how effectively the City is communicating and how it offers good value for money.

As an Elected Member you can use the Strategy to help:

- Understand and challenge how the City is doing in communicating effectively.
- Signpost residents and businesses to communication channels that you think may be useful to them. Understand priorities for improvement in communications and how the City is delivering these.

As a City employee you can use the Strategy to help:

- Understand what external channels of communication are available and which are most appropriate to engage with your customers and service users.
- Understand priorities for improving communications and your role in supporting delivery of this.

I invite you to read the Strategy, embrace our commitment and approach, and I look forward to the interactions and outcomes it will guide.

Cr Ruth Butterfield Mayor, City of Armadale



### **Our Values**



### **SAFETY**

We demonstrate personal responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of everyone around us. Everything we do relies upon the safety of our workforce and the community. We care about the safe management of the environment.



### **HONESTY**

We are honest, consistent, open and transparent in our dealings with our stakeholders and are committed to building mutual trust and respect.



### **ACCOUNTABILITY**

We set high performance expectations and hold ourselves accountable for the quality of our work and the results we achieve as individuals, as team members and as an organisation.



### RESPECT

We are sincere, fair and forthright, treating others with dignity and respecting their individual differences, feelings and contributions.



### **PROFESSIONALISM**

We show pride, enthusiasm and dedication in everything that we do. We are committed to delivering high quality service and advice.

# Our Vision: A place of natural beauty, rich in heritage and respectful of culture, with diverse landscapes and lifestyles, and a wealth of business and investment opportunities.

### Introduction

### The City of Armadale plays an important role in shaping our community's future.

Our community wants more information about what we do, why we do it and how we plan to do it so they can better measure community outcomes.

We believe that thoughtful communication will improve our service delivery and help inform and connect our community.

This Communications Strategy (Strategy) has been prepared to support our commitment to open and clear messaging from the City to the intended audience which includes, but is not limited to, residents, ratepayers, businesses, visitors, community groups, partners, staff, Councillors and other members of our community.

The Strategy delivers a vision for the City and responds to the following Outcome and Objective as listed in the Strategic Corporate Business Plan 2020 - 2030:

Outcome 4.4: Effective Community Engagement and Communications

- 4.4.2 Align the City's communications and marketing strategies and activities to facilitate the delivery of the Strategic Community Plan and Corporate Business Plan.

While it is linked to a number of organisational plans and strategies, it is closely aligned with our Customer Service Charter and Community Engagement Strategy 2018 - 2023 which sets out the City's objectives and strategies for two-way engagement with our community, stakeholders and staff.

All of our guidance documents set the framework to ensure clear communication, connection and collaboration of people and place in our community.

### **Our Communication Checklist**

- Our communication is open and clear
- Our information is timely and up-to-date
- Our approach is planned and proactive
- Our language is easy-tounderstand
- Our messages are consistent
- Our content is accessible
- Our delivery is targeted and cost effective
- Our processes are clear and followed

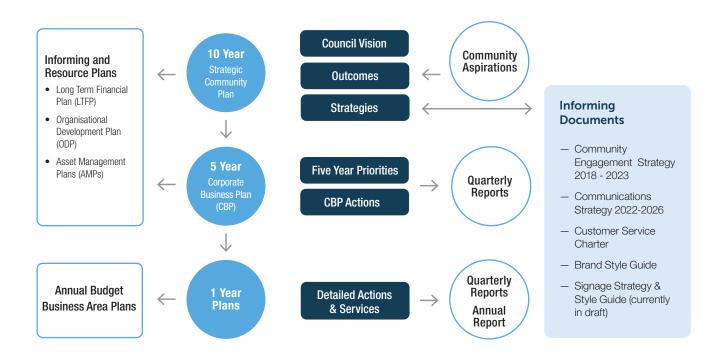
## Our Integrated Planning Framework

Integrated planning and reporting provides local governments with a framework for translating community priorities and aspirations into operational objectives, and tracking progress in delivering on these objectives.

Recognizing the importance of integrating community and organisational planning, the Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996 require local governments to adopt a ten-year Strategic Community Plan (SCP), a five-year Corporate Business Plan and supporting resource plans.

