

Communication Strategic Plan 2023-2028

Contents

Acknowledgement of Country	1
Introduction	2
Our Vision in 2030 – Our Communities	3
Progressive - in our aspirations & approaches	3
Proud - of who we are, what we do and how we do it.....	3
Prosperous - in all aspects of our life – economic, environmental & social.....	3
Values and Principles	3
Council Values.....	3
Guiding Principles	4
Who is this Plan for?	4
Municipality Snapshot	5
How we Communicate and Engage	5
Our Tools.....	6
International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation.....	7
Main Forms of Communications.....	7
Key Focus Areas	12
Objectives	13
Sponsorship.....	14
Emergency Communication.....	14
Review and Monitoring.....	14

Acknowledgement of Country

George Town Council acknowledges the palawa people from the litarimirina tribe from Port Dalrymple as the traditional custodians of the land.

We honour and give thanks for the caring of country, seas and skies of kinimathatakinta and surrounds.

We pay respect to the elders past, present and future for they hold the memories, traditions, culture and hope of pakana people in lutruwita.

Introduction

George Town Council's Communication Strategic Plan (**the Plan**) outlines how we communicate and engage with the community, as well as key initiatives and actions that we will take to improve communication and engagement between Council, Stakeholders and the community.

We aim to build upon, clarify, and improve our current communication and engagement methods to ensure consistency across all communication platforms, and increase the community's ability to access details of Council's activities and decisions.

The Plan has been developed to:

- Continue to improve communication between Council and the community
- Transparency and good governance
- Ensure that all Council's communications are timely and easily understood and accessible
- Ensure Council's communications meet the requirements set out in the *Local Government Act 1993*
- Reflect Council's Strategic Plan 2020 -2030
- Ensure that Council's communication aligns with:
 - Community Consultation Framework
 - Sponsorship Policy and Guidelines
 - Community Assistance Grants Policy
 - Reconciliation Action Plan
 - Sport and Recreation Plan
 - Diversity Equitable Access Inclusion Policy
 - Event Strategy
 - Dog Management Policy
 - Interpretation Strategy

Council is committed to transparently sharing information and recognises the benefits that effective communication and engagement have for building the community's confidence in Council. Effective communication and engagement require buy-in from all stakeholders. Both Council staff and Councillors are responsible for the organisation's reputation. Everything we say and do impacts the public's perception of Council.

A key challenge for Council is operating in a typically reactive environment which often directs the communication and engagement methods and activities that are undertaken. Shifting from operational and reactive messages to more strategic and proactive messages with greater consistency, interest and relevance is a priority. Council aims to share more positive stories that showcase the good work we do for the community and instil community confidence in Council.

A further challenge also lies in harnessing the many communication and engagement activities into one consistent approach that reflects the priorities of the community and Council.

The Plan seeks to help the growing community expectations.

The Plan encompasses "**George Town Council**" and its affiliate businesses:

- George Town Mountain Bike Trails
- Bass & Flinders Maritime Museum

- Healthy George Town
- George Town Swimming Pool
- The Watch House
- Visitor Information Centre
- Wild Tamar
- Artisans Guild (whilst under Council's governance)
- Future Impact Group (while auspiced through the George Town Council)

Our Vision in 2030 – Our Communities

Progressive - in our aspirations & approaches

We are resilient and adaptive innovators and change makers. With courage, we respond creatively to our challenges and opportunities. The energy of our young people drives us all forward and we value participation from our elders who contribute and encourage the endeavours of our communities.

Proud - of who we are, what we do and how we do it

We foster positive and productive attitudes and know that inspirational leadership is found everywhere within our communities. We care for one another and back ourselves.

Prosperous - in all aspects of our life – economic, environmental & social

Economically we prosper as a community of lifelong learners. We encourage, coach and mentor our young people to reach their potential. We are making and building a diverse economy centred around doing old things in new ways and new things first. We promote our enviable lifestyle as the setting for entrepreneurial endeavours. Our population continues to grow with people who identify with all the extraordinary things we see in our place and living here. Visitors are welcome to stay and experience our environment, culture, celebrations and produce.

