Auckland Council Elected Members Survey 2017: Full Report

October 2017

Auckland Council
Te Kaunihera o Tāmaki Makaurau

Auckland Council Elected Members Survey 2017: Full Report

Dr Jesse Allpress
Dr Carina Meares
Research and Evaluation Unit, Auckland Council

Table of contents

Main messages

Auckland Council elected members were asked in surveys and focus groups in 2017 about their satisfaction with the advice and support they have received from Auckland Council employees since the start of the electoral term.

Overall satisfaction with council support remains steady at 53%, up only 2 percentage points on 2016.

A number of **positive findings** were seen, including:
- Satisfaction with all administrative support and professional development services increased from 2016. Notably large increases were seen for the Kura Kāwana programme (+19% point increase) and technology equipment and support (+13%).
- Local Board members' satisfaction with engagement and reporting from Regional Facilities Auckland and Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development increased from 2016. Satisfaction with Regional Facilities Auckland, in particular, more than doubled from 2016 levels.
- Elected member satisfaction with the dedicated support they receive from Local Board Services and Democracy Services departments continues to be high (86% and 75%, respectively).

However, the results also identify a number of **issues of concern**:
- Only one in five elected members (22%) agreed that the council family (including the governing body, local boards and CCOs) is progressing towards functioning as a unified organisation, down 2 percentage points on 2016.
- Although satisfaction with in-person advice from council staff at council meetings and workshops increased from 2016 (to 62% and 61%, respectively), satisfaction with agenda reports remained static at 55% and satisfaction with the timeliness continues to be low, at 30%.
- A number of elected members expressed concern about the independence of the advice they are given by council officers, noting that they have found some staff to be 'too involved', 'opinionated', 'biased' or 'obstructive'.
- Organisational restructuring was identified by elected members as leading to losses in institutional expertise and knowledge, as well as decreases in quantity, timeliness and sometimes quality of support provided to elected members.

The static overall satisfaction score over the last five years, as well as a lack of progress on other measures, indicates a need for more radical change. The survey identifies a number of **critical areas for future focus**, including:
- A continued focus on improving the quality, consistency and timeliness of advice provided to elected members.
- Focusing on ensuring the council family (including governing body, local boards and CCOs) are working in a consistent and unified manner. Progress on this issue must address issues related to governing body and local board roles within the shared governance structure, CCO accountability and council departmental coordination.
- Addressing the negative impacts of restructuring.

Executive summary

This report describes the results of the 2017 survey of Auckland Council elected members as well as thematic analyses of focus groups held with governing body and local board members. It presents detailed results for each question in the survey, exploring differences between these findings and those from the previous surveys undertaken in 2014 and 2016, as well as differences between the perspectives of local board and governing body respondents.

Survey purpose and sample

The purpose of the survey and focus groups was to gauge elected members' satisfaction with the advice and support they have received from Auckland Council employees since the start of the electoral term in November 2016.

This year's survey involved quantitative questions; two qualitative questions; and an opportunity to participate in focus groups. The survey was completed electronically, and took place between 25 July and 13 August, 2017. A total of 110 survey responses were received, reflecting an overall response rate of 65 per cent; this breaks down to a 57 per cent response rate for governing body members and 66 per cent for local board members. It is important to note when considering 2017 governing body satisfaction rates that each governing body member equates to 8 percentage points.

Overall satisfaction

Just over half (53%) of all elected members were satisfied with the overall support provided to them by council employees, a small increase of 2 per cent since 2016. Despite this small increase, and a commensurate decrease in dissatisfaction (from 10% to 7%), these results suggest that further work is required to reach the organisation's performance target of 65 per cent satisfaction.

Overall satisfaction with advice and support provided by council employees
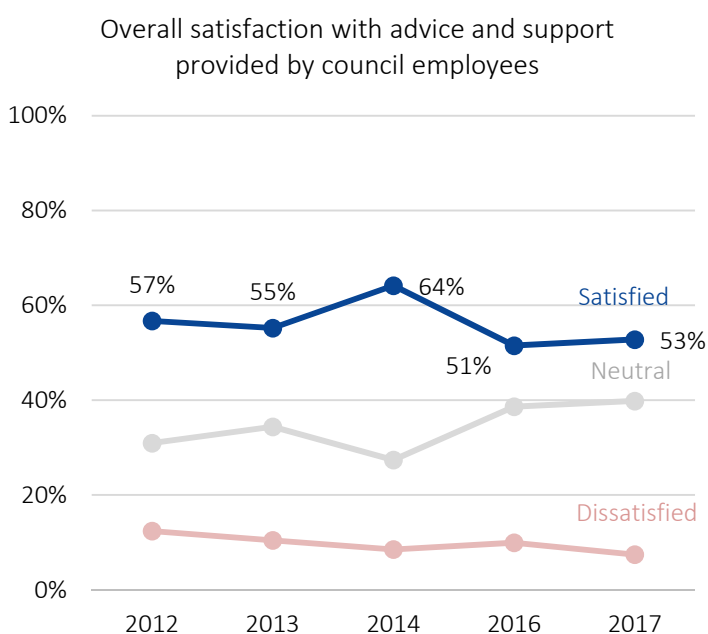
Key drivers of satisfaction