The City utilises this Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework mandated by the State Government to ensure its activities are informed by the community, focused on key priorities and are sustainable.

The diagram below illustrates the legislated and City of Armadale's Integrated Planning Framework.



## **Our Communication Aims**

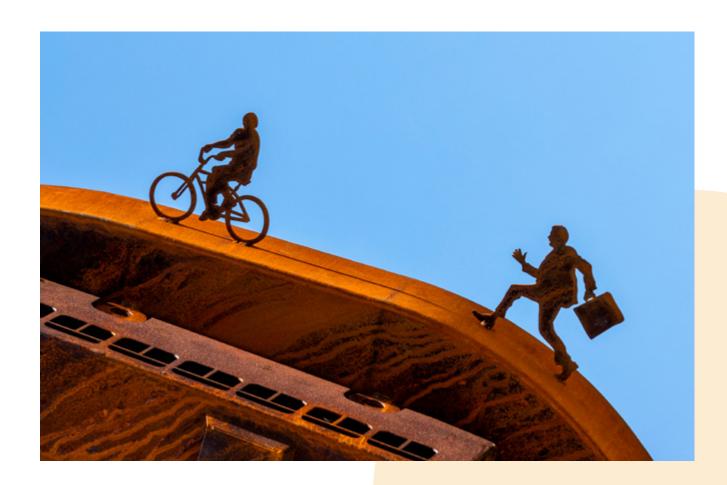
- To create continuous connections with our community that integrates City and Council activities into the everyday experience of residents, ratepayers, local businesses and stakeholders.
- To ensure our community understands our intentions, challenges and decision-making processes.
- To build trust and add value to all members of the community.

This Communication Strategy (Strategy) sets the framework to ensure positive connection and collaboration of people and place in our community.

It delivers a vision for the City rather than a roadmap and responds to the following Outcome and Objective as listed in the Strategic Corporate Business Plan 2020 - 2030:

### **Outcome 4.4: Effective Community Engagement** and Communications

- 4.4.2 Align the City's communications and marketing strategies and activities to facilitate the delivery of the Strategic Community Plan and Corporate Business Plan.



## Why Community **Matters**



### The City and Council are part of the local community. Our people:

- deliver vital programs and assistance including health, waste management, ranger and emergency services
- build and maintain local roads, footpaths, parks, sporting fields, open spaces and beautify our places and spaces.
- develop community connections and support our ageing, youth and Aboriginal communities as well as people living with disability.
- plan for a strong and connected community and the sustainable use of our land, whilst protecting our heritage and environment.
- strive for the prosperous future of our community through economic development programs and planning priorities that renew our economy, creating a vibrant and thriving community to be envied.
- support local community groups and events and create reasons for people to visit, live and invest in our place.
- encourage true community ownership. Elected Members use their links with the community to seek out and amplify voices that aren't usually heard and encourage people and groups to proactively share their ideas.
- share information. Elected Members provide a vital link in communication between the City and the community. Information flows both ways, with Councillors sharing information about current and future priorities while listening to the community about their needs, wants and concerns to create a response / approach to assist with decision-making regarding complex and important matters.

We do this for our community, because we are part of our community. Our community should know what we do, how we do it and why we do it.

### Introduction

## We believe that strong and effective communication can deliver a range of benefits, including:

- strengthening relationships internally and externally
- generating trust, support and participation
- improving community awareness of the City's programs, activities, processes, facilities and services
- enabling and strengthening community capacity
- creating a connected and collaborative community
- strengthening relationships with the business community; championing investment opportunities while driving advocacy projects and
- building the City's reputation for service delivery as a well-managed organisation

We are mindful of the complexity and diversity of our community with almost 98,000 (2018 Census) living in the City of Armadale.

It is therefore important that our communication seeks to:

- be flexible in our approach in consideration of the changing nature of the communications mix
- be mindful of how the community interacts, participates and seeks knowledge and leverage those opportunities to connect
- be agile and contextual in our delivery of information to ensure engagement with different audiences and
- build a connected and collaborative community aligned to our values which ensures our community that we are here for them.

