

STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIPS REPORT

**Survey of
Strategic Partners and
Stakeholder Groups**

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Executive Summary

In June 2019 Administration surveyed 43 groups that had been identified as being strategically important to Council. The purpose of the survey was to provide a measure of the quality of the relationship between each group and Council. Of the 43 groups surveyed 16 replied to the survey with one group responding twice.

The responses received were mostly positive with more scoring agreed or strongly agreed than disagreed or strongly disagree across the eight statements posed in the survey.

There were opportunities for those responding to provide comments for each statement and an open response section at the end of the survey. This revealed mixed experiences depending on which department within the Council the responder had interacted with.

Administration provides a series of recommendations to conclude this report that are aimed at improving the information management practices with Council when it comes to how we capture the details and interaction with each organisation. Administration also recommends clarifying the accountability and responsibility across Council and Elected Members when it comes to growing and improving the relationship with each strategically important group.

Background

In 2018 Council made a commitment to understand and grow the quality of key stakeholder and partner relationships. The process to achieve this commitment started with a workshop between Staff and Councillors on 26 September 2018. The workshop identified those partners and stakeholders that are important and influential in the District.

A resulting paper following on from the workshop was put to the Governance and Strategic Relationships Committee 26 November 2018. The Governance and Strategic Relationships Committee confirmed the following 42 Organisations as being high in importance and influence:

Table One: Stakeholder Groups and Partners identified as being important and influential in the District

Stakeholder Group or Partner	Grouping
Northland Regional Council	Local Government
Northland Intersectoral Forum	Forum
Northland District Health Board	Local Agency
Te Puni Kokiri	Central Government
Northland Transport Alliance	Alliance Partner
3 Waters Alliance	Alliance Partner
Far North Holdings Ltd	CCO
Ministry of Social Development/Community Investment	Local Agency
Mayoral Forum	Forum
Te Runanga a Iwi o Ngāpuhi	Iwi Authority
Te Runanga o Ngāti Hine	Hapū

Stakeholder Group or Partner	Grouping
Te Runanga o Te Rarawa	Iwi Authority
Te Runanga Nui o Te Aupouri Trust	Iwi Authority
Ngati Kuri Trust Board	Iwi Authority
Ngatiwai Trust Board	Iwi Authority
Top Energy	Utility
New Zealand Police	Central Government
Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency	Central Government
Central Government Politicians	Politicians
Ministry of Health	Central Government
Te Hiku Development Trust	Community Trust
Department of Internal Affairs – Community	Local Agency
Ngati Torehina	Hapū
Ministry of Social Development	Central Government
Department of Conservation Northland	Central Government
Ngati Rehia	Hapū
Te Roroa Whatu Ora Trust	Iwi Authority
Te Runanga-a-Iwi-o Ngati Kahu	Iwi Authority
Te Runanga o Whaingaroa	Hapū
Te Whiu Hapu Inc	Hapū
Local Government Commission	Central Government
Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment	Central Government
Whangarei District Council	Local Government
Kaipara District Council	Local Government
Northland CEO Forum	Forum
Department of Internal Affairs - Relationships C/L Government	Central Government
Iwi Local Government Chief Executive Forum	Forum
Local Government NZ	Advocacy
Ministry of Education	Central Government

Stakeholder Group or Partner	Grouping
Office of Treaty Settlements	Central Government
Civil Defence – District	Local Agency

The Committee agreed that the next step was to survey each group to determine the current quality of the relationship that Council has with each group from the group's perspective.

Survey Method

An assessment of the groups identified in Table One eliminated any forum as being subject to any quality of relationship survey as they represented a collective of organisations and therefore could not be surveyed as one group providing a singular view. The same rule of a collective applied to the group identified as politicians.

The following groups were not surveyed because they are closely connected with Council through operational contract and agreements;

- Northland Transport Alliance
- 3 Waters Alliance

The following organisations were added to the list to be surveyed that were identified as 'Wellness Partners' via the development of the District Strategy – branded as Far North 2100.

- Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Takoto
- Ministry of the Environment
- Heritage New Zealand
- New Zealand Transport Agency
- Ministry for Primary Industries
- Northland Chamber of Commerce
- Waitangi National Trust
- Northland Wood Council
- New Zealand Forest Owners' Association
- Northland Inc
- NorthTec
- Te Wananga o Aotearoa
- Royal Forest and Bird Society
- Federated Farmers
- Sport Northland

This left a total of 47 groups identified as being subject to the survey

Survey statements

The survey consisted of eight statements where the responder was asked to score one of the following for each statement:

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

The survey statements were as follows:

1. The Far North District Council communicates their strategic direction effectively
2. The Far North District Council communicates effectively with me and my organisation
3. The Far North District Council treats my organisation fairly and justly on matters that concern us
4. The Far North District Council responds within an appropriate timeframe to matters or concerns that are raised by my organisation
5. The Far North District Council addresses the matters or concerns that are raised by my organisation
6. When making an important decision, the Far North District Council considers how this will impact my organisation
7. The Far North District Council keeps its commitments to my organisation

The survey was carried out in May and June 2019. Of the 47 groups identified as being subject to the survey Administration had a senior contact (executive level) in 43. It was this list of 43 groups that were invited to participate in the survey

The survey was initially sent to representatives of the 43 organisations via email with a hard copy survey form attached in pdf and a link to an electronic survey form developed in the Council's survey system. This email was sent out in the week beginning 13 May 2019. The email was followed up with phone calls to representatives of the organisations that had received the email.

A follow up email was sent to those organisations invited to the 26 June Far North 2100 Summit with key wellbeing partners. The Summit formed part of the pre-engagement on the development of Far North 2100. This email was sent on 25 June 2019 followed up by two reminder notices. The survey was closed on 28 June and the results compiled.

Survey Results

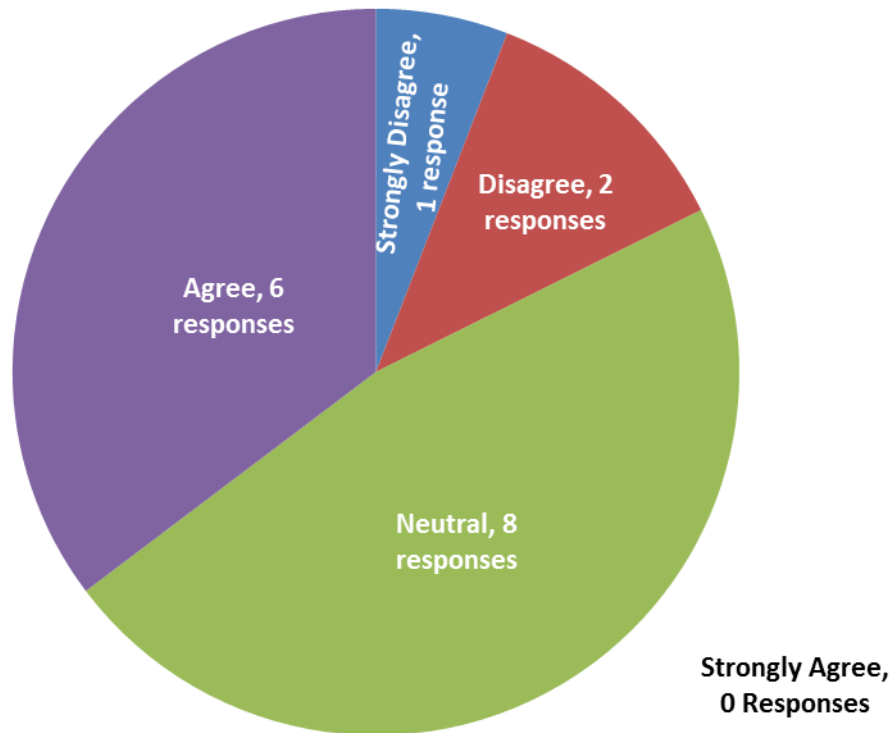
Seventeen responses to the survey were received within the timeframe that the survey ran for. This included two separate responses from Kaipara District Council. Of the 43 organisations that were surveyed sixteen agencies replied representing a return rate of 37%. The table below lists the organisations that responded.