A key driver analysis was conducted to identify which areas of council activity were the strongest 'drivers' of overall satisfaction, as well as where improvement is most needed.

The analysis highlights the following primary areas for improvement:
- The quality of advice provided to elected members, particularly with respect to timeliness and the advice contained in agenda reports
- The progress of the Auckland Council family (including the governing body, local boards and Council Controlled Organisations [CCOs]) toward one unified organisation
- Engagement from CCOs
- Local Board communications support.

The key driver analysis shows that the organisation is doing well in the following areas:
- Local Board Services and Local Board Financial Advisory support
- Administrative and professional development support
- Democracy Services support.
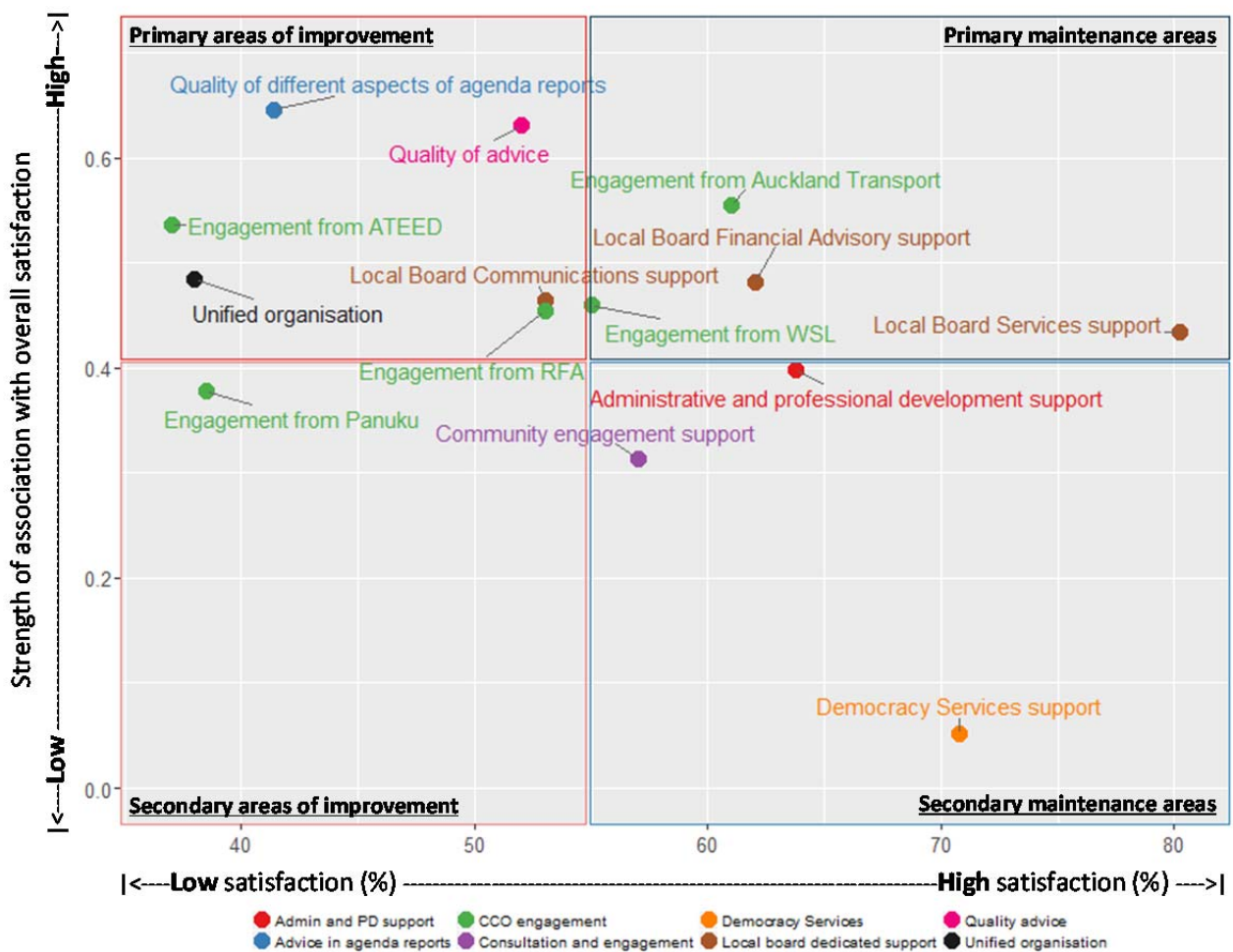
Note, the average satisfaction with Auckland Transport (AT) is influenced by very high levels of satisfaction with AT Relationship Managers. When including only engagement and consultation scores in the calculation places Auckland Transport in the 'areas for improvement' quadrant.

