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Nelson City Council

Independent assessment report | October 2017*

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 **Nelson City Council**
te kaunihera o whakatū



A measure
for better
community value.

*Period of Assessment February 2017

Assessment Summary

AT A GLANCE



Nelson is the furthest north city on the South Island and has been a city since 1858. Nelson and the wider region is well known for its stunning natural landscapes, richly diverse communities, arts and artisans, clever business and being highly connected.



LARGE METRO

SMALL METRO AND LARGE PROVINCIAL



SMALL PROVINCIAL AND RURAL

REGIONAL

The current situation

Nelson City Council is a unitary authority, meaning it is a city council that also performs the functions of a regional council, with responsibility for land use and resource management issues.

Nelson is a small city of about 50,000 with a median income of \$42,000. The region is attractive to live in and the population, while growing slightly, is ageing. Unemployment is 5.9 per cent. Less than 10 per cent of the community identifies as Māori, compared with 14.9 per cent for all of New Zealand. While its ethnicity is largely European, Nelson is one of New Zealand's six refugee resettlement areas, and has small but growing communities of new settlers. Nelson is becoming more culturally diverse, with data showing that Nelson has the third largest percentage of migrants per capita in New Zealand, with more than one in five people born overseas¹.

A busy airport that now sees one million travellers per year and a shipping port from which 80 per cent of wine exports leave the South Island support many commercial industries in the wider region. As with other parts of New Zealand the area is exposed to a range of natural hazards including heavy rainfall, earthquakes, tsunami and rural fires. There has recently been increased tourism and heavy-traffic pressure on the Nelson area, which may be attributed to the November 2016 Kaikoura earthquake.

Period of assessment

The assessment interviews were conducted on 27 and 28 February 2017.



\$42,000
GROSS DOMESTIC
PRODUCT PER CAPITA¹

SERVES
48,441

PEOPLE², A MIX OF
89.3% EUROPEAN/PAKEHA
9.4% MĀORI



POPULATION TREND
INCREASE

MAKES UP
0.148%
OF NEW ZEALAND'S TOTAL LAND AREA
REPRESENTING **NELSON CITY**, FROM
HIRA THROUGH TO STOKE, AN AREA
OF:
423 km²

RESPONSIBLE FOR
263km
ROADS AND

813km²

WATER



Key learnings

The Council has worked hard with neighbouring councils to develop joint activities and is likely to move from a co-located to a multi-council integrated planning system for the top of the South Island. Council is working on integrated planning on a range of activities including landfill, National Policy Statement on the Urban Development Capacity, biosecurity, transport, freshwater as well as working with iwi Chairs and Mayors.

The Council understands the benefits of identifying environmental issues and being one of the key stakeholders that implements operational changes to meet regulatory requirements. On the other hand, the Council also recognises that activity will not be implemented until the relevant resource consents are in place.

For this council, information systems have become an inhibitor rather than an enabler due to the age of the systems. However, the assessors saw some opportunities to streamline administrative activities without the need to change systems substantially.

¹ MBIE 2016

² Stats NZ Census 2013

³ DIA 2013

⁴ Ministry of Transport 2013/14

Assessment Summary

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OVERVIEW

The Council is largely responsive to community needs and is performing competently in most assessment areas. There are major service needs for the city, and the Council has a low appetite for risk. With councillor commitment, a sound financial setting, requisite operating expertise, a continuous improvement ethos and community input, the Council is well placed to further increase its effectiveness.

RATING



Findings

The Council recognises the need to co-operate and share services with neighbouring councils. The considerable operational improvements underway should be extended through Council activities with governance oversight. The Council has an experienced group of infrastructure managers, and though there are small areas for improvement, overall performance is good. Key communication is defined and priorities have been established. The Council's relationship with Māori/Iwi could be improved to recognise the settlement contribution by Iwi, and to recognise how Iwi can contribute to economic development.



THE COUNCIL WORKS HARD TO PROVIDE ALL THE AMENITIES OF A LARGE METROPOLITAN AREA TO THE POPULATION OF A SMALL CITY, INCLUDING EXTENSIVE COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND A MAJOR EVENTS PROGRAMME.



THE COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL POSITION IS EXCELLENT. THE COUNCIL'S BALANCE SHEET IS IN A COMFORTABLE FINANCIAL POSITION AND IS MANAGED PASSIVELY RATHER THAN ACTIVELY.