Table One: Responding organisations to the relationship survey

Organisation Name
Ministry for Primary Industries
Northland Chamber of Commerce
Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment
Waitangi National Trust
Sport Northland
Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga
Hancock Forest Management NZ Ltd
Te Runanga Nui o Te Aupouri Trust
Ministry of Social Development
Department of Conservation, Bay of Islands office
Department of Internal Affairs
Federated Farmers Northland
Kaipara District Council (1 st response)
Top Energy Limited
Northland Regional Council
Kaipara District Council (2 nd response)
Te Runanga o Te Rarawa

The following are the responses received on a scale from 'Strongly Disagree' to 'Strongly Agree' for each of the eight 'quality of relationship' statements which made up the Quality of Relationship Survey. For each question the responder was provided with the opportunity to provide supporting comments. These are captured below for each statement.

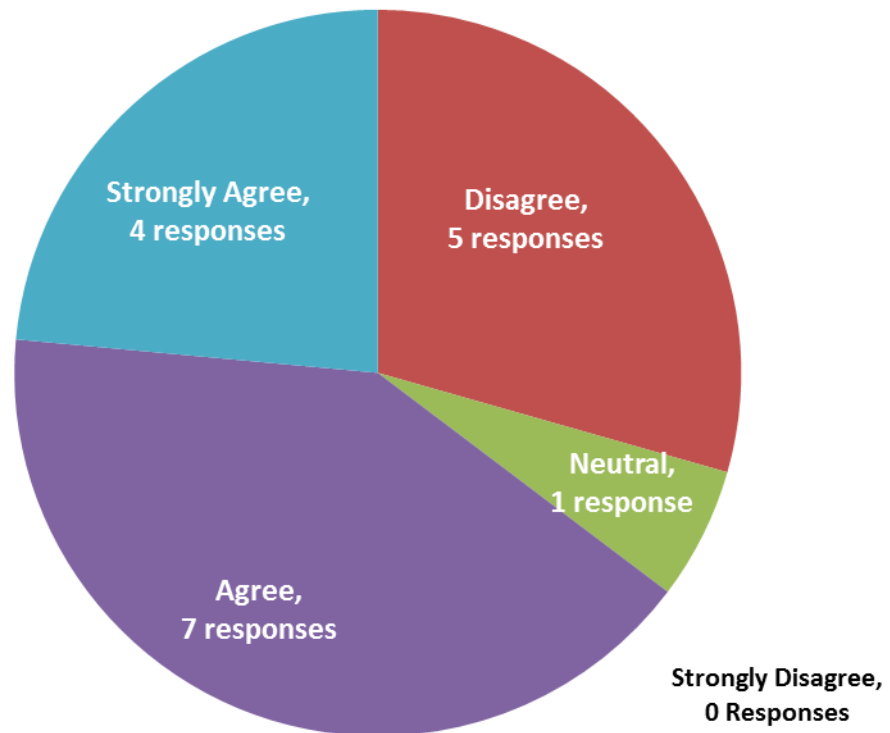
Statement One: "The Far North District Council communicates their strategic direction effectively"



Comments made with this statement included the following:

- Regular email and web based information is effective.
- FNDC Strategy is available on the FNDC Website and is documented, and I understand FNDC strategy is well articulated at forums like CEO's Forum and the Mayoral Forum, and is well represented at TTNEAP. There is opportunity to share strategic direction at other interagency forums and this information would be of benefit to shaping the future of the Northland Region. Representatives from FNDC that attend the interagency forums hosted by MSD contribute freely and their input is valued and appreciated. Distance is a barrier to participation so we will endeavour to bring our meetings to FNDC where this is practicable.
- To be honest I have not looked for you strategic direction.
- Limited opportunities for face to face updates are carried out. Reliance seems to be more on printed and digital methods. Having said that, the information provided in formal correspondence (rates demands) are useful, BUT doesn't work when there are multiple shareholders in land ownership.