We are committed to demonstrate our support and understanding of our community and their needs by:

- providing information to our community on what we do, how we do it and why we do it
- showing empathy and humanity in how we communicate to demonstrate our commitment to people in our place
- being present, accessible and available to build collaborative relationships, to encourage open relationships and build trust and lead mutual respect
- supporting the local media which provides an important community voice, enabling community capacity and recognising the local culture and
- being creative and innovative whilst having a continuity of voice.



## The Communication **Environment**

### The City exists in a complex, dynamic, crowded and often competitive communication environment.

We will be flexible in our approach to communication to benefit from the fluidity and dynamic character of modern communication and to respond to the diverse communication needs of the community and various stakeholders.

We value direct and participatory communication with our community, media representatives and our people.





## The Communication Principles

### **Foundational**

The Strategy is a foundational "umbrella" document which will help guide communication actions and outcomes.

### **Over-arching**

The Strategy supports the City's objectives as expressed through the Vision and its overarching strategic instruments such as the Community Strategic Plan (CSP) and Corporate Business Plan (CBP).

### **Integrated**

The Strategy applies to both internal and external communication, although it should be noted an Internal Communication Strategy is currently in development, and supports our commitment to be professional, honest, respectful, useful, timely, factual, proactive, customer focused, consistent, responsive, and to listen and be receptive to continuous improvement.

### **Builder and Driver**

By such commitment we will build rapport and relationships, we will align our communication with our core values and core business, we will drive performance and reputation, and positively contribute to all facets of Citydriven activity.

#### **Transition**

It will take time to be implemented - a process of cultural and procedural transition is to be expected and supported.

### **Direction**

By aligning our communication and organisational objectives there will be a clear direction for staff. The Strategy provides the framework of intent which is implemented through the annual Communication Business Area Plan which details how the Strategy will be delivered.

Implementation of this Strategy will deliver a range of benefits including:

- strengthening relationships, internally and externally
- generating trust, understanding, support and participation
- improving community awareness of City programs, activities, processes, facilities and services through the delivery of information
- enabling and strengthening community capacity and engagement opportunities and
- building a reputation for service delivery as a well-managed organisation.

### Correct

Honest communication comes from ensuring information is true and accurate to mitigate any misinformation confusing our communication

### Timely

Delivering information to the right people at the right time through an agile approach to communication delivery - one that is both proactive and responsive to our community.

#### Relevant

There is purpose to our communication that is relevant to each audience. We are relevant, contributory and mindful of what is topical.

#### Consistent

Appropriate and uniform in tone across all channels and audiences whilst remaining contextually appropriate across different brands, formats and subjects.

### Accessible

Recognising the need for multichannel approaches and delivery formats to ensure reach across our diverse community.

### **Collaborative**

Underpinning all communication with a reinforcement of connection, collaboration and cooperation across the organisation.

## Communication **Objectives**



A key driver of this Strategy is to positively influence the narrative around the City of Armadale by sharing key messaging, real stories and future plans for the City via the following objectives:

### Identify

To build and reinforce the City's identity as an organisation in line with our Vision and Strategic Priorities, ensuring that how we communicate is in line with these principles.

### Role

To increase community awareness and understanding of the City's role within the Local Government Area (LGA).

### Capacity

To proactively deliver accessible, useful, comprehensive and comprehensible information in ways that best meet the interests, preferences and needs of the community and which improves the capacity of the community.

### **Engagement**

To strengthen supportive and honest relationships with the community through improved community engagement, which enhances trust in the City as a well run and managed organisation. It should be noted, a separate Community Engagement Framework and Strategy exists.

### **Opportunities**

To identify opportunities for communicating with the community in the delivery of projects and activities. as well as keeping the community informed throughout the duration of projects and activities.

### **Understanding**

To improve the community's understanding of City decision making processes and challenges.

### Culture

To create a positive and valuable communication culture within all areas of the City by improving communication awareness and skills.