Progress toward one organisation

Approximately one in five elected members (22%) agreed that the council family (including the governing body, local boards and CCOs) was progressing towards functioning as a unified organisation, reflecting a small decrease from 24 per cent agreement in 2016. A larger proportion disagreed (36%) or were neutral (42%).
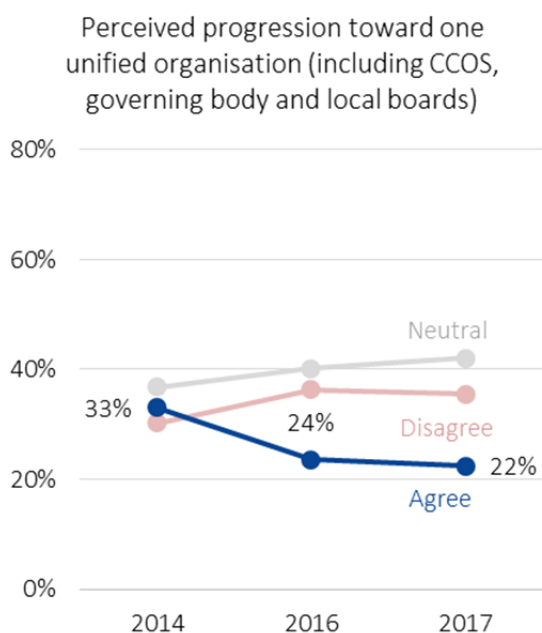
Note, this survey question asks about the coordination of four entities (council departments, CCOs, governing body and local boards). Some elected members commented in the survey that they found coordination between council staff to be lacking in some instances, although these comments were not explicitly linked to the 'unified organisation' question.

When governing body focus group participants were asked directly about progress toward one unified organisation, they focused their discussion primarily on the relationships between the governing body and local boards, as well as between elected members and CCOs. Less focus was put on coordination among council departments.

Discussion during the focus group included views that the governing body-local board-CCO structure, with distinct but overlapping areas of responsibility and accountability, makes addressing issues in a unified way inherently difficult. Other participants felt that any current lack of unified coordination was more a result of relationship and communication issues.

___

Quality advice

The majority of elected members were satisfied with the quality of advice provided to them in agenda reports (55%), in person at council meetings (62%), and for (and at) workshops (61%). They were less satisfied with the timeliness of advice provided by council employees, with 30 per cent satisfied, and 30 per cent dissatisfied.

A number of elected members commented that they found it difficult to assign one overall number, as they experience a wide variation in the quality of advice across individual council teams and staff.
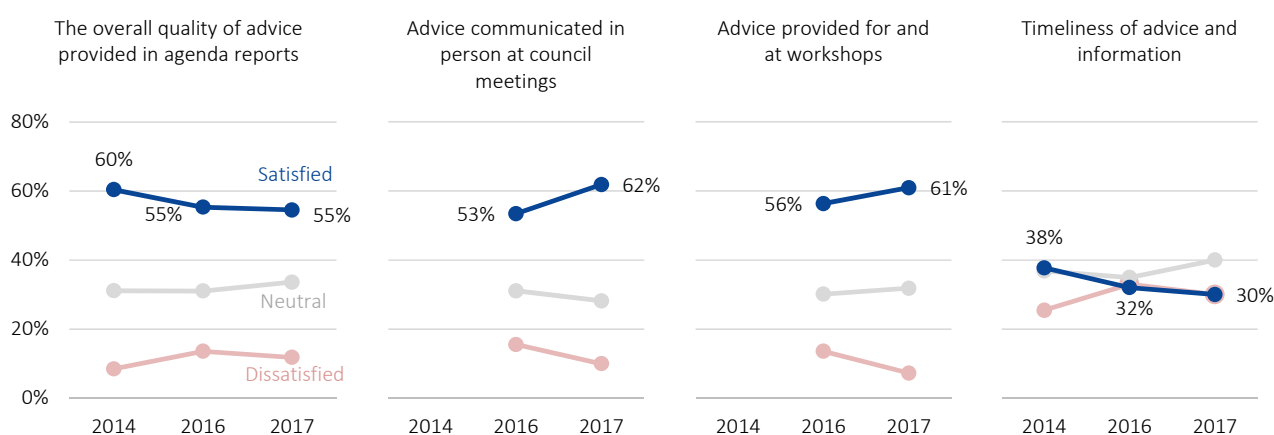
When asked how the quality of advice had changed over their tenure as elected members, 38 per cent reported an improvement, 50 per cent no change, and 12 per cent a decrease in quality.