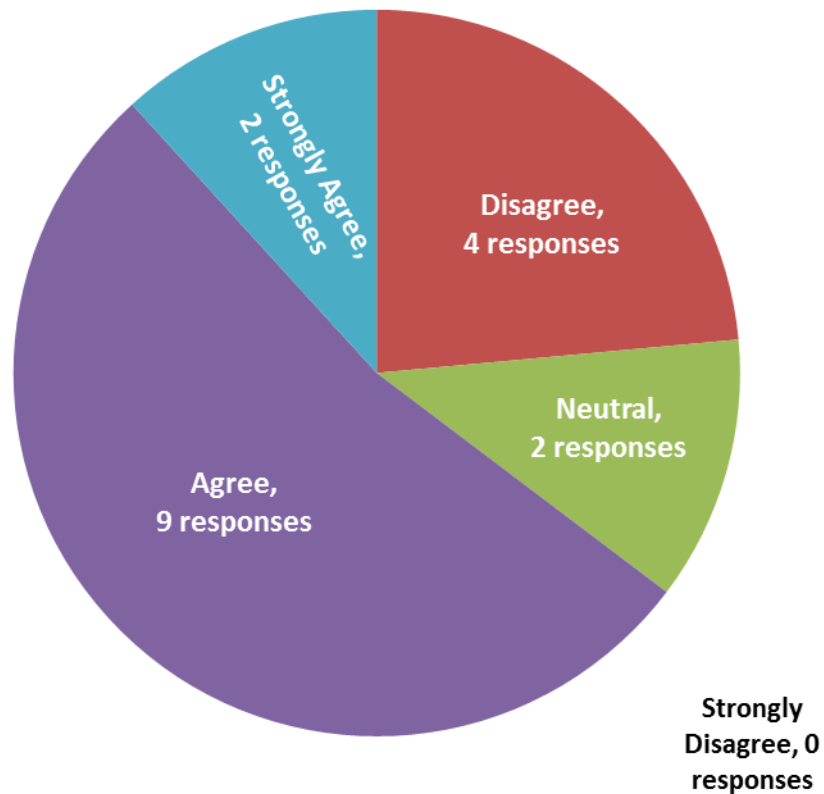
Statement Two: “The Far North District Council communicates effectively with me and my organisation”



Comments made with this statement included the following:

- *Communication varies across the organisation, however outside the efficiency of the roading department our experience is that communication could be improved. This is largely non or very slow response to emails, phone calls etc. Requests from us are often last minute or poorly timed*
- *Most time it is very difficult to get information from FNDC.*
- *Distance is a barrier to participation and lining up dates in busy schedules is also problematic. We value FNDC participation at our interagency forums and would welcome opportunities to make this easier.*
- *I find this council to be one of the best I have dealings with.*
- *Communications with Mayor/Chief Executive to our Chief Executive are excellent, as is communication in relation to the District Plan. Processing of consents and similar matters are much more difficult.*
- *Strong communication links exist between: - The Mayor and my Chair - The Chief Executives - and between operational staff, however communication between elected members is inadequate.*