### **Best Practice**

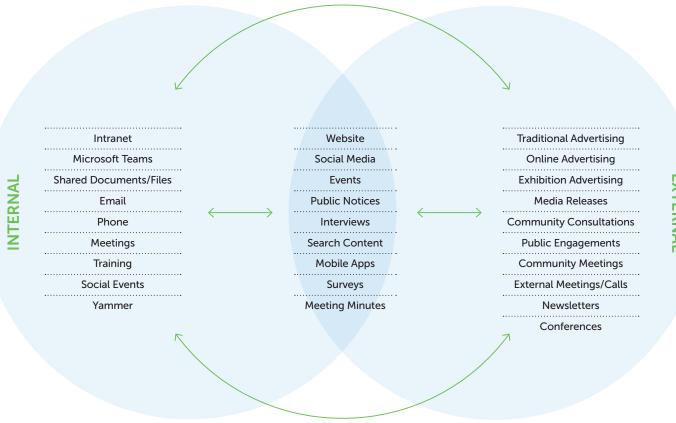
To develop and maintain best practice communication of internal and external communication, recognising that quality communication is informative, inclusive, supportive, co-operative, consistent, clear, timely, accessible, appropriate, purposeful, transparent, honest, respectful and positive.

### **Awareness**

To ensure staff have awareness of City and Council activities, services, strategic planning and decision- making processes so that they approach communication from an informed and constructive baseline.

## Communication Framework

The Communication Framework is multi-dimensional with opportunities to customise and integrate communication.



This Strategy provides the framework for all City communication and guides the use of the communication framework.

Our audience and therefore the scope of communication is multi-layered, diverse and broad.

The framework for Council's communication is multi-faceted with various types and platforms of communication which contribute to informing and engaging the community in a manner that suits collective and individual needs and preferences.

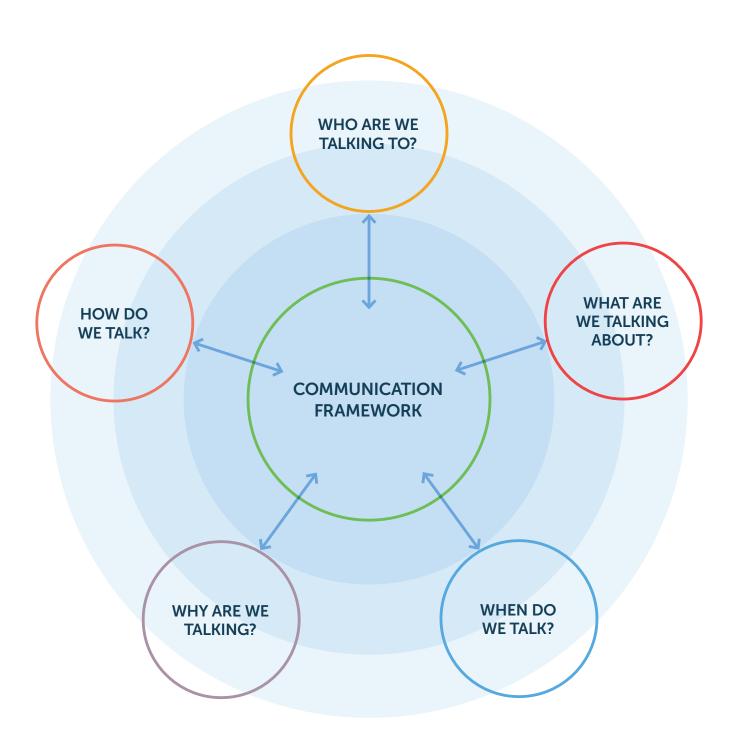
The communication framework includes multiple channels/platforms/forums which can be broadly categorised as:

- General communication which is informative and managed; such as the City's website, newsletters, promotional and informational literature, reports and surveys.
- Traditional communication such as media and advertising generated through Media Releases, Media Statements, display advertising, regular media features, special media features, radio sessions and audio files, and products such as signage, logos and displays/exhibits.
- Social media such as Facebook, which can be participatory, interactive, visual and informal.

Customer service including face-to-face, by telephone, emails/ letters, messenger posts, databases and notices.

The Strategy supports the existing communication framework and does not detract from either developing or re-imagining how we communicate. Changes to the communication framework may be developed through the annual Communication Business Area Plan.

