

Manukau City Media and Editorial Policies (2006)

Minute Number: 1235/06

MINUTE NO. CL/JUL/1235/06 – Cr Noel Burnside/Cr Sharon Stewart

That the under mentioned recommendations (Minute No. 1204/06 and 1205/06) made at a meeting of the Strategic Directions Committee held on 18 July 2006 be adopted:

Minute No. 1204/06 Manukau City Media and Editorial Policies

That the Media Policy (Appendix “B1 – B9”) and the Editorial Policy (Appendix “B10 B13”) be adopted.

Appendix A

MEDIA POLICY May 2006

Introduction

The Manukau City Council is an elected body representing and advocating for the greater well-being of the residents of Manukau City. As such it must be as transparent as possible.

For the ongoing credibility of Council it is important that information is shared with residents and the rationale behind Council policy and decision-making is clearly understood.

Manukau City Council has a policy of open communication with the news media and will cooperate with members of the media on areas of concern or interest. Open media access is not only a necessity, but an obligation.

Objective

The objective of the Manukau City Council Media Policy is to identify the roles of elected members (councillors) and management when dealing with the media, and the role of the communications team.

The Media Policy and other communication policies developed by the Communications team will support the overall Manukau City Council Communications Strategy (currently under development).

Staff of the Communications Unit (Strategy, C4) are available to provide training, advice and assistance with the application of this policy.

Processes and Protocols

To ensure the messages delivered by all areas of Manukau City Council are consistent, it is important that processes and protocols are used appropriately.

These include The Controller and Auditor-General's guidelines 'Good Practice for Managing Public Communications by Local Authorities' and the Manukau City Council Code of Conduct.

The Controller and Auditor-General's guidelines (attached) are not binding but do provide principles which underpin the council's media policy, and should be read in conjunction with this policy.

The following statements appear in the MCC Code of Conduct – 2003:

5.2 *Media*

Elected members of the Council are free to express their personal view in the media, at any time, provided the following rules are observed:

- *media comments must not state or imply that they represent the views of Council;*
- *where an elected member is making a statement that is contrary to a council decision or council policy, the member must not state or imply that his or her statements represent a majority view; and*

- *media comments must observe the other requirements of this Code of Conduct, in particular the protocols relating to relationships with other members and staff (4.1, 4.2), disclosure of information (5.1, 5.3) and procedures for the resolution of problems (6.1 - 6.5).*

In general terms it is expected that spokespersons will be as follows:

- *the Mayor will represent the decisions of Council*
- *Committee Chairperson will represent the decisions of Committees*
- *Community Board Chairpersons will represent the decisions of Community Boards*

In support of the above provisions, elected members undertake not to use the Council's logo for campaign purposes or personal publicity, including the expression of personal views.

5.3 Public Statements by Management

Official comment to the media or other external agencies on the decisions, actions or management of the Council should only be made by those authorised to do so. Council officers, if so authorised by the Chief Executive Officer, may comment on the implementation of the policy or decision. The Chief Executive Officer, Directors or the Communications Unit are the only officers who have the mandate to talk to the media. The Chief Executive Officer and Directors have the ability to delegate to officers who they believe have more detailed, up-to-date and relevant information.

Officers should not comment on policy, limiting their comments to explanation of factual matters and the implementation of policy only.

While officers have the same rights of free speech as members of the public, officers have a duty not to compromise their employer. Any comment criticising the Council, its elected members or policies will be viewed as a breach of that duty.

7.2 Pre-election period

(Added by Minute Number CL/APR/622/04)

During the three months prior to polling day for local body elections, Council resources should not be used in any way that could be deemed to give any sitting member an electoral advantage or by any sitting member solely in their capacity as a candidate for the elections.