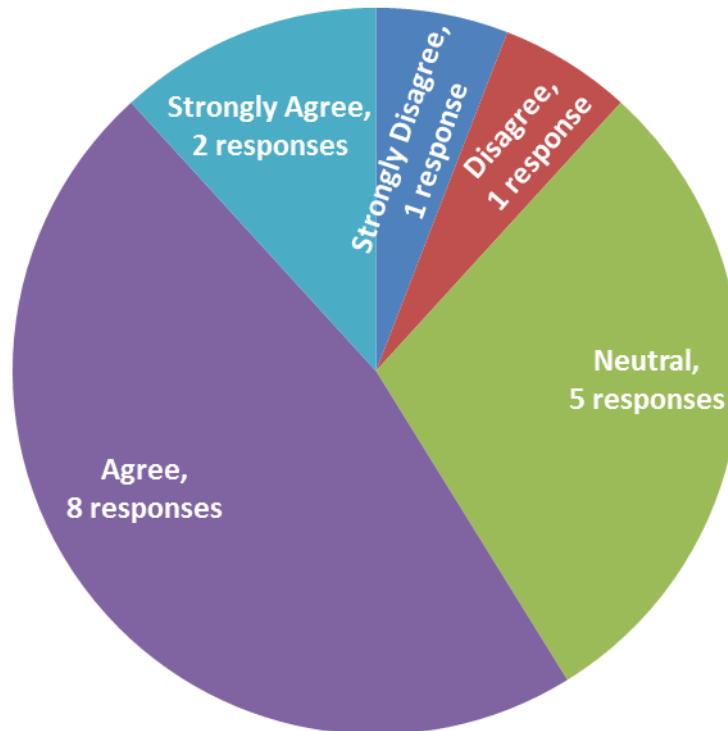
Statement Three: “The Far North District Council treats my organisation fairly and justly on matters that concern us”



Comments made with this statement included the following:

- *We are continuously educating the FNDC staff about the agreement signed and what the FNDC agreed to when it was signed*
- *Very variable. At a political level our organisations work well together. Regarding the FNDC District Plan Review the FNDC has treated us fairly. The performance of the FNDC resource consent department, in terms of processing consent applications, is very poor insofar as failing to comply with statutory time frames, promising delivery of consent approvals and not complying with those promises.*
- *This is highly variable. We have always been treated fairly for any regulatory function that we are subject to FNDC jurisdiction, however, we have often been placed in the invidious position of having to take enforcement action against FNDC due to your councils refusal to meet certain of your obligations under the RMA*
- *We are fortunate to have governance members and operational senior staff who know and understand council processes.*

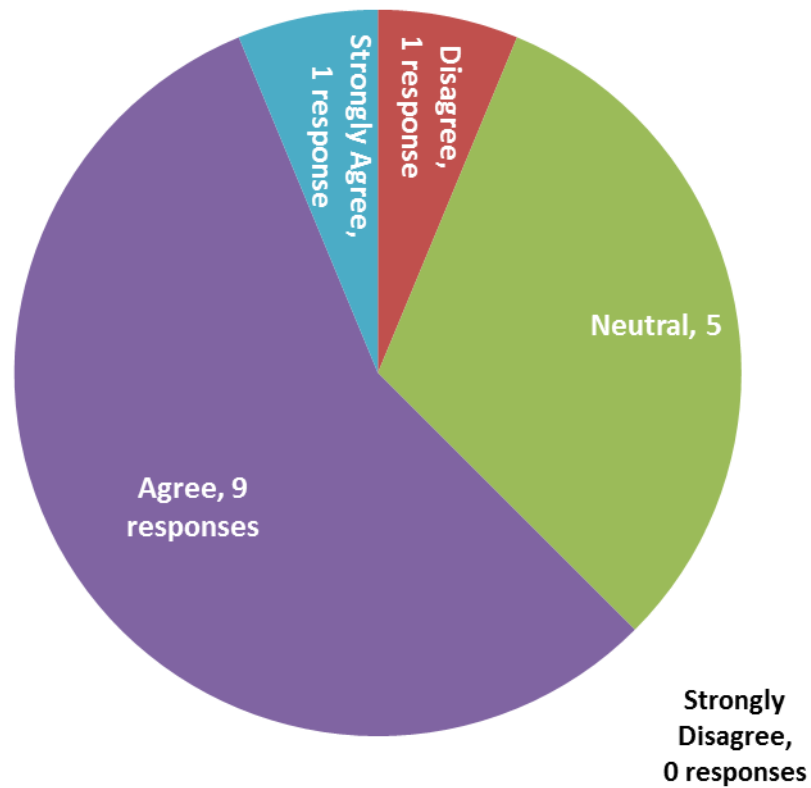
Statement Four: “The Far North District Council responds within an appropriate timeframe to matters or concerns that are raised by my organisation”