## Communication "Ecosystem"



The Who, What, When, Why and How of our communication is a simple framework which guides us to ensure we deliver our communication according to the needs of the City and the Community.

Our audiences are varied, diverse and intrinsically linked through their relationships, their choices and their personal needs expressed in their sphere of influence.

### Who Are We Talking To?

From community to consultants to colleagues, the diversity of our audience requires being mindful of inherent complexity. All audiences are important, but not all information is relevant to all groups, all of the time or in the same format.

### 1. Community and Councillors

Our community includes residents, ratepayers, visitors, community organisations, businesses and organisations, local agencies, social groups, service users, sporting groups and ourselves. It includes local groups and committees that represent parts of our community either through interest or activity. Our community is represented by our Councillors.

### 2. Government

State and Federal representatives, other Local Government representatives, as well as stakeholders across a broad range of departments, authorities and levels of Government.

#### 3. Media

This includes all levels of media - local, regional and national.

### 4. Partners/Stakeholders

Providers of shared knowledge, resources and networks, offering collaborative and connective opportunities to assist us in delivering ideas, initiatives and programs.

### 5. Suppliers/Consultants

Goods and services providers whom assist the City to deliver according to our strategic priorities as set by our Integrated Planning Framework and guided by our community.

### 6. Colleagues

City staff and those that work at other Councils and agencies who provide support, knowledge, skills, labour and opportunities for collaboration.

### What are we talking about?

Projects, services, activities, decisionmaking, campaigns, programs, opportunities and information that benefit and engage our community.

We, as part of our community, demonstrate that we are a positive part of everyday life in our place as we strive to inform, interact and participate in community life.

### When are we talking?

We use every opportunity to talk to each other and our community. It is everevolving, ever-changing and challenging, but we do it every day being mindful of having the right conversations at the right time, to the people to whom it is most relevant.

### Why are we talking?

We communicate to inform, collaborate, learn and build relationships. Our communication can enrich the lives of our community, fostering prosperity and creating opportunity.

- To build trust with our community
- Our content reinforces the benefits to the community of what we do
- Our information provides understanding and alignment with our decision-making
- We use our values to ensure our community know what is happening
- We share with our community, so they feel supported, recognised and important
- To build mutual respect and boost pride in our City.

### How do we talk?

As one voice, as part of the community and with an organised and professionally executed program of activity, processes, auidelines and policies to ensure that we are effective communicators.

- Deliver our communication in alignment with our principles and objectives
- Express to our community what we provide, even those services that they cannot see
- Support our community by being a part of the community in work, life and play
- Build our community's knowledge and demystify our operations
- Provide critical information to ensure social prosperity and wellbeing
- Ask our community their views, listen to their needs and respond to their concerns.

## Ten strategies to improvement





To guide the consistent delivery of our messages as a foundation for building community awareness and exposure to the Council as an organisation, and to City services, facilities, activities and projects; and to explore opportunities to deliver these messages throughout our customer interactions and engagement with the community.

#### Outcome

We will build our authentic organisational persona and develop our community's positive perception of Council through demonstrating what we do, how we do it and why we do it. Our communication will explain, account for, support, specify, substantiate, reinforce and enhance our achievements, our challenges, our decisions and our Vision, thereby building our positive reputation and reflecting our values and integrity as an organisation.



### 2. Using Media Strategically

- To continue to develop strong relationships with traditional media to enhance opportunities, as well as communicating through the use of new technologies to help inform our community and aid their understanding of our achievements and challenges.
- To guide the use of broadcast and published information, and external media generally, by taking into account where and how our audiences best receive information.

### Outcome

We will demonstrate that we understand and support that local media furnishes our community with an important voice and opportunity, as well as supporting our local culture, which both the City and the community can use for a mutual advantage and for building capacity. By including local media in our communication mix we acknowledge the preferences of our community for receiving information in various forms and our understanding of any local diversity requirements including but not limited to technological, demographic, language and cultural needs.



