

Reference Number: 2023/1033

26 January 2024

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for email of 10 December 2023 requesting under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (LGOIMA), information relating to the Ombudsman's report 'Open for Business' and Council expenditure. Please see outlined below a response to each part of your request.

***Topic A - Ombudsman's report 'Open for Business' dated October 2023
What steps has your territorial authority taken in regards to the Ombudsman's report?***

Firstly we would like to note that on initial assessment of the Ombudsman Report we are currently doing a number of the recommendations, such as an open approach to workshops and briefings as a default, with the incorporation of live streaming.

Horowhenua District Council (the Council) upon receipt of the Ombudsman's report, has carefully begun a process of considering the recommendations. This involves a thorough examination and internal discussions to assess how each recommendation could be implemented and the implications of each recommendation.

What actions/motions have been passed by your territorial authority in response to the Ombudsman's report? What steps are still under consideration?

As of now, no specific actions or motions have been passed. We are currently reviewing the Ombudsman's report, and will be briefing council early in the New Year with recommendation findings.

What has or will the total cost been of any changes?

Any cost of potential changes resulting from the Ombudsman's report are yet to be determined.

***Topic B - costs relating to councillors interactions
How much has your territorial authority budgeted in each of the last 3 years for any costs related to councillor conduct. This could include individual conduct or between other councillors, mayor/chair or Chief Executive. This may include mediation, legal fees, legal investigations and similar.***

The Council does set aside a budget for legal fees, but it is specifically designated for general legal expenses. There is no budget allocated specifically for addressing councillor conduct.

How much has your territorial authority spent in each of the last 3 financial years for any costs related to councillor conduct. This could include individual conduct or between other councillors, mayor/chair or Chief Executive. This may include mediation, legal fees, legal investigations and similar.

Over the last 3 financial years there has been no cost incurred related to councillor conduct. There have been no expenses associated with councilor conduct over the past three financial years.

Topic C - staffing numbers

What is the full FTE staff number if your territorial authority was fully staffed?

236.1 (18.6 FTE vacant)

What is your current FTE staff number employed?

Council's current FTE is 217.5

What percentage of full FTE staff required is currently vacant?

7.88% is currently vacant.

What percentage of the vacant positions are not being actively recruited to fill. Eg what percentage are currently remaining vacant?

Of the 18.6 vacant FTE we are currently recruiting for 7.6 FTE, which is 41%

What effect will these vacancies have on the services your territorial authority delivers / can deliver?

Any current vacancies in roles that support essential services are covered by contractors to minimise any impact on our services.

Topic D - senior leadership

Has your Chief Executive resigned, or a new CE been appointed in the last 3 years?

Yes, a new Chief Executive has been appointed in the last 3 years.

How many of your Tier Two leaders resigned, or a new leader been appointed in the last 3 years?

We have had 4 Tier Two Leaders resign and 4 new Tier Two Leaders appointed in the last 3 years

Have your territorial authority had a staff restructure implemented, considered by senior leadership or consulted in in the last 3 years. This includes a restructure of the whole territorial authority, or one or more department.

Yes, Council has had a restructure in the last 3 years.

Topic E – contractors

The following numbers for Topic E questions relate to consultants and contractors we deemed as providing professional services for:

1. short term projects where it would not be feasible to engage as an employment capacity (i.e. due to time and skill set of the work).
2. specialist knowledge that are only needed for advice, and would not be feasible to have as an employee because the workload is inconsistent.
3. backfilling where we have staff vacancy. These consultants are completing tasks that would otherwise have been able to be completed by staff directly employed by council.

How much was budgeted by your territorial authority in each of the last 3 years for external contractors?

2020/21 (\$000)	2021/22 (\$000)	2022/23 (\$000)
\$3,386	\$4,617	\$5,655

How much was the budgeted amount as a percentage of total income for each of the last three years?

2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
5.60%	6.31%	7.43%

How much was spent by your territorial authority in each of the last 3 years for external contractors?

2020/21 (\$000)	2021/22 (\$000)	2022/23 (\$000)
\$5,082	\$5,081	\$5,005

How much was the amount spent on contractors as a percentage of total income for each of the last three years?

2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
7.05%	7.06%	6.68%

Is your territorial authority's spend on contractors expected to increase this year because of staffing shortages.

No, this is not expected to increase.

Could the services contracted for be hired directly under the territorial authority?

Some services could be but it has been considered more efficient to contract the work.

What were the three companies, receiving the highest contractors spend in the last year?

WSP New Zealand Limited, GHD Limited & Leith Consulting Limited

You are entitled to seek an investigation and review by the Office of the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Horowhenua District Council publishes responses to Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (LGOIMA) requests that we consider to be of wider public interest, or which relate to a subject that has been widely requested. To protect your privacy, we will not generally publish personal information about you, or information that identifies you. We will publish the LGOIMA response along with a summary of the request on our website. Requests and responses may be paraphrased.

If you would like to discuss this decision or any of the information provided as part of this request, please contact Jacinta Straker (Group Manager Organisation Performance) on jacintas@horowhenua.govt.nz.

Ngā mihi



Monique Davidson
Chief Executive