Our environmental prosperity, health and well-being is found and facilitated in our beautiful coastlines, beaches, rivers, rolling hills, productive agricultural land and built heritage. We cherish all living things. We respect and take care of our environmental richness so it will continue to nurture us and the generations to come. We promote active, healthy living and enjoy doing this together. Socially we find joy and learning from the ancient past of the original custodians of our place and our more recent European history. We are community builders energised by our creative endeavours and events.

Values and Principles

Council Values

Council's Mission is supported by its commitment to pursue fundamental values. These values drive the way Council operates and how it carries out all of its activities and services for the benefit of the community.

- Accountability
- Innovation
- Community

- Can Do
- Respect
- Transparency
- Heritage & Environment

Guiding Principles

These are the principles we will use to guide our future choices and behaviours. In all we do and how we work together we will:

- Respect and care for each other
- Welcome diversity in all its forms
- Pursue local opportunities
- Celebrate our heritage
- Treasure our natural environment
- Be open to new ideas and show leadership

Who is this Plan for?

The key stakeholders George Town Council regularly communicates and engages with include:

OUR COMMUNITY

- Residents, ratepayers and potential residents
- Community and sporting groups/clubs, not-for-profits, Progress Associations
- Local Aboriginal Community
- Visitors and tourists
- Local Businesses and their employees
- Volunteers

COUNCIL

- Mayor and Councillors
- Employees and potential employees

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

- Federal, State and Local Government Representatives and Policy Advisors
- Funding bodies
- Industry Groups (eg. Emergency Services, TasWater, Health providers)
- Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT)
- Schools
- Media
- Contractors
- Consultants
- Neighbouring municipalities

These groups are unique and have different interests in Council functions and activities. Therefore, our communication and engagement approach with these groups needs to suit their differing requirements, whilst also being consistent with Council's objectives.

We consider tailored approaches for specific demographics or users, such as:

- Youth
- Older people
- People with limited literacy
- People with a disability, vision or hearing impairment
- Culturally and linguistically diverse community members
- Other minority groups

Municipality Snapshot

The Municipal area of George Town Council is located in northern Tasmania, about 50 kilometres north of the Launceston CBD. It is bound by Bass Strait in the north, Dorset Council area in the east, the City of Launceston in the south, and the Tamar River in the west.

The George Town Council area includes the localities of Beechford, Bell Bay, Bellingham, George Town, Hillwood, Lefroy, Long Reach, Low Head, Lower Turners Marsh (part), Lulworth, Mount Direction (part), Pipers Brook (part), Pipers River (part), Retreat (part) and Weymouth.

The George Town Council area includes rural and rural-residential areas, with the main township at George Town. Significant industrial areas are located just south of George Town, including the Bell Bay Advanced Manufacturing Zone. Rural land is used largely for agriculture (particularly sheep and cattle grazing), forestry, and includes strawberry farms and vineyards. Tourism is also an important industry.

The district offers three schools providing early childhood, primary and secondary education, and a hospital and medical centre. Recreational infrastructure including sporting clubs, a public swimming pool, indoor sporting venues, mountain bike trails, safe beaches and boat ramps provide an exciting choice of recreational activities.

The George Town Aerodrome is a minor airport serving George Town and the Launceston Airport is approximately a 55 minutes' drive from George Town. The area is well served by a state highway connecting the Tamar Valley, the City of Launceston, north east Tasmania and the rest of the State.

How we Communicate and Engage

We communicate and engage with the community through a variety of different methods and strategies including: (excluding the general day-to-day activities which include: phone calls, emails and meetings). The five communication strategies are verbal communication, non-verbal communication, written communication, visual communication, and listening.