### 3. Best Practice Managed Communications

- To support the centralised management and oversight of the procedures, processes and practices of the delivery of communication in recognition of the responsibilities of the City's communications.
- To develop and maintain the City's own managed communication channels/platforms/ forums in order to have a professional capacity for an independent profile and voice in the community.
- To create our own content and narrative, share our stories and define our own messages, linking our communication to our marketing and branding strategies and the building of our organisational character and reputation.
- To ensure information and content is useful, interesting, factual, timely, respectful and comprehensible by minimising misinformation, exaggeration, jargon, conspicuous marketing and agenda-driving and empty messaging.

### Outcome

We will view communication as a strategic tool and as part of our management toolbox, to be used professionally. We will lift communication to an over-arching whole of organisation role. We will use communication to relate our own "story" in a positive and respectful manner.

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- To develop information and messaging which better informs the community of decision- making and planning processes. This includes identifying and actioning positive media opportunities stemming from Council meetings.
- To raise awareness of how the City handles issues management so that our communication, including during emergencies and crises, is centralised, strategic, co-ordinated and resourced.
- To ensure Council communicates regular up-dates to the community on specific projects and activities so that Council visibly engages with the community in respect of such projects and activities.
- To promote City news and activities through the City's service centres and facilities and to nurture opportunities at such points of contact for connecting with the community.

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### Outcome

By furnishing specifics and demonstrating the sustainability of decisions, financial and otherwise, we will assist our issues management and public relations, and demonstrate how we are achieving our "Strategic Priorities". We will seek opportunities to "touch base" authentically with our community at the interfaces between community and Council, which broadens the opportunities for communicating important facts and which enhances the building of a positive reputation.



### 5. Stretching the **Opportunities**

- To deliver a strong social media presence for conversing with our community in a dynamic, participatory and less formal manner.
- To guide the continuous development of the City's website with the enduser as the primary focus The City will investigate how we can make it easier to do business online and how the website can become a hub for community information.

### Outcome

We will use communication in a more participatory, inclusive and multi-faceted manner which maximises opportunities to share and to engage with the community. By using information across several platforms, we stretch the reach and utility of our communication and improve receptivity.



### 6. Enabling Improvements

 To ensure that communication needs are adequately factored into the City's budgeting through the allocation of funds for advertising, printing and publishing, broadcasting, production of communication products, maintaining and re-developing internet-based platforms, updating of equipment and software, communication training and the employment of skilled communication personnel.

### Outcome

By adequately factoring communication needs into the Budget we will progress our communication from the "talk" to the "walk". We will consider and offset the cost of improvements with the cost of risk factors such as issues management risks, reputational risks and opportunity cost risks.

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## Ten strategies to improvement Continued





- To include communication in the everyday functioning of the workplace; this includes encouraging employee engagement, listening to concerns and removing perception barriers; and to include an "around the water cooler" approach to our communication toolkit for internal communication in order to assist taking the pulse of the organisation.
- To identify and implement any staff education and guidance on the use of communication including identifying any communication skills deficits and the implementation of any staff training on communication skills, as well as identifying staff capabilities and experience in communication and maximising the use of such capabilities.
- To improve communication opportunities, linkages and channels between the organisation's executive, managers and the workforce which foster honest, supportive, non-judgemental, inclusive and harmonious internal communication.

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#### Outcome

The way we communicate internally is critical to a happier work environment. We will benefit from staff commitment and loyalty as well as staff retention. By improving our communication skill set organisationally we enable staff to use communication for everyone's benefit.



### 8. The Empowerment of Communication

- To give all Business Units an equal and balanced opportunity to use and benefit from internal and external communication.
- To increase staff knowledge of the organisation's core services, projects, activities, decision making and planning processes through the intranet, the staff newsletter and the distribution of information arising from Council and staff meetings.

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### Outcome

We will make our staff our organisation's communicators. We will enhance a connectivity throughout the organisation and our internal communication will improve our external communication.



### 9. Integrating Responsibilities

- To drive a proactive communication culture across the workplace, by putting processes in place to assist staff identify when there is a need to communicate in their operational activities. This will include building communication considerations into project management frameworks and other management strategies to support communicating with the community at a range of milestones in project activities and implementing communication checkpoints with managers and across Business Units
- To increase the value of communication by sharing information across the organisation in a timely manner.