THE COUNCIL'S VISION COULD BE STRENGTHENED TO MORE EXPLICITLY DESCRIBE FUTURE GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND ASPIRATIONS. COUNCIL GOVERNANCE WOULD BENEFIT FROM MORE EXPLICIT EXPECTATIONS OF ITS PERFORMANCE AND THAT OF ITS STAFF.



Governance, leadership and strategy	Financial decision-making and transparency	Service delivery and asset management	Communicating and engaging with the public and business
Variable	Variable	Competent	Competent

STRENGTHS

The Council is in a very strong financial position.

The Council has demonstrated a good understanding of the risk to the city of climate change and potential flooding events.

The Council works well with neighbouring councils on joint activities.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The ability of councillors to govern could be strengthened with further training in risk management, audit and finance, and training and experience in managing utilities such as the three Waters.

The Council should develop a coherent vision making explicit the values of the Council, its strategic challenges and its long-term direction.

The Councils should address staff concerns around morale and working conditions, particularly office accommodation.

Commonly used terms

Term	Definition
Asset and Activity Management Plan	A tactical plan for managing a council's infrastructure and other assets to deliver an agreed standard of service.
Infrastructure	Local and regional roads, pathways and cycleways, drinking water, wastewater and stormwater assets, sports and recreation facilities (parks, sportsgrounds, green spaces etc), community and tourism facilities (playgrounds, public toilets, libraries, museums, galleries and public art etc), town centres, and other facilities.
Local Government Act 2002	The legislative act that provides a framework and powers for councils to decide which activities they undertake and the manner in which they will undertake them.
Long Term Plan	The document required under the Local Government Act that sets out a council's priorities in the medium to long-term.

Leading locally

Governance, leadership and strategy

The Council works hard to address the potential conflicts of a unitary council in regulating and being regulated on environmental issues. Council decision making processes could be improved, particularly in the area of risk management.

Priority grading

Variable

< There is a general view, by stakeholders as well as by Council itself, that the current Council is more unified and cohesive than its predecessor. The Council generally sees its regulatory and operational roles as being of benefit to the city. >

The Council undertakes the functions of a territorial authority as well as those of a regional council. It also recognises the need to co-operate and share services with its neighbouring unitary authorities, the Tasman District Council and the Marlborough District Council.

The Council's mission "Making Nelson an even better place" is embedded within the organisation. However, it is not measured in internal surveys or in the Council's external residents' survey. The Council recognises that various strategic reports will need to be brought together for community consultation through the Long Term Plan 2018-28.

The Council has inconsistent views in assessing and managing its risk, and could consider expanding its participation in governance and self-assessment activities.

Since the assessment was completed, the Chief Executive has resigned and another is currently being appointed. References in this report to the Chief Executive are either generic or specifically referenced to the previous Chief Executive.

As a unitary authority, the Council has established practices to ensure independence of its governance activities from its regulatory and operational functions, thus avoiding conflicts of interest by being both the regulator and regulated. For instance, the Council appoints independent experts to decide its resource consent applications. The Chief Executive leads on operational issues undertaken by territorial authorities.

Setting the direction for the community

The Council recognises the high expectations of its community and actively works to provide affordable services. The Council reaches across communities and boundaries to co-operate and share services with Tasman and Marlborough District Councils.

Twin themes of service affordability and regional co-operation are well established within the Council, and will influence the Long Term Plan 2018-28. The Council sees the need for clarity of vision, balancing the needs of Nelson city and the region. There are several vision documents (eg *Nelson 2060*), but there is a project to establish a new "regional identity" for the Nelson Regional Development Agency. The various "visions" need to be brought together to provide a coherent direction for the new Long Term Plan. There is no well-known vision for the city, and the vision expressed in the Long Term Plan 2015-25 is not familiar to staff.

Creating confident councillors

A third of the Council were newly elected to the Council in the October 2016 local body elections. Overall, the new councillors reported that the pre-election information they were given about their expected time commitments was "unrealistic". However, they thought the induction material was adequate. New councillors held mixed views on governance training, with some considering the separation of governance and operations was not well explained.

There is a training budget for councillors, and five have undertaken external governance courses. Several councillors expressed concern over spending ratepayer money on training. There was little support by councillors for self-assessment, with some councillors indicating that their knowledge and skills were

evaluated by voters at election time. However, the Mayor supports councillor self-assessment and governance training.