The proportion of elected members who think that the quality of advice has improved has decreased by 5 percentage points since 2016, while the proportion who think it has stayed the same has increased by 7%. Most of the elected members who felt the quality of advice had stayed the same over time reported being either satisfied with (52%) or neutral toward (37%) the recent advice received in agenda reports. Only a minority were dissatisfied (11%).

Elected members were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with various aspects of agenda reports. They were most satisfied with the definition of the problem/opportunity (57%) and clarity of recommendations (49%). The levels of satisfaction with all other aspects of agenda reports were relatively low, ranging between 35 and 46 per cent.

Participants were particularly dissatisfied with the following aspects of agenda reports: environmental impact assessments (26% dissatisfied), local board views (25% dissatisfied), Māori impact statements (23% dissatisfied) and local impacts (22% dissatisfied).

Governing body focus group participants described the overall state of reports as inadequate but improving and noted that while some workshops were good, others needed to be tighter, better defined and more targeted. Excellent advice, they said, should be independent; with a clear

articulation of risks and implications; have well-articulated trade-offs; be definitive, lucid and tight; as well as succinct and to the point. Of these, two qualities were emphasised: independence and succinctness.

Administrative support and professional development

Notable increases in satisfaction were seen across the different forms of administrative and professional development support provided to elected members. In particular, satisfaction with technology equipment and support was up for both local board (+15% point increase) and governing body (+8%) members. Satisfaction with the Kura Kāwana programme increased a lot for local board members (+24%), but declined for governing body members (-18%). Governing body focus group feedback indicated this decline in satisfaction was likely due to poor attendance of governing body members at available training session, rather than poor delivery of specific training sessions.

Democracy and advisory support

Governing body members were asked to rate their satisfaction with different aspects of the dedicated support they received from Democracy Services. Respondents reported high levels of satisfaction with the overall support provided to them by Democracy Services (75%), although this had decreased 5 percentage points since 2016. Satisfaction increased for both democracy advice and meeting support (92%) and Councillor Support Advisor (CSA) support (83%).

Satisfaction with governance-related strategic and policy advice provided by Democracy Services decreased notably to 33 per cent satisfied in 2017.

Local board dedicated support

Local board members were asked about their satisfaction with different aspects of dedicated support received from Local Board Services, the Local Board Communications team and the Local Board Financial Advisory Services team. The overall satisfaction with the dedicated support provided to local board members by Local Board Services was very high at 86 per cent. Satisfaction with the range of Local Board Services support functions was similarly high. Most scores were stable over time, with the exception of strategic and governance advice, which decreased 7 percentage points to 77 per cent in 2017.

Consultation and engagement

All elected members were asked about their satisfaction with the support they had received since the beginning of the electoral term in engaging with communities to increase their participation with, and understanding of, Auckland Council. Just over half (57%) were satisfied with the support received in this area, with 29 per cent neutral and 14 per cent dissatisfied. This represents a 7 percentage point increase in satisfaction since 2016. Dissatisfaction has remained low over the last three years.

Support from council departments

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the overall support they had received from elected-member facing departments since November 2016. Highest satisfaction levels were recorded for the Chief Economist Unit (73%),[1] Libraries and Information (65%), Infrastructure and Environmental Services (64%), Finance (61%) and Financial Planning and Strategy (60%). The greatest dissatisfaction was reported with the CCO Governance and External Partnerships team (32% dissatisfied), Auckland Design Office (29% dissatisfied), Legal and Risk (25% dissatisfied) and Auckland Plan, Strategy and Research (24% dissatisfied).

The largest increased in satisfaction from 2016 were seen for Plans and Places (+18% point increase), Infrastructure and Environmental Services (+9%) and the Auckland Design Office (+9%), while the largest decreases were experienced by CCO Governance and External Partnerships (-37%), the Chief Economist Unit (-20%) and Parks, Sport and Recreation (-13%).