During this period the following practice will be observed:

PRINCIPLES	EXAMPLES
<p><i>A local authority must not promote, nor be perceived to promote, the re-election prospects of a sitting member. Therefore, the use of Council resources for re-election purposes is unacceptable and possibly unlawful.</i></p>	<p><i>Not Permitted:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>using Council stationery, email, postage or fax/phone facilities or any other Council resource explicitly for campaign purposes.</i>

<p><i>A Council's communications policy should also recognize the risk that communications by or about Members, in their capacities as spokespersons for Council, during a pre-election period could result in the Member achieving electoral advantage at ratepayers' expense. The chief executive officer (or his or her delegate) should actively manage the risk in accordance with the relevant electoral law.</i></p>	<p><i>Permitted:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>photographs of members where it is the practice to include them, such as the Annual Report or website</i> - <i>communication by spokespersons of Council business to the public</i> <p><i>Not Permitted:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>any use of Council communications that could be construed as giving a sitting member an unfair electoral advantage through raising their profile where this is not necessary</i>
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Complaints in regard to any matter relating to the conduct of the elections are to be made through the Electoral Officer. If any complaint involves the use of Council resources, the Electoral Officer will bring the complaint to the attention of the Chief Executive Officer.

Spokespeople

Organisations like Manukau City Council, which have elected representatives as well as executive staff, must have clear communication guidelines.

Political

His Worship the Mayor and Councillors are the only people that are able to comment on decisions of policy and any other decisions made by elected members.

Under the Code of Conduct, the Mayor represents the decisions of Council, while the Committee Chairs represent the decisions made by the respective committees.

The role of the Mayor will, in practice, also result in a requirement to comment on any issues of significance to the city.

Elected representatives generally comment on policies, the intent or direction of Manukau City Council or give opinions. It is possible the personal opinion of Councillors might be at odds with Council decisions. Councillors are free to express these views however they must be clearly stated as personal opinion, not Council policy.

The Communications team will assist the Mayor and Committee Chairpersons with media releases and media responses relating to Council policy.

Management

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for management issues. Directors and nominated staff may provide information relating only to the implementation of policy, and may be quoted on technical matters or project details. They may not comment on Council decisions or policy, although they may be required to give an explanation around why a Council decision has been made or policy introduced.

Speaking on behalf of the council is a significant duty that has potentially serious consequences. Therefore it is expected that the Chief Executive Officer and Directors will be the primary spokespeople on management issues.

Directors typically delegate to third level managers, matters which are clearly within their sphere of expertise and accountability. Delegations below third level should only be on a case-by-case basis, around specific issues. Where there is a reasonable expectation that a matter may be contentious, the key communication points must be clarified with the appropriate Director prior to an interview or statement being released.

It is the responsibility of council officers to ensure all information requested by the media is easily accessible and factually correct (after taking into account issues of personal and commercial privacy).

The Communications team is available to assist the Chief Executive Officer, Directors and staff with media releases and media responses relating to the implementation of council policy and council processes.

Community Boards

Under the Code of Conduct, the Chairperson of the community boards represents community board decisions.

The Democratic Services Coordinators will work with Community Board Chairs to establish and maintain channels of communication with local media. The Communications team will assist the Democratic Services Coordinators with media contact details and publication deadlines.

Council Reports

Council officers, through reports to Council, Committee or Community Board meetings may be quoted by the media. If approached by the media following a meeting, the reporting officer can restate the information in the report and provide factual explanation of the report, but should not provide personal opinion.

Communications Advisors would normally attend Council and Committee meetings and will provide communications assistance if required.

If a reporting officer is approached by the media in the days following a meeting, the normal media log process applies (see below).

Communication's Processes

Media Log

The Communications team maintains a media log, identifying who called, when, on what topic, who answered it and how it was resolved.

Should the media phone staff directly, they are advised not to answer any questions. Instead, they should re-direct the call to the Communications team (Sharleen Pihema). (If the media call Directors or nominated spokespeople on a subject they are already dealing with and they feel confident to answer immediately, they should ensure the Communications team is advised so the call can be logged in the system.)

Communications Advisors have been allocated to each directorate and committee (*attached*). They will log the call and liaise with the Mayor, appropriate committee chair, or staff member to ensure the call is answered appropriately.