Effective working relationships

Most stakeholders reported a constructive relationship with the Council, the Mayor and the Chief Executive. Second and third-tier managers were generally positive about the Council leadership, direction and operations.

An internal survey found a strong shared vision among staff, with 70 per cent proud of the Council. However, only 52 per cent of staff would recommend the Council as a good place to work, and confidence that the survey would influence management decisions was low. The Council is addressing the survey's findings by improving staff connections and wellness (including improving the physical workplace). The workplace came in for particular criticism in staff discussions. Managers said silos could be broken down by bringing functions together to meet stakeholder needs in addressing regulatory issues. However, it is important that Council maintains some regulatory separation.

The mid-tier management team meets regularly and has a generally positive view of the executive.

Health and safety requirements are generally complied with, although the internal survey does not record how well a culture of health and safety is embedded in the workplace.

Strengthening risk management

At the time of the assessment, four months into the new Council's term, the Audit, Risk and Finance Committee had not formally met (the Committee had its first meeting for the triennium on 18 May 2017). Consequently, the Sub-Committee terms of reference, its upgraded status as a full committee and its independent membership were unconfirmed at the time of the assessment. Also, the role and remuneration of the independent members was being debated by councillors. The Council could improve this position by resolving the noted issues and thereby improving its governance, awareness and transparency of risk.

The Council's understanding of risk is developing, and its risk approach is mixed. For instance, issues of systems and network resilience are not fully articulated. Further, not all councillors are involved in the risk approach and many have a different perception of risk.

Strengths

The Mayor is open and accessible, and provides a recognisable public persona.

Relations between the Council elected members and staff are generally supportive and cohesive.

Council relationships with stakeholders are good. They provide a strong foundation for the Council's interactions and consultation.

The Council's vision and outcomes are largely embedded in the organisation.

The Council has committee structures that include councillors and staff in activity areas to ensure transparent communication and outcomes.

Areas for improvement

The Long Term Plan 2018-28 could include a refreshed and coherent vision that unites all documents and reflects the new (yet to be established) identity for the region.

Newly elected councillors would benefit from more information ahead of the election, to better prepare them for serving on the Council.

Councillors would benefit from self-assessments to identify knowledge and skills gaps.

The Council would benefit from councillors better understanding governance and probity matters, especially in relation to the Audit, Risk and Finance Sub-Committee.

Councillors could benefit from a stronger understanding of risk, and a collective view of the risks facing the Council as a whole.

The Council would benefit from building a stronger workplace culture, for example, by improving linkages between its different areas and improving workplace conditions.

The Council could place more emphasis on measuring its effectiveness.

Investing money well

Financial decision-making and transparency

The Council is in good financial health, although it may not be realising the full benefits of this position.

Financial systems are workable, but take considerable management effort and may restrict efficiencies in the future.

Priority grading

Variable

< The Council has an excellent balance sheet, a strong credit rating and no signs of rating change. It makes use of a standard general-ledger package and has implemented a module that has much improved its budgeting, although it acknowledges a better system could be used. >

Improvements in project management are being worked on and there is transparency in underspending on capital investments, with a focus on decreasing the rate of underspending from 20 to 15 per cent. The Council would benefit from a more robust business case discipline that is consistently applied to new projects. Most critically, the current business case process falters when considering issues of competing interests. An example of a competing interest would be where a shopkeeper's views on parking clash with a desire for more cycling access.

Planning and evaluating financial goals

The Council has some but not all elements of a full financial strategy. It has a very good long-term view of its assets and how they will age, with a 30-year forecast horizon and substantial replacements within that forecast. However, the Council's budget priorities are not clear. For example, some staff and councillors appear to believe that it is acceptable to increase rates to beyond the affordable level for ratepayers on a fixed income such as a

pension. This view reflects the considerable pressure to offer community services including a golf course, a marina and stadium infrastructure capable of servicing a much larger city.

The Council has a large balance sheet, with around \$1.3 billion of assets, which it manages passively and without full reference to the value of the balance sheet and how that value might be released or used.

Assessing the financial data

There has been considerable bespoke work to customise the Council's financial systems in past years. Consequently, the systems are outdated and do not function to the level the finance team needs. For example, asset registers could be integrated with the general ledger.

There is a substantial underspend on capital investment within a given financial year. The Council recognises this, and has increased the spending target from 80 to 85 per cent.

