

CITY OF
CANADA BAY

COMMUNICATION POLICY

Date Revised:: 21/03/2016

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Policy purpose and scope

This policy sets out the City of Canada Bay's approach to communication it undertakes with its community. It provides a broad framework for the manner in which Council will communicate with the community and sets out specific guidelines for a number of key areas.

Definition

For the purposes of this policy, Council defines communication as the means by which information is conveyed to the community through written and electronic means. The policy relates to all corporate communication undertaken in a formal capacity on behalf of the organisation. It does not specifically include telephone communication nor written correspondence in the form of personally addressed mail, as these methods of communication are guided by other Council policies.

Council defines community in the broadest possible sense to include City of Canada Bay residents, visitors, ratepayers, businesses, community organisations, neighbouring councils, other tiers of government and other stakeholders with an interest in the City.

Communication principles

The City of Canada Bay will actively communicate with the community and both put and seek a range of views, information, feedback and advice across a variety of mediums. Council will provide effective communication that provides timely and appropriate information and ensures the community has access to information on the full range of Council activities. Council is committed to:

- Informing the community of key Council decisions, services, programs and initiatives using plain English;
- Promoting transparency and accountability in Council's decision making processes;
- Promoting opportunities for community engagement in appropriate circumstances; and
- Representing the views of the City of Canada Bay community and acting as advocate to other tiers of government and in all appropriate forums.

In all forms of communication Council will demonstrate the highest standards of ethical practice and professional competence. Council will also ensure that appropriate methods of communication are utilised according to varying needs and audiences. Council recognises the need to ensure appropriate communication activities and methods are used to communicate with sections of the community that have specific language or other needs, communication preferences or cultural requirements. Council also recognises the need to embrace new and emerging technologies in communicating and will utilise the most appropriate methods of information dissemination to fulfil these needs.

Corporate communication

Council's Communication and Public Relations (CPR) section is responsible for overseeing all Council's corporate communication in accordance with this policy and the principles outlined. This includes but is not limited to media liaison, publications, advertising, web and social media tools and other promotional communication. CPR also coordinates use of Council's logo and corporate identity.

Media liaison

The City of Canada Bay will establish and maintain a good working relationship with media outlets. Council will be proactive in providing information to relevant media outlets about issues of interest to the community. Council will also be timely in handling all incoming media enquiries and will endeavour where possible to provide a response to media enquiries within realistic timeframes. In order to ensure this takes place, all enquires by media representatives should be directed to CPR so that communication between Council, media and the community in accordance with this policy and Council's Register of Delegations. This is also to ensure that all communication with the media is consistent, well-informed, professional and appropriate.

In the first instance, the Mayor will be the official spokesperson for the City of Canada Bay. At the discretion of the Mayor and/or the General Manager, Council officers may be authorised to make public statements. Council officers will only be asked to make public comment on behalf of the Council and on matters of factual information if the information has been

approved by the General Manager or the relevant Director. Council officers must not discuss sensitive, confidential or political matters with the media, in particular current court cases or confidential legal advice. If Council officers are approached by journalists, photographers or camera operators, they should politely direct all enquiries to CPR. They are not to provide background information, discuss Council matters, Council staff or Councillors, make a comment as a Council representative or issue official statements without prior approval from the General Manager (protected disclosures are exempt from this policy).

Publications

Council will produce and distribute a range of publications in order to fulfil the principles of this policy. Publications will include (but are not limited to) community magazines, newsletters, direct mail, fact sheets, flyers, reports, display materials and other promotional items. Such publications will be made widely available to the community via a variety of methods and formats matched to the appropriate audience. CPR will coordinate and/or provide advice and approval on the production of all Council publications to ensure each publication produced by Council is:

- Professional in appearance and content;
- Accurate and timely;
- Written using appropriate language and tone; and
- Suited to the audience at which it is targeted.

Advertising

The City of Canada Bay will utilise paid advertising in media outlets such as print, radio, television, cinema and online as a means of communicating with the local community and with other target audiences. When considering advertising Council will select the most appropriate avenue of advertising for the message being communicated and the audience it is being communicated with. Advertising may be conducted at a local, metropolitan or national level, depending on the content and purpose of the advertisement.

Council will place a weekly Council Column in a local newspaper as a key means of communication with the local community. The Council Column will be a primary tool for community consultation and provides transparency in Council practice. The content of the Column will include Council news and events, development application listings and other relevant Council information. The format and placement of the Council Column will be determined at the discretion of the General Manager based on newspaper distribution, cost, frequency and timing, quality and other such considerations.

Council will also adhere to all statutory and regulatory requirements for advertising as related to development applications, public exhibitions, tenders, recruitment and similar.

All Council advertising will be coordinated by CPR.

