

Chief sought for new Auckland Council

The role of Interim Chief Executive of the Auckland Council is to be advertised from tomorrow.

The position – which is for a fixed term to 29 June 2012 – calls for an individual who can build a high-performing, customer-focused organisation. The successful candidate is expected to have:

- Significant experience at Chief Executive level in managing large and complex change.
- Direct experience of strategic public sector leadership or exposure to commercial roles with public sector impact.
- The ability to create a culture of innovation and performance.
- Success in integrating teams into a high-performing unit.

ATA Board member Wayne Walden is to chair the sub-committee that will make the final appointment. He said: “We are searching for an exceptional individual with expertise in change management who will establish an appropriate culture of performance at the Auckland Council.”

Ian Taylor, the Executive Director of Sheffield Search – the agency appointed to lead the search – said: “This will be a local and global search and we anticipate there will be considerable interest.”

The job advertisement will appear in local newspapers, online and be circulated via Sheffield’s local and international search networks. A copy can also be accessed on the ATA website www.ata.govt.nz – click on Auckland Council.

Integrated treasury for Auckland councils

The Auckland Transition Agency (ATA) has worked with Auckland’s existing local councils to create an integrated treasury group to coordinate treasury decisions during the transition period with the objectives of reducing treasury related risks for the Auckland Council on 1 November 2010 and achieving efficiency savings.

ATA advisor Andy Coupe, who co leads the finance and treasury work stream, said the integrated treasury group will source funds on behalf of Auckland’s existing local councils prior to the establishment of the new Auckland Council.

It avoids the need for the separate councils to continue with individual strategies to raise funds, such as issuing parcels of debt to investors through banks on the wholesale market or through retail bonds.

Until the formation of the Auckland Council, the group will work jointly to ensure the borrowing needs of the existing councils are met as efficiently as possible. Auckland City Council, which has the strongest credit rating, will be used as the conduit for the region’s borrowing.

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Decisions made by the group must fit with individual councils' long-term plans and treasury management policies.

Andy said that without such an integrated treasury decision-making framework there was a high likelihood that the Auckland Council would have inherited an imbalanced treasury portfolio on 1 November 2010 with a high concentration of maturing debt and interest rate risk. The integrated treasury group will be coordinating treasury decisions to mitigate this risk.

Updates on work streams

To ensure the timeframe required by the government is met, the ATA has organised tasks required for transition into project management work streams.

The full list is available at http://www.ata.govt.nz/web/cms_ata.nsf/weblive/WGTN-7TE734?OpenDocument.

The ATA is committed to providing updates on its progress and reports from a number of work streams are published below.

Business processes and systems

Contact mike.foley@ata.govt.nz

Work is continuing with planning activities to deliver several key programmes of work required for Day 1 – including computer network consolidation, email consolidation, website and telephony. Additionally we continue to review the assumptions and expectations of the other work streams. Work is being undertaken to verify the solutions required in the financial consolidation, reporting and planning functions.

Customer services

Contact trish.langridge@ata.govt.nz

Discovery information has been analysed and project work is under way in three areas – the development of a customer service channel strategy, the development of a website in conjunction with the communications and business processes and systems work streams, and the telephony and call centre project also in conjunction with the business process and systems work stream. Other projects to be launched shortly include: a complaints management project, developing key performance indicators, working with the HR work stream on the customer service structures, and scoping potential transaction improvement processes.

Human resources

Contact laila.harre@ata.govt.nz

Following the release of last week's Discussion Document, meetings with councils and council-controlled organisations are continuing and feedback is being received. The position of Interim Chief Executive at the Auckland Council is to be advertised and the approach to other senior council appointments is being developed into a proposal for comment. Within the work stream, projects on HR function design, HR information systems and HR policies and processes are under way.

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Regulatory services

Contact heather.harris@ata.govt.nz

Analysis of discovery information provided by councils is very close to completion. This analysis will be a valuable tool for future design. Project plans have been completed for the six principal projects within the regulatory work stream (resource consenting, building, animal control, licensing, enforcement and an overarching integration project to achieve consistency across regulatory processes). Work on developing consistent forms has been prioritised because of the potential systems and customer service implications, and the need to ensure there is a good lead time for implementation. Ensuring appropriate delegations are in place for Day 1 will be important, not just for regulatory, but also across council activities. For this reason, this work has been shifted to the governance work stream, with the regulatory work stream having input into the development of delegations as this work is progressed.