- Monthly Ordinary Council Meetings (in person, audio and written)
- Community Consultation (refer to GTC 11 Community Consultation Framework)
- Quarterly Newsletters
- Media Releases
- Social Media (Facebook, Instagram: Currently this method is only used by George Town Mountain Bike Trails, Wild Tamar and Bass & Flinders Maritime Museum)
- LinkedIn: Primary purpose for recruitment

- Council Publications: Publications include Annual Report, Annual Plan, Strategic Plan, Quarterly Reports
- New Resident Kits
- Website
- Intranet: Staff and Councillors
- Waste Management App
- Roadshows
- Print Media: Tamar Valley New, The Examiner (a requirement for DA's to be advertised)
- Committees
- Marketing Collateral: Such as flyers, posters and fact sheets
- Partnership Meetings: Tamar NRM
- Surveys
- Community Assistance Grants
- VMS Board
- Community and George Town Council Community Boards
- Youtube: This was used during COVID
- Events (For example: Australia Day, Seniors Concert, Christmas Carnival, NAIDOC WEEK)
- Radio (Tamar FM/ABC)
- Seek

Our Tools

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

- Facebook
- Instagram
- LinkedIn
- Youtube

ONLINE

- Audio
- Mailchimp – e-newsletter
- Survey Monkey – Survey
- Smarty Grants – Community Assistance Grants
- Eventbrite – event bookings
- Website
- Seek – recruitment
- Australian Tourism Warehouse Database

INTERNAL PROGRAMS

- Adobe Suite
- Canva
- Outlook Calendar
- Intranet

OTHER

- Photographers
- VMS Board

International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation

The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2), is an association that aims to promote and improve the practice of public participation. The IAP2 has developed an engagement that is widely used to describe the different levels of engagement that can be applied in a given situation.

The table below shows how the different stages on the engagement spectrum result in different levels of participation. The spectrum ranges from basic information to decision-making being placed in the hands of the public. The table shows typical techniques for each level and George Town Council's examples of participation.

Public Participation Goal	Promise to the Public	Our Examples
Inform	Provide information to the community	Facebook, Website, newsletter
Consult	Obtain community input	Community Consultation Framework, roadshows, surveys
Involve	Work directly with the community throughout the process	Workshops, community consultation
Collaborate	Create partnerships with community groups	Advisory Groups, Youth Advisory Group, special committees, Progress Associations, World Cafe
Empowerment	To place the final decision-making in the hands of the community	Election polls

Main forms of Communications

(This does not include all forms of communication.)

George Town Council

	Method/Tool	Frequency	Responsibility
Ordinary Council Meeting	Face to Face meetings Hard copy and audio minutes – Website Social Media post - Facebook	Monthly	General Manager Directors Office of the General Manager

			Communications Officer
Residents Newsletter	Hard Copy with the Rate Notices Electronic Copy	Quarterly	Directors Key Staff Members Communications Officer
Social Media Posts e.g. General information, events, news, updates etc.	Facebook Adobe/Canva Social Media Website	When required	Communications Officer
Publications e.g. Annual Plan & Annual Report	Hard Copy Website Electronic Copy	Annual	Directors Councillors Key Staff Members Communications Officer
Publication: Quarterly Report	Hard Copy Website Electronic Copy	Quarterly	Directors Key Staff Members
Roadshows	Face to Face Meetings	Annual	Mayor General Manager Directors Councillors
Community Assistance Grants	Social Media Website Email/Newsletter	Twice a year	Director – Corporate & Community Communications Officer
Community Consultation	Email Social Media Website	When required	Directors Key Staff Members Communications Officer

Events	Social Media Website Eventbrite	When required	Team Leader – Communities Communications Officer
Development Applications	Newspaper Website	When required	General Manager Team Leader - Planning & Building Services Planning Officer/Permit Authority
Tenders	TenderLink Website	When required	Director - Infrastructure & Development Coordinator – Engineering & Projects
TamarFM / ABC	Radio	Monthly As required	Mayor General Manager

George Town Mountain Bike Trails

	Method/Tool	Frequency	Responsibility
Social Media Posts	Social Media	Weekly	Project Manager Communications Officer
Website	Website	When required to keep up to date	Project Manager Communications Officer
Events	Social Media Website	When required	Project Manager Communications Officer External Business Operator
Education	Social Media Website Survey		Project Manager Communications Officer