Comments made with this statement included the following:

- Responses with the roading department around events is excellent and appreciated. At times responses from other areas of FNDC is varied
- At a strategic level FNDC is prompt at dealing with community matters. However at times FNDC representation at industry meetings have been poor and not consistent.
- Yes, individual staff members respond within an appropriate timeframe to matters or concerns that have been raised by my organisation And no in other instances
- In most cases yes, however there have been times when feedback or response has been slow

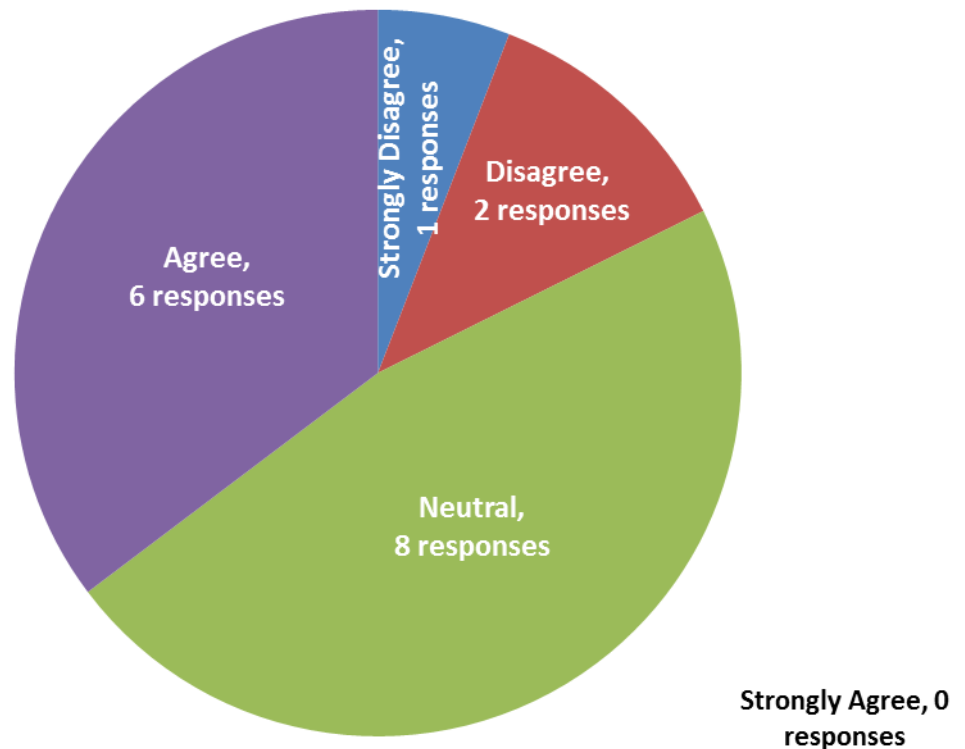
Statement Five: “The Far North District Council addresses the matters or concerns that are raised by my organisation”



Comments made with this statement included the following:

- *Council responds in its own time*
- *Yes, individual staff members address the matters or concerns that have been raised by my organisation*
- *While issues are ultimately addressed the timeframes to achieve a response is excessive. I accept that this perception as with the response above are strongly influenced by a lack of visibility of FNDC's priorities and work programmes. There is likely to be a whole lot happening that I have no visibility of but the lack of feedback leads to frustrations and friction. I also acknowledge that issues of common concern are often complex and costly to resolve*