Media Responses

Media responses are a priority for the organisation and must meet media deadlines.

In most instances the deadline on the media log allows enough time for the Communications Advisors to work with the spokesperson to gather the information required to respond. However, if the deadline is too tight and can not be met, the Communications Advisor will phone the journalist and request an extension.

'No comment' is not a valid answer and must be avoided.

Media Releases

The Communications Advisors will work with the Mayor, Committee Chair, Director or nominated staff member to ensure the media release quotes the appropriate person/people.

Media releases will comply with council's editorial policy. Media releases must be signed off by either a Director or Committee Chair, or both. Sign off will be limited to ensuring the information is factually correct.

All media releases must be approved by the Communications Manager or Media Relations Manager before release.

Media training

All designated spokespeople ie Mayor, Committee Chairperson, Chief Executive Officer, Directors and Managers with delegated authority to speak to the media, should undertake media training.

Members of the Communications team are able to train staff on dealing with the media on a day to day basis. This includes providing tips on how to handle phone and face to face interviews.

However, if required for controversial or difficult issues which may involve television interviews, an external resource can be brought in and the training taped.

Buddy System

The Communications team has allocated advisors to all committees and directorates.

The buddy system enables Committee Chairs to work closely with communications staff for advice and assistance in developing the profile of the Committee, deliver Council-agreed messages and identifying positive opportunities for media comment.

Although Councillors will obviously have input into how often they meet with their communication's buddy, it is recommended that the Communications Advisors attend Committee briefing sessions to identify possible public opportunities and issues, and discuss with the Chairperson following the meeting.

Other meetings can be arranged as appropriate.

The Communications team works within the parameters of the Controller and Auditor-General's Communications Guidelines and the Manukau City Council Code of Conduct.

Any queries regarding Communications should be referred to Donna Baker, Communications Manager extn 5476

Communications Team Responsibilities

Committee and Chair	Directorate and Director	Activity	Communications Advisor(s)
Council – His Worship the Mayor			Donna Baker Philip Keating Contract speech writer
	Chief Executive – Leigh Auton		Donna Baker Philip Keating
	Advisory Unit	Chief Advisor Treaty Team	Donna Baker Steve Attwood/Sharleen Pihema
Strategic Directions – Colleen Brown	Strategy – Grant Taylor	Strategy and Policy Asset and Infrastructure Council Enterprises Emergency Management Communications	Helen Slater Helen Slater Helen Slater Donna Baker/Dana Findlay Donna Baker
Annual Planning – Su'a William Sio	Strategy – Grant Taylor	Strategic and Annual Planning	Helen Slater/Donna Baker
Economic Development – Neil Morrison	Economic – Rick Walden	Economic Property (internal)	Dana Findlay Dana Findlay Gabrielle Hinton Italia Toelei'u
Transport – Alf Filipaina	Economic – Rick Walden	Transport	Daryl McIntosh

Environment and Urban Design – Noel Burnside	Environment – Ree Anderson	City Design and Planning City Environment Resource Consents Development Compliance and Enforcement Building Authority Business Support Manukau Building Consultants (Flatbush)	Dana Findlay Daryl McIntosh Daryl McIntosh Daryl McIntosh Dana Findlay Daryl McIntosh Gillian Buzzard/Helen Slater Helen Slater/Gillian Buzzard/Daryl McIntosh/Sharleen Pihema/Dana Findlay
Hearings – Neil Morrison	Environment – Ree Anderson		Dana Findlay/Daryl McIntosh
Community Development – John Walker	Community – Ian Maxwell	Policy and Planning Libraries Parks Leisure Community Management Boards – Arts - Memorial Gardens - Housing for the Elderly	Gillian Buzzard/ Gabrielle Hinton Gillian Buzzard/ Gabrielle Hinton Gillian Buzzard/ Gabrielle Hinton Gillian Buzzard/ Gabrielle Hinton Gillian Buzzard/ Gabrielle Hinton Gabrielle Hinton Gillian Buzzard Gillian Buzzard