The Council clearly sets out what its performance measures are and where they have been breached in its annual reporting. However, business units and the finance team could improve their ability to describe the variances between the Long Term Plan and actual performance reporting. For example, notes could be included to show why spending has increased or decreased. Further, business group managers and finance staff should be able to explain variances. Whatever method or metrics are used, a clear and accurate financial position should be referenced for public understanding and decision-making.

There is no set of performance indicators for management to use to indicate, among other issues, network resilience. These indicators will be introduced later this year.

The financial systems are legacy based and there is little integration of systems used by the business units. For instance, asset registers do not link optimally with the general ledger. The existing systems were purpose built, but are now reaching the point where upgrades are necessary.

Addressing risk

At the time of the assessment the Audit Risk and Finance Committee was not meeting, as councillors debated whether or

not the two independent members of the Committee should be compensated. Until October 2016, the Committee met once every six weeks. Risk awareness is being developed at the business-group level upwards, and all business units have risk registers with different ways of characterising risk. Councillors do not see a full risk register, but instead receive regular quarterly reporting on the top risks by operating group and discuss the top 10 risks.

When staff and councillors were asked what the Council's top 10 risks were, many had very different answers. Council staff were open about the Council having a less-than-complete understanding of risk concepts, but there was a general feeling that a natural disaster would be high on the list.

The Council's credit rating has been upgraded by Standard and Poors from AA- to AA. The credit rating report notes the majority of the Council's spending is discretionary and it has shares in the shipping port and the airport and a number of council controlled organisations which are unlikely to be sold off. It notes that rate collection is very good, with a low-rate of arrears.

Being clear and transparent

The Council's rating policy is clear that rates are based on land value, the Uniform Annual General Charge and that targeted rates are fixed charges. Water is metered. However, the strategy behind the Council's use of its rates is not so clear.

There is less transparency over future infrastructure costs than is desirable, and there is a great deal of expense in retaining some of the Council's amenities. Staff and councillors may benefit from identifying what amenities have public or private benefit, and what could sustain a service or user charge. Less easy to identify is how much is paid by ratepayers to sustain the high level of service provided by community activities such as arts festivals. In the future, with more of the community on a fixed income, this may become a more high profile issue.

Mixed application of business case disciplines.

The Council has modelled its business case approach on the NZ Transport Agency (NZTA), Better Business Cases and Prince 2, and tailored them to its own environment.

A cycleway business case was reviewed. It was found that an issue of car parking was focussed on other issues rather than the specific problem to be addressed - the provision of facilities for cycleways. Such analysis shows the Council understands general community concerns and reflects them in their business cases, but in the manner of making trade-offs between competing interests rather than being able to draw conclusions about overall societal perspective.

Strengths

The Council has a strong balance sheet and a very good long-term financial view of its assets.

The Council clearly outlines what its performance measures are and there is visibility where the measures are met.

Areas for improvement

The Council would benefit from a more robust business case discipline that is consistently applied to new projects.

Full risk awareness at the business group level should be improved and councillors and management should have access to the full risk register.

Councillors need to engage actively in risk management discussions and come to a consensus on major risks facing the Council.

The Council would benefit from integration of systems, such as integration of general ledgers and asset management systems, which it recognises may take a systems refresh.

The Audit, Risk and Finance Committee needs to be reinstated (and subsequently has been).

Delivering what's important

Service delivery and asset management

The Council has an experienced infrastructure team which manages its infrastructure well. The Council has been able to attract good resource management expertise, albeit the business group is small and dependent on its manager.

Priority grading

Competent

< The Council has a sound and experienced group of infrastructure managers. There are areas where improvements are needed, but those are marginal improvements on an overall good performance. >

In the area of community services and facilities, the Council's level of service is very high and this appears to be the community's expectation. Resource management activities correspond directly with the values of the community, even though there is planned discharge of wastewater into the sea after heavy rainfall. The full implications of building on a river plain are evident to the Council, but are not likely to be fully evident to residents.

Planning and evaluating service goals

The Council's asset and activity management plans integrate with the Long Term Plan. There is a 30-year forward outlook, which has been in place for a decade and, as such, systems and cycles are clearly outlined (eg asset replacement cycles for water reticulation). However, each of the business units within the Council makes decisions without referring to the Council's strategy (as expressed in the Long Term Plan). Furthermore, it is clear that the vision outlined in *Nelson 2060* is not "owned" by councillors and it is at too high a level to be useful in prioritisation.