Web and social media tools

The City of Canada Bay is committed to utilising an online environment to communicate with its community. This includes through the provision of an active website, production of e-newsletters and group e-mail and utilisation of other social media tools and technologies. In using any online format to communicate, Council will maintain the same professionalism, accuracy and principled approach as any other form of communication.

Council's website is an emerging means of communicating and engaging with the community. It also provides important customer service functions that can complement traditional options. Council will continue to pursue opportunities to utilise the website for both these distinct aspects but will provide appropriate non-electronic options for customer service functions for those residents without access to the internet.

While Council's website will primarily be used to communicate corporate information, links will be provided to external websites in some circumstances. These linked sites are not under the control of Council and Council accepts no liability for those linked websites or the conduct of organisations operating them. Council may also allow other organisations to place information about events of interest to this community of its website. Criteria and guidelines for how this can take place will be published on the website.

When producing e-newsletters, group email or using other forms of social media to communicate with residents, the same policy requirements and principled standards will apply as apply to other forms of corporate communication.

Content of Council's website will be maintained by a network of Council officers while its strategic coordination will be the responsibility of CPR. Strategic coordination of the application of other online communication tools will also be the responsibility of CPR, however Council officers are strongly encouraged to consider such tools when undertaking communication or engagement activities.

Community events

Council will hold community events each year in order to engage with the community. It is the policy of Council that no political advertising is allowed at these events.

Logo and corporate identity

Council has adopted corporate identity guidelines to ensure that all communication material presents the City and the organisation as innovative, dynamic and professional and in a cohesive manner. Council's corporate identity plays an important role in conveying an image to our community and can be utilised to communicate a clear message about Council. The guidelines ensure the City of Canada Bay delivers one look and feel when communicating with the community and stakeholders. It assists to build and protect our corporate identity and communicate with relevance, purpose and clarity so that our community and audience consistently recognise and relate to Council services and activities. All Council communications must adhere to these guidelines unless otherwise approved. All Council communications (with the exception of correspondence and reports) must be approved by CPR prior to release.

The corporate identity guidelines also govern the use of Council's logo. All external use of Council's logo must be approved by CPR. No other organisation is permitted to utilise Council's logo without permission and unauthorised uses must be removed from the public domain.

Supporting documents

FuturesPlan20

FuturesPlan20 (FP20) is Council's community strategic plan. It is a 20 year vision that was developed to ensure our City and its people can respond in a positive and constructive way to the challenges ahead. FP20 was adopted by Council in December 2008 and was developed through consultation and discussion with community members, stakeholders and industry experts interested in having a say about the City's future. One of the seven themes identified in FP20 was the desire for the City of Canada Bay to be an engaged city. To this end, FP20 identifies four key outcomes; each with related strategies. This outcomes and strategies are outlined below:

- Outcome: 1.1 *I have opportunities to participate in and contribute my opinion to local decision making through consultation and other forms of engagement with Council*
To create an engaged city we will:
 - Engage with the community on local issues and planning
 - Communicate opportunities for consultation and engagement using varied methods
 - 3 Establish and strengthen partnerships and alliances to identify and respond to local issues
- Outcome: 1.2 *I know where to find the services I need and feel comfortable in accessing them*
To create an engaged city we will:
 - 1.2.1 Support effective communication and promotion of services in the area
- Outcome: 1.3 *I know about events in the community and feel welcomed and encouraged to participate*
To create an engaged city we will:
 - 1.3.1 Provide and promote a wide range of community events using varied communication methods
- Outcome: 1.4 *My City is well managed and my needs are met through high quality services and well maintained facilities and infrastructure*
To create an engaged city we will:
 - 1.4.1 Integrate service delivery and operational planning
 - 1.4.2 Implement a long term financial plan which prioritises infrastructure renewal
 - 1.4.3 Effectively manage staff and resources

City of Canada Bay Communication and Engagement Toolkit

In order to provide consistency in the application of this policy, a Communication and Consultation Toolkit has been developed for internal use by Council officers. This toolkit is designed to assist Council officers assess and provide advice to Councillors on the type and nature of communication which should be undertaken around relevant Council activities. This toolkit is designed to act as a supplement to any legislated or regulated exhibition or public notification associated with Council decisions, actions or operations.

Related policies and legislation

- NSW Local Government Act 1993
- NSW Local Government Amendment (Planning and Reporting) Act 2009
- NSW Planning and Assessment Act 1979
- NSW Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000
- NSW Protected Disclosures Act 1994
- FuturesPlan20
- City of Canada Bay Statement of Affairs
- City of Canada Bay Statement of Business Ethics
- City of Canada Bay Code of Conduct
- City of Canada Bay Community Engagement Policy
- City of Canada Bay Customer Service Charter
- City of Canada Bay Complaint Handling Policy
- City of Canada Bay Telephone Protocol
- City of Canada Bay Computer Usage Policy
- City of Canada Bay Procurement Policy
- City of Canada Bay Development Control Plan

Review of the policy

Council will formally review this policy after three years of operation.