Community Safety – Dick Quax	Community – Ian Maxwell		Gabrielle Hinton
Corporate Governance – Bob Wichman	Finance – Dave Foster	Financial systems and advice	Helen Slater
		Policy Planning and Investments	Helen Slater
		Financial Reporting and Compliance	Helen Slater
		Legal Services	Helen Slater
		Democratic Services	Sharleen Pihema/Steve Attwood
	Organisational Performance – Robyn McCulloch	Best Practice	Italia Toelei'u
	Information Office	Italia Toelei'u	
	Human Resources	Italia Toelei'u/Phil McCormack	
	Customer Relationships	Italia Toelei'u/Phil McCormack	
Te Tiriti o Waitangi –			Steve Attwood/Sharleen Pihema

Note:

Donna Baker is responsible for management of the Communications team

Steve Attwood has responsibility for Manukau Matters and media issues

Philip McCormack is responsible for branding and publications

EDITORIAL POLICY
June 2006

Introduction

The Manukau City Council is committed to open communication with its communities.

The information it presents must be factual and explanatory, presented in a way that is accurate, complete, fairly expressed and politically neutral.

It must also be easily understood.

Objective

The objective of the Manukau City Council Editorial Policy is to provide guidance around council communications, both internal and external.

The policy will apply to all printed council publications such as (but not limited to) brochures, internal and external newsletters, posters, pamphlets, leaflets and flyers. The policy will also apply to electronic publications such as the council's portal (for internal use) and the council website.

This policy should also be used as a guide for the approval of content of any publication (whether printed or in electronic form) prepared by another organisation; either in conjunction with the council, or in which the council's logo is to appear as a sponsor.

The term "Publications" applies to editorial copy (written or electronic) intended for widespread dissemination. The term does not apply to routine written correspondence by council, council minutes, and the like. However, the general principles of this policy and the proposed Style Guide may guide council as regards the wording of such documents.

The Editorial Policy and other communications policies developed by the Communications team will support the overall Manukau City Council Communications Strategy (*currently under development*).

Other relevant documents include:

- The Manukau City Council Media Policy
- The Communications Unit Style Guide (*currently under preparation and which will be appended to the Editorial Policy when completed*)
- "Editorial Policy for Manukau Matters June 2006" which is a specific editorial policy for the council's city-wide newsletter.
- Manukau City Council Branding Guidelines (*currently in preparation*)

Staff of the Communications Unit (Strategy, C4) are available to provide training, advice and assistance with the application of this policy.

General principle

The image and work of Manukau City Council are enhanced when communications are clear, concise, consistent, accurate and factual. Clear communications help improve understanding, reduce the risk of misinformation, and improve the efficiency of the organisation.

An Editorial Policy, by providing a clear framework for staff, helps achieve these aims and helps ensure that nothing is published that might damage council, its interests or the interests of Manukau City.

It is recognised that the production of editorial copy occurs in a politically and socially fluid environment. Therefore, this policy can be reviewed and/or amended as appropriate with the approval of the Executive Leadership Team (for minor changes) and Council (for major changes).

Auditor General Guidelines

The over-arching guidelines for council communication shall be the Auditor General's publication "Good Practice for Managing Public Communications by Local Authorities – April 2004" (*attached*). The guidelines are not binding but do provide principles which should be read in conjunction with this policy.

Policy Overview

- Editorial copy produced by council should be clear, concise, consistent, accurate and factual.
- Spelling, grammar, punctuation, the use of acronyms, and other issues of editorial style will be as set out in the Communications Unit Style Guide.
- Content should be constructive, helpful and considerate.
- Editorial content should never be used to hide, confuse, distort or otherwise misrepresent council decisions, policy or issues of fact.
- Editorial content will not contradict, express opposition to, or solicit opposition to, approved Council policy or Council decisions.
- Denigration of individuals and/or groups is never appropriate.
- All council publications must go through an approval process involving Council, the Chief Executive Officer, directors or senior managers as appropriate for the publication concerned.
- The Communications Unit should be involved in the approval process for all council publications.