The difficulty of transitioning vision to planning is reflected in the Council's environmental management. For example, the Council is attempting to get rid of its Douglas fir forests and to rehabilitate a major waterway. However, it has other environmental issues that still need to be addressed, such as its wastewater treatment

plant which discharges sewage into the sea whenever there is a storm, and there are other issues such as manholes and pump stations with capacity issues. While the wastewater discharge is consented, the Council may need to prioritise funds and find a more environmentally sound way to address the problem. The cost of achieving no discharge is considerable and will require consultation with the public.

Assessing capability and capacity

The Council has robust environmental reporting and is able to detect when air is polluted and where water is swimmable. The information is provided by a monitoring service, some of which is shared with Tasman District Council. The community is able to access monitoring information through the national Land Air Water Aotearoa (LAWA) website.

System processes are time consuming and need administrative streamlining. Some of this work is underway, with a "customer journey" analysis for large users of building consents and resource consents areas. An e-strategy is emerging. Mobility for staff is another improvement that is being worked on so that Council officers can take photos, log faults and record GIS codes, and record activity on site. The Council has access to reference materials on operating procedures, which is an excellent innovation.

Drinking water is tested daily and there is full metering. The reticulation system is ageing and is being replaced over time, with a large expenditure appearing in the middle of the 30-year forecast.

The situation with wastewater is complex. The Council operates a wastewater plant that allows discharge into the sea, but with strict limits under consents. The Council is considering changing the Annual Report wording in the Long Term Plan 2018-28 (from "accidental" discharge to "exceptional" discharge) to reflect the likelihood of the discharge happening with heavy rainfall. Māori/Iwi have been informed of this.

Stormwater management is in place. Flood management is a significant issue and the Council has taken a risk-based approach to this. The Council says it actively informs the community of the need to be resilient and to be able to operate independently for

three days. It is unclear if these risk-based choices and implications are well-known in the community.

The Council participates in the NZTA “Top of the South” initiative, which plans transport across the Nelson City Council, Tasman District Council and Marlborough District Council areas. Planning is integrated, although there are opportunities to improve integration and realise efficiencies (eg by having a single approach to contracting road maintenance in the same geographical area). The Nelson “Southern Link” investigation is being run by NZTA. The community interest is high (and vocal), but satisfaction is low.

There are extensive community services and amenities. However, there is limited analysis of the value of these activities.

The Council is working with the Tasman District Council to jointly buy an electronic system that will assist with filing and management of building consents. Once this system is in operation, there may be closer co-operation between the two councils including shared inspections.

The Council takes its responsibilities for resource consent and land management seriously. It is particularly conscious of environmental hazards.

Strengths

The Council co-operates extensively with Tasman District Council on shared activities such as air and water monitoring; and the two councils are co-procuring an electronic system for building consents.

The Council pays particular attention to the assessment of natural hazards.

Extensive services and amenities are provided to the community.

The Council has a good working relationship with NZTA, Tasman District Council and Marlborough District Council in planning the region’s transport.

Areas for improvement

The Council would benefit from translating its vision into its environmental management decision making and practices.

The Council would benefit from an integrated asset and financial management system.

The Council would benefit from analyzing the value of amenities and non-core activities to better align with the Council’s intention of keeping rates affordable.

The Council would benefit from greater integration of transport contracting with other neighbouring councils.

The community should be made aware of trade-offs in environmental discharge and costs of rectification.

Listening and responding

Communicating and engaging with the public and businesses

The Council is customer-focused and its communications are performed well with clear messages. Key messages are defined and priorities have been established in the new draft communications strategy. Relationships between the Council and Māori/Iwi can be further improved by working closely together on planning and projects.

Priority grading

Competent

< The Council's communications are assisted by a Mayor who is strong on communicating and by staff who are generally customer-focused. Key messages are defined and priorities have been established in the new (draft) communications strategy, which is stronger than its predecessors.>

Despite communications being managed well, the external residents' survey should be extended to include measures of what the community thinks of the Council, and also how the community perceives its interactions with the Council. The survey in 2016/17, which ran after the assessment, included such questions.

While stakeholder relations appear positive, there is no independent stakeholder review. The Council would benefit from improving its Māori/Iwi relationships. In particular, it needs to help the community understand the economic and other contributions made by Māori/Iwi through Treaty settlements.