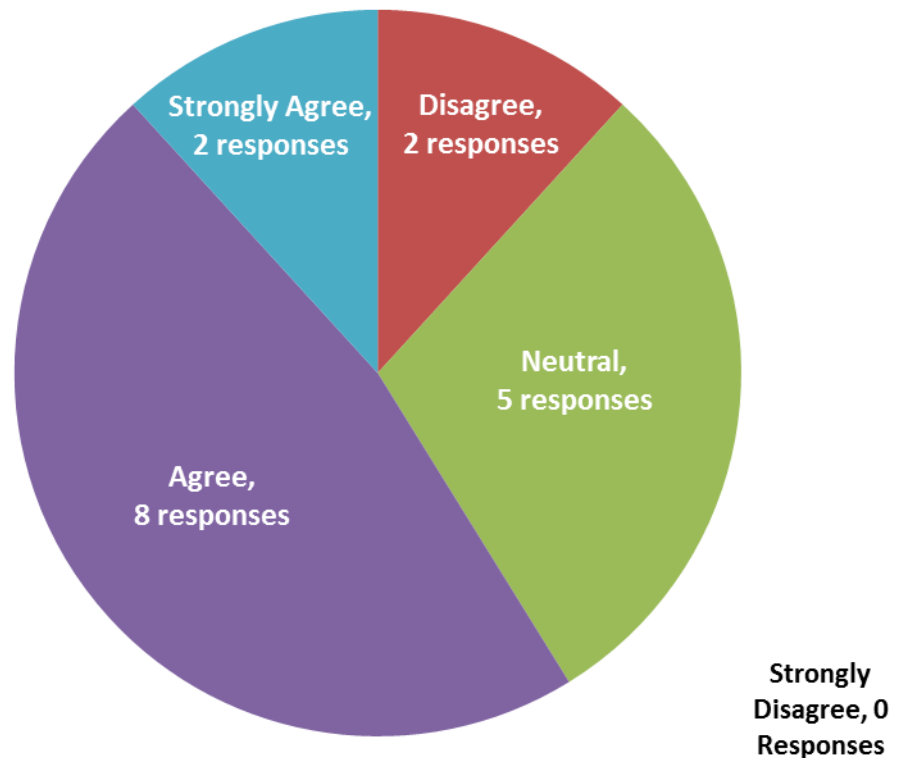
Statement Six: “When making an important decision, the Far North District Council considers how this will impact my organisation”



Comments made with this statement included the following:

- *Probably not but we need to establish more of a strategic relationship especially around the consent process for Marae*
- *Yes very much so*
- *Back when the Local Government Reorganization was on the cards, FNDC very much acted alone*
- *Sometimes, reluctantly*
- *I see no evidence that the elected members take regional consequences or direct impacts on my agency into account in their decision-making process*
- *Under statutory obligations, particularly with RMA matters yes, but does not always consult when proposals are being made that require a deliberation by Council*

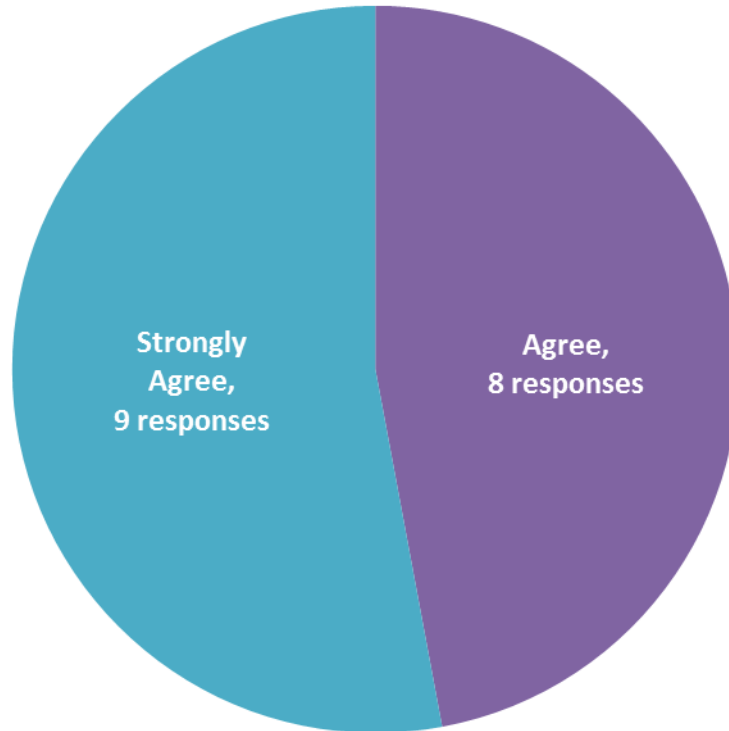
Statement Seven: “The Far North District Council keeps its commitments to my organisation”