Illegal or antisocial activity

- Council publications must not encourage or condone violence or any criminal activity.
- Council publications must not encourage or condone activities that might generally be seen by large sections of the community as immoral (while noting that morality is an individual thing around which it is impractical to set hard and fast rules or boundaries of what is or is not acceptable. Common sense is expected to be applied).
- Caution and discretion should be exercised in decisions on whether or not swearing and coarse language is used/quoted. As a general guideline, decisions and/or guidelines issued by the Censor's Office, the Broadcasting Standards Tribunal and the Press Complaints Authority can be referred to.

- If there is any doubt, the proposed copy should be forwarded to the appropriate council authority for approval.

Diversity

- Council publications will seek to reflect the ethnic and social diversity of Manukau (including people living with disabilities) in its publications and will endeavour to maximise public access to information by ensuring its wide availability in diverse media.
- A separate Council policy around translation will be updated.

Discrimination

- Council publications will not publish anything that breaches the anti-discrimination provisions of the Human Rights Act.

Libel

- Statements or comments about a person or organisation that cannot be proved to be true and that might be considered damaging to their reputation and or interests, or otherwise constitute libel, will not be published.
- Defamatory comments are to be avoided.
- Personal attacks are to be avoided.
- Comments must be specifically relevant to the topic being discussed and must be fair and reasonable.

Privacy

- Council publications will adhere to the provisions and guidelines contained within the Privacy Act.
- Invasion of privacy in relation to people or organisations is to be strictly avoided.
- Name of victims in relation to specific legal events should not be mentioned unless they are already in the public domain.
- Council publications will not breach the privacy of issues discussed "in committee" by Council.

Political Bias

- It is appropriate for council publications to present council's decisions and policies effectively to citizens of Manukau. As such, they represent the council view. There is no obligation to provide "balance" in council publications by including articles or any other opinions that oppose, differ with or are contrary to, council decisions and policy.
- Political comments will not be published except where they represent the collective and agreed position of the Council.
- Where an individual view or comment is appropriate (such as in a 'news' item in Manukau Matters) the individual view will be clearly identified so as not to be confused with the collective opinion of the Council.
- In general, quotes/items by elected members of the Council will only be when that person is the agreed spokesperson for the collective view of the Council on that issue.
- Council publications will not contain material that could be construed as promoting the personal and/or political views of elected members of Manukau City Council, especially where such coverage could be construed as giving

the quoted individual a political or election advantage over others not so quoted or otherwise covered in the publication. The Auditor General's guidelines "*Good Practice for Managing Public Communications by Local Authorities*" should be followed at all times, especially during the period of Local Authority elections.

Corrections Policy

Should false or misleading information be published, the council will negotiate with the affected person(s) for an appropriate correction in an agreed medium.

Right to Reply

Comment and feedback on the council publications is welcome and will be noted and/or acted upon as appropriate, but there is no obligation on council to publish such feedback in any way, except to correct errors of fact as referred to under "corrections policy".

Picture Policy

Written approval should be obtained (from the individual(s) concerned) for the inclusion of recognisable photos of individuals in council publications.

Intellectual Property

The council retains property and reproduction rights over its printed, film, and electronic publications (including digitally stored information such as, but not limited to, printing files and digital photos).

Publications, including commissioned artwork, photographs, editorial content, commissioned design work, and all printed publications (including page proofs, bromides, plates and other stages of the printing process) and electronic files such as PDFs and website files, are the intellectual property of council and council holds copyright over such material.

Original material (including artwork, editorial content and design), in whole or part, produced by council staff or agencies contracted by council are the intellectual property of council as the commissioning agency.

A copyright symbol and date should appear on all printed council publications.

Council, as the owner, has exclusive rights over the sale, reproduction, distribution, or broadcast of such material.