Bass & Flinders Maritime Museum

	Method/Tool	Frequency	Responsibility
Social Media Posts	Social Media	Weekly	Team Leader – Communities Communications Officer Volunteers
Website	Website	When required to keep up to date	Team Leader – Communities Communications Officer Volunteers
Events and key dates	Social Media Website	When required	Team Leader – Communities Communications Officer Volunteers
Education	Social Media Website	When required	Team Leader – Communities Communications Officer Volunteers
Promotion	Social Media Website Advertising e.g., Let's Go Kids	When required	Team Leader – Communities Communications Officer Volunteers
Tour/School Groups/collaborations	Facebook	When required	Team Leader – Communities Communications Officer Volunteers External groups

Healthy George Town

	Method/Tool	Frequency	Responsibility
Programs	Face to face sessions Printed Flyer Social Media Website Event Booking Annual Report	When required	Director – Corporate & Community Team Leader – Community Communications Officer

Wild Tamar

	Method/Tool	Frequency	Responsibility
Social Media Posts	Social Media	Weekly	Project Manager External Business Operator Communications Officer
Website	Website	When required to keep up to date	Project Manager External Business Operator Communications Officer

Visitor Information Centre

	Method/Tool	Frequency	Responsibility
Social Media Posts	Facebook	When required	
	Instagram		
Website	Website	When required to keep up to date	

Key Focus Areas

Social Media

Continuously develop Council's social media presence across a range of platforms with the end-user the primary focus to deliver engaging, informative, trusted, and timely information.

Website

Explore options to make it easy to do business with Council online and encourage the website to become the hub for community information. A new website is under development in the 2023/2024 financial year, and aims to be engaging, informative and accessible for this purpose.

Brand Management

To promote consistent delivery of Council's brand. This will include a planned, proactive marketing campaign to build community awareness and promote exposure to Council services, activities and projects.

Communications

Support delivery of targeted communications. Establish an approach to guide effective communication choices, taking into account where and how individuals best receive their information.

Community Education

Support community understanding of who we are, what we do, where ratepayer money goes, how we make decisions, and how we plan for the future. This includes ensuring we continue to develop strong relationships with traditional media to help our community understand our challenges and decision making.

Staff Communications

To increase staff knowledge and understanding of our services, activities, projects, decision making and planning processes to increase internal morale and allow staff to be advocates in the community - through both their professional and personal interactions with the community.

Measurement and Evaluation

Consistent reporting and measurement of communication activities, outputs, and impacts. The regular analysis will be used to improve practices and constantly refine our approach.

Objectives

What do we want to achieve?

Increase Community Awareness

To increase community awareness and understanding of what we do, the services, activities, projects, planning and decision-making processes.

Proactively Deliver Information

To proactively deliver clear, accessible, timely, relevant and targeted information in ways that best meet the local interests and needs of our community.

Transparency and Good Governance

To provide communication that is transparent so that our community has trust and confidence in us, by providing genuine and meaningful engagement.

Provide Accessible Communication

To provide informative, accessible, interactive, and responsive communication with digital services that meet the needs of our community.

Strengthen Relationships

To strengthen relationships within our community, through communication activities and a whole of Council approach to engagement, to increase confidence, support the development of trust, and change behaviour and perception where necessary.

Build Our Identity

To build our reputation and identity through consistent messaging and an engaging visual presence. Present a clearly identifiable and approachable corporate brand that reflects our identity.

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

To proactively inform and include the community in decision making process. Refer to the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation.

Sponsorship

The George Town Council is pleased to work in partnership with, and offer incentive and support for, community events held in the George Town municipality that contribute to the development of a strong, vibrant, and connected community.

The provision of sponsorship funds is a mechanism by which Council furthers its strategic goals and objectives and supports sustainable community development.

Refer to the Minor Community Events Program and Projects Sponsorship Fund Guidelines

Emergency Communication

Communications during disaster periods are managed and monitored for relevance and are given top priority during any type of disaster event. Council disseminates information from authorised agents only.

Regular, up to date, and accurate information is supplied during a disaster via social media, website and media alerts.

Review and Monitoring

This Communication Strategic Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it continues to reflect our Strategic Vision 2020- 2030 and to deliver the communication needs of our community.

The Plan is designed to be a living document that is reviewed and adjusted annually to take into account new ideas, technologies, and opportunities for development and delivery to our community.

Many of the actions will also form part of our integrated planning and reporting processes, which are reported on a quarterly and annual basis to both Councillors and our community.