Comments made with this statement included the following

- *We are currently trying to get our CoC completed with FNDC but they have not replied to some of our emails trying to resolve this matter.*
- *Distance is a barrier to participation*
- *Yes and no we don't have a strategic relationship but we can both work on it.*
- *In some areas this is correct, however this is significantly overshadowed by the failure of the resource consent division to keep to its statutory and otherwise promised commitments*
- *Once a commitment is made it is always kept - the problem is getting the Council to make a decision or commitment.*

Statement Eight: “My organisation is willing to work together with the Far North District Council on future planning and project work, where it aligns with the objectives or functions of my organization”



Comments made with this statement included the following;

- *Compared to other Councils I work with FNDC is responsive, helpful and professional with a real willingness for FNDC staff to make themselves available and talk about issues if required*
- *In the past year it has been increasingly hard to get hold of a person inside the consents/policy team to provide guidance on RMA issues. This is partly due to staff promotions/changes*
- *Yes we are willing to work together with the Far North District Council on future planning and project work, where it aligns with the objectives or functions of my organization*
- *Our organisations both work within the public infrastructure space and need to work co-operatively together. The relationship is sound at the political/CEO level, but delivery of transactional requirements doesn't always reflect this commitment*

Further Comments

The survey allowed for further comments to be made: Below is a summary of these comments:

- *Our relationships with FNDC are across a number of different departments/staff so therefore the experiences differ greatly, however overall the relationship and outcomes we seek together are very positive which can be continually improved with clearer and more timely communication*
- *Compared to other Councils I work with FNDC is responsive, helpful and professional with a real willingness for FNDC staff to make themselves available and talk about issues if required*
- *I think what I bring to the table is the interest of my group from a practical point of view but also what other councils are doing and what has worked well in other areas*
- *I have worked with FNDC staff on a number of projects over the years and am currently working with them on an on going project. FNDC have proven themselves a good partner to work with*

Survey Analysis

At 37% the number of responding agencies was low. As part of conducting the survey Administration observed the following that they consider as contributing to the low response to the survey:

- The contact information currently held by Council is not up to date. This resulted in a few 'return to sender' responses
- The person(s) identified by Council as the key contact at many organisations was not the relationship owner for FNDC and therefore could not provide a valid response to the survey
- The person(s) identified by Council as the key contact at the organisations held many varied positions within the organisation and could not comment on the relationship with FNDC

Across the responses received in general the responses were positive (agree, strongly agree). This was supported by commentary for each question. It was observed that the interactions and touch points across the Council varied that influenced how the responder replied. This demonstrated a lack of consistency on how Council interacted with each group across the various departments and at the elected member level.

Recommendations

Administration recommends the following actions as a result of completing this survey:

- A reassessment of the important and influential relationships is completed to coincide with the anniversary of the last assessment in September 2018. This will reaffirm if Council is focused on the relationships that are important going forward and as Council progresses with the development of District Strategy.. This should be done in the context of the key transformational opportunities that are coming out of the District Strategy that is currently in development and being lead by Council.
- A follow up Summit with the strategically important organisations should be arranged for mid 2020. This will reaffirm the relationship and also provide an opportunity to come together as a collective
- The information held by Council on the key contacts within each organisation needs to be updated and maintained.
- Owners of each relationship should be identified at an Elected Member Level and Strategic Leadership Team Level.
- The Strategic Leadership Team owner should be made accountable for;
 - Ensuring the relationship information is kept current
 - Putting in place a plan to grow and improve the relationship
 - Reporting back to the Governance and Strategic Relationships Committee on progress made towards growing and improving the relationship against agreed measurables