Generally, the Council's communication documents are clear, although they could benefit from using more concise language and more graphics. Social media is being developed. Internal communication is a priority.

These improvements will assist the Council in overcoming some of the negative feedback recorded in the external residents' survey and the internal (staff) survey.

Planning effective engagement

The draft communications strategy is a more strategic document than its predecessor which was, in effect, a plan. The draft strategy updates the older communications strategy (2013), the social media plan (2011) and the engagement "toolkit" (2013). The new draft strategy is clear on its priority areas, but could benefit from more analysis of how and why suggested channels will be effective for particular segments of the community and how effectiveness will be measured. The draft strategy refers to the external satisfaction survey (residents' survey) of 2011 and 2012; a third survey was conducted in June 2016, too late to be used for the draft strategy. The draft strategy also refers to the existing vision and to *Nelson 2060*, but not to the yet-to-be-established identity for the region. Even with this vision, which will be focussed on external stakeholder and visitor perceptions of the region, the Council still needs to define and publish a coherent vision.

Engaging with the community

Community outcomes and emphasis on the outdoors is well reflected in the Council's communications. There is a strong focus on arts and sports, and work with youth is well developed. For instance, there is a Youth Council which is active in Council processes.

How the community views the Council

The June 2016 residents' survey recorded low scores for most areas of the Council's performance, apart from parks and reserves. Most importantly, satisfaction levels were low for the Council's feedback to the community on its decision-making and for the community's sense of being well informed about the Council. The community's experience of "customer service" could be measured, as well as its reputation (including credibility, leadership and trust). The Council's media relations are reported to have improved.

Stakeholders and third-tier managers have commented that the Council needs to improve public understanding of the value it provides.

Engaging digitally

The Council recognises that its digital strategy is a "work in progress."

Communicating internally

The Council's internal communication was praised by some staff, but could benefit from a clear measure of its effectiveness, such as building a health and safety culture or establishing a shared vision.

Building relationships with Māori/Iwi

Relationships between Māori/Iwi and the Mayor and the Chief Executive are positive, although Māori/Iwi would like to extend the relationship to councillors and lower-level management. The Council's honesty on "fast failure" proposals by Māori/Iwi was appreciated – in other words, they were told quickly what would and wouldn't work.

Some Māori/Iwi reported that it was "early days," particularly with a new Kaihau (liaison person at the Council), and that it would take time to see how Māori/Iwi contributions on planning and other issues would be taken up by the Council.

Māori/Iwi contribution on matters of freshwater quality has been sought and acknowledged by the Council for inclusion in the Nelson Plan.

Māori/Iwi seek greater interaction, to ensure full participation. However, they are not always informed about policies that are relevant to them and on which they can make submissions. It was generally thought that the Council needs to "mature" its post-Treaty settlement relationships with Māori/Iwi. In particular, the Council needs to appreciate and recognise the Treaty settlement contribution and how Māori/Iwi can contribute to economic development. Māori/Iwi are open to improving the relationship

with the Council, and also to exploring the ways it can contribute as a cultural partner and as an investment partner.

Building relationships with stakeholders and business

The Council is working hard to establish co-operation and shared services with Tasman District Council, and in some cases, with Marlborough District Council (eg civil defence). This regional approach is evident in the Council's communications.

The Council may consider implementing a stakeholder plan and an independent stakeholder audit or stakeholder survey to help it understand its broader reputation with stakeholders.

Stakeholders indicated they see the Council's relationship with business as strong.

Strengths

The Mayor communicates well with the community.

The Council benefits from its clear messaging and collaborative style of working with Tasman District Council.

The new (draft) communications strategy is more genuinely strategic than its predecessor, and sets clear priorities for the Council's communications.

The Council exhibits strong community involvement with groups such as community forums.

The Council encourages input from youth and other segments of its community, to inform its activities.

Areas for improvement

The Council would benefit from maturing its relationship with Māori/Iwi, and also from more clearly demonstrating that it has a partnership with Māori/Iwi.

Regional identity should be reflected in the Council's communications. This will give a voice to the region's aspirations and help build community cohesion.

The Council needs to be more effective at communicating the value of what it does.

The external residents' survey should contain measures to show how the community perceives its interactions with the Council.

Communication within the Council could be improved by sharing success and emphasising the values of working for the Council.

The Council's public documents would benefit from being more concise and using more graphics to enable it to be accessible to a broader range of stakeholders.

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