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### Outcome

By making communication everyone's business, operational communication is improved throughout the organisation and in particular the accuracy, thoroughness, breadth, and inclusivity of information dissemination and the reduction of instances of double-handling and miscommunication.



## 10. Resourcing and Accountability for Progress

- To deliver consistent assessment of communication activities and reporting on communication outputs and impacts. Regular analysis will be used to improve practices and constantly refine this approach. Targets will be set to allow for regular reporting of communication activities.
- Ensure the Communication team is adequately resourced to ensure the following skills/services are maintained publishing and broadcasting, product development, internal communication, media liaison and media events, content creation including journalism and editing, issues management, surveys, photography, video and drone footage, posters, presentations, display signage and advertising.

### Outcome

We will resource communication to achieve outcomes and enable strategic adaptations to be implemented. We will resource the annual Communication Business Area Plan which actions this Strategy towards identified outcomes. The resourcing of communication will ensure targets and outcomes as specified in Communication Business Area Plan are delivered.

Having a clear and consistent Communication Strategy that shapes our internal and external communications will help consolidate our reputation and reinforce our commitment to service and assist us to deliver on our priorities.

The annual Communication Business Area Plan will guide the actions we will take to implement this Strategy and achieve our shared objectives and continue to inform and engage with our community in ways that align with our Values.



## Actioning Key Strategies



We will plan and implement a range of strategies to ensure that we have the basics in place alongside a culture of communications that delivers our principles and objectives.

### 1. Communication is Everyone's Business

This Strategy makes communication everyone's business across the organisation. It will ensure the culture shifts from communication as a secondary activity to communication as an integral part of every task, every project and every opportunity to deliver our principles within and around the communication ecosystem. Empowerment will be the key to this transformative objective.

### 2. Digital Asset Development

The Strategy is supported by ongoing digital asset development including the planned redevelopment of the City's website with customer experience central to the organisation of content. The website should encourage interaction and engagement to deliver our aims, principles and objectives whilst being agile and ensuring our customers find it easy to do business. This will involve mapping customer's journeys to ensure all Council information, services and initiatives are accessible and easy to find.

### 3. Corporate Branding and Style Guide

To support the Strategy, corporate branding guidelines and style guidelines will be regularly reviewed to ensure they meet the City's communication objectives with a focus on consistent messaging. A range of designed assets and templates will be created to be used by Business Units in communication asset development.

### 4. Evaluation of Strategic Approach

A process will be developed to measure and evaluate the success of the strategic approach with agreed measurement criteria and investment into the tools required to continually monitor, optimise and inform continual improvement.

## **Evaluation** and Review



**Validity** 

This Strategy will undergo a desktop review every two (2) and a major review every four (4) years to ensure it continues to reflect the principles and objectives of the City and delivers on the communication needs of the community.

It is appropriate that the Strategy is reviewed at least every two years to respond to:

- any changes or shifts in the City's priorities or integrated planning objectives
- changes in communication delivery
- changes in the media landscape and
- changes within the community.
- Referencing

Any review of policies related or linked to internal or external communications will be referenced to this Strategy.

### **Delivery**

The Strategy will be supported by actions and associated timeframes to be expressed in the annual Communication Business Area Plan and, which allows for communication goals to be adjusted to include new ideas, technologies and opportunities for development and delivery of communication internally and externally. **Monitoring** 

The implementation of this Strategy will be monitored and reported to the Chief Executive Officer on an annual basis through the generation of an Annual Media and Communication Report.

This Strategy will also form the basis for reporting to the City's Executive Management team (ELT) and to Council as requested.

### Surveys

The Strategy will also be monitored in line with the City's bi-annual community satisfaction survey and improved index score results of the performance measure of informing our community. Specific market research may also be undertaken as part of reviewing and developing various future elements of this Strategy.

The Strategy will also be monitored in line with the City's staff satisfaction surveys to measure improvements in staff and workplace relationships and the role of communication in satisfactory outcomes.

We will ensure that measurement is defined with a 'bottom-up' approach. This will ensure that all reporting requirements are met, and measures of success are aligned to the Strategy and the annual Communication Business Area Plan.

