

Waikato District Council

Te Kaunihera aa Takiwaa o Waikato

Engagement hui

28 November 2023

A learning and contributing opportunity for elected members and staff at Waikato District Council

Covers....

1. understanding “participatory democracy” (at the heart of everything you do)
2. communication/engagement/consultation (the differences between each)
3. the communication survey results (an early peek at trends coming through)
4. overview of *Our Communication Strategy*

Participatory v representative democracy



“a local authority should make itself aware of, and should have regard to, the views of all its communities”

- *Representative democracy = **you represent certain viewpoints or concerns** and these viewpoints or concerns generally inform your decision-making (before LGA 2002)*
- *Participatory democracy = **you explicitly seek, enable, listen to and consider the widest range of views and evidence** before coming to a decision (since LGA 2002)*

Barriers to hearing from our communities

Opportunities for hearing from our communities

Information/communication/engagement/consultation

[the infographic – to come]

Engagement

Engagement is listening to the community with the intent of using that feedback and input to inform a decision **ie the people you are engaging with have choices and influence over an outcome before a decision has been made.**

Engagement **is a conversation** that...

- is informal and non-statutory
- is active and evolving
- is not time nor rule bound
- requires *relationships*
- requires 'will' to do it properly
- has a listen-respond-adapt-listen-respond approach
- benefits the silent majority

An **input** to decision-making

Consultation

Consultation is what you do once a decision has already been made and there is a statutory requirement to 'test' that decision. Consultation **is not a conversation** – it is...

- a formal statutory process
- passive and prescriptive
- time-bound and static
- a 'transaction'
- usually a numbers game
- a receive-record-respond approach
- benefits the squeaky wheels

An **output** of decision-making

Communication Survey results – early preview

[will be reported on the day]

Our Communication Strategy [draft]

Process

- Our Plan
- resident surveys
- interviews with elected members
- interviews with staff
- review of current practice/observations across the organisation/current measures and metrics
- assessment of external drivers (growth district, future direction, key projects)

Information from the 2023 Resident Survey

Trust: 47% (2021) – reduced to 37% (2023)

“Residents believe that the council needs to show more transparency in decision making and consider more consultation with the ratepayers.”

Percentage of people who are confident the Council is going in the right direction – 51% (2021) – reduced to 40% (2023).

“I have a good understanding of the work activities the Waikato District Council is undertaking or planning to undertake in my community” – a reasonable 62%.

“I know how to provide feedback to Council on issues that are relevant to me” 48% (2021) – reduced to 36% (2023)

“Percentage of customers satisfied with the ease of access and clarity of information regarding key community issues.” Has a target of 50% and is sitting at 37%.

There is a growing frustration around queries not being answered and a lack of follow-up. More residents state that it was harder to conduct business with the Council.

Latest result shows a decline from 69% (2021) to 50% (2023) overall satisfaction.

Key issues to be addressed.

1. Connecting the community and the Council more meaningfully
2. Creating a sustainable positive profile for the Council and the mahi that it delivers
3. Being more timely and flexible in Council’s responsiveness (whether that is customer service or information/communication deliverables)
4. Establishing (or joining up) the right Council systems and processes.

Question: what would success look like for you?

Liveable, Thriving and Connected Communities
He noohanga aahuru, He iwi whai ora, He hapori tuuhono tahi

Our Communication Strategy

Goal

We are visible, trusted and committed to engaging with our communities

“People are at the heart of all the decisions we make” Mayor
he tangata, he tangata, he tangata

Ambitions:

- ✓ enhancing the visibility of who we are, what we do
- ✓ creating pathways for the right conversations
- ✓ developing organisational capability.

10 points....

1. Get the infrastructure right (systems and processes)
2. Be more visible
3. Support/enable the ‘free’ people channels
4. Prioritise your stories, tell them better
5. Be relevant and targeted
6. Prioritise authentic Maaori engagement and the rest will follow
7. Use collaborative platforms
8. Be joined-up
9. Spread the load
10. Be more insightful and measure the right things

Notes