Governance

Contact grant.taylor@ata.govt.nz

Work on four projects in the governance work stream is under way. On the elections project, the electoral officer has been appointed; work on delegation levels for the Auckland Council is under way; and preliminary planning has commenced on the mayoral and council set-up requirements and the support required for future local boards.

Finance and treasury

Contact andy.coupe@ata.govt.nz and brian.monk@ata.govt.nz

Project plan scoping is largely complete and the teams are working through discovery information and in many cases already deeply involved in satisfying requirements for early deliverables – for example, the technical accounting team have recently been drafting a supportive submission to the New Zealand Institute of Chartered Accountants in respect of a proposed exemption to current New Zealand accounting standards. The exemption that is proposed to be specifically adopted is required in order to deal with the nature of this local government reorganisation and which is not adequately contemplated and reflected in New Zealand's existing accounting standards.

Planning and policy

Contact craig.shearer@ata.govt.nz

There are four projects underway in this work stream. The first focuses on the organisational arrangements for the policy and planning function of the Auckland Council, including consideration of the volume of policy and planning documents which are already approved, are being developed and will be initiated over the next year. A second project will focus on the research, investigations and monitoring responsibilities of councils and the appropriate supporting arrangements. Two further projects are being sponsored by the Regional Policy Steering Group. These are the future planning framework project - setting out the scope of the various plans the new council will need and the relationships among them - and the appeals project, which aims to settle all the Environment Court appeals Auckland's current councils have in opposition to each other, thus avoiding the situation of the new council having appeals against itself.

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Environmental services

Contact kerry.connolly@ata.govt.nz

Activities in eight project areas are under way – stormwater, solid waste, contaminated land, hazardous substances, bathing water monitoring, harbourmaster, biosecurity, and natural and physical resource management (including pollution, natural and cultural heritage, conservation and biodiversity, and environmental and sustainability programmes). Information from the discovery process is being evaluated and project teams are involved in assisting the ATA with the strategy and design phase for each area. Liaison is taking place with Watercare on inter-relationships between stormwater and wastewater functions.

Communications and public affairs

Contact clive.nelson@ata.govt.nz

Council nominees are involved in work stream projects including developing internal and external communications services for Day 1 and ensuring business continuity during and after the transition. Scoping work on the Auckland Council website is under way, in conjunction with the customer service and business systems and processes work streams.

Property

Contact david.blow@ata.govt.nz

The discovery information has been analysed and summarised. A draft report on property management arrangements for the Auckland Council is being prepared for review. The office accommodation utilised by the existing councils is being mapped in preparation for determining the optimum location of staff for the new council and its associated entities.

CCOs, trusts and investments

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In transport, current state and future options analysis work has been undertaken in the following project areas: planning and programming; infrastructure development and management; road network operations; public transport operations; parking services and enforcement; road safety and travel planning; customer interface; staffing and human resources; IT systems; finance, contracts, assets and legal; communications and branding; governance and stakeholder relations; and business planning.

In water, the due diligence process is now complete, a strategic plan prepared and work has commenced on a business programme with work streams dedicated to detailed planning. The search is ongoing for a Transition CEO.

Community services

Contact colin.dale@ata.govt.nz

Work stream activity is progressing well, with analysis of discovery information nearly complete. A review of all CCOs and community trusts which deliver community services is under way. This review will focus on governance arrangements and service continuity.

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Economic development

Contact craig.shearer@ata.govt.nz

This work stream has progressed to a scoping and research phase. This phase includes interviews with all current organisations and councils, a scan of international practice and a functional analysis of existing strategies and plans in the region. Detailed design is due to commence in December. Final design will be complete by the end of January. A close working relationship with the Ministry of Economic Development (MED) will be important to ensure that the structure of the new arrangements complement those of central government.

Legal

Contact rob.fisher@ata.govt.nz

Work on three projects is advancing: legal function, which includes defining the nature, scope and design of the legal function for the Auckland Council and major CCOs; the development of a litigation register of current matters; and the development of a contracts register. Some work is being undertaken jointly with the finance and treasury work stream.