---

[1] Chief Economist Unit satisfaction was only asked of governing body members.

Support from council departments.

Department	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied
Chief Economist Unit (n = 11)	73%	9%	18%
Libraries and Information (n = 102)	65%	25%	10%
Infrastructure and Environmental Services (n = 108)	64%	28%	8%
Finance (n = 109)	61%	29%	10%
Financial Planning and Strategy (n = 107)	60%	29%	11%
Plans and Places (n = 102)	51%	35%	14%
Te Waka Anga Mua ki Uta (n = 98)	49%	29%	22%
Parks, Sport and Recreation (n = 107)	49%	30%	21%
Arts, Community and Events (n = 107)	49%	38%	13%
Auckland Emergency Management (n = 94)	47%	31%	22%
Legal and Risk (n = 93)	46%	29%	25%
Resource Consents (n = 103)	45%	34%	21%
Community Facilities (n = 107)	44%	31%	25%
CCO Governance and External Partnerships (n = 103)	42%	26%	32%
Auckland Design Office (n = 82)	41%	29%	29%
Licensing and Compliance (n = 98)	41%	41%	18%
Communication and Engagement (n = 106)	40%	43%	17%
Auckland Plan Strategy and Research (n = 96)	40%	36%	24%
Community and Social Policy (n = 102)	39%	42%	19%

Engagement from Council Controlled Organisations

Local board members were asked about their satisfaction with engagement from CCOs. Levels of engagement from CCOs varied, for example almost all local board members had engaged with Auckland Transport (93%) whereas only 56 per cent had engaged with Regional Facilities Auckland (RFA).

Levels of satisfaction[2] with aspects of CCO engagement also varied but were particularly high for Auckland Transport relationship managers (85%). Overall improvements in satisfaction levels were evident for Regional Facilities Auckland (+30% point improvement in satisfaction with 'reporting to local board' and +28% for 'engagement with local board') and Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development (+8% in reporting and +3% in engagement).

Themes from written feedback

Three main themes emerged from an analysis of the written feedback provided by elected members: restructuring and its impacts identified as problematic; the perception that some staff lack impartiality; and dissatisfaction with the impact and influence of local boards. The first theme focuses on the multiple impacts of restructures which include a loss of institutional expertise, knowledge and understanding; a decrease in the quantity and sometimes quality of support provided to elected members; and the subsequent impacts of these changes on timeliness, accuracy and ultimately on public confidence.

The perception that some staff lack impartiality was the second theme. Elected members expressed concern about the independence of the advice they are given by council staff, noting that they have found some staff to be 'too involved', 'opinionated', 'biased' or 'obstructive'.

The third theme centred on local board members' concerns about a perceived lack of impact and influence on council decision-making; about being inadequately informed; and about being poorly regarded in comparison to their governing body counterparts.

Conclusion

This year's survey and focus groups have generated useful insights into elected members' satisfaction with the support they have received from Auckland Council staff since November 2016. In the previous survey, overall satisfaction levels for Democracy Services and Local Board Services were already strong, and this year's results are similar. The findings also demonstrate that we can celebrate improvements in administrative and professional development support; increases in satisfaction with Plans and Places, Infrastructure and Environmental Services and the Auckland Design Office; and notable increases in satisfaction for Auckland Tourism Events and Economic Development (ATEED) and Regional Facilities Auckland (RFA).

Despite these encouraging findings, the survey results also suggest that considerable work remains. This is reflected in three findings:

1. **A lack of improvement across a range of important issues.** Overall satisfaction rates have remained around 50 per cent since 2014; levels of satisfaction with the quality of advice in agenda reports remaining the same as 2014 (55%); and satisfaction with most of the components of agenda reports remaining largely unchanged since the previous survey, moving no more than 6 percentage points in either direction.

---

[2] Questions about satisfaction with specific CCOs were only asked of those elected members who indicated that they had had engagement with those CCOs since November 2016.

---

2. **Some of these results sit at relatively low levels.** Only around 20 per cent of elected members agree that the council family is progressing toward performing as a unified organisation; satisfaction with the timeliness of advice and information has not yet risen above 38 per cent; and many of the components of agenda reports including consideration of options, Māori impact statement and local impact have not risen above 40 per cent in the two most recent surveys.
3. **This survey saw declining levels of satisfaction in several council departments.** Levels of satisfaction decreased for 10 out of 19 council departments between 2016 and 2017.

The survey results, the key driver analysis, and the focus groups with elected members shed light on key areas for future focus: further improve the quality of advice provided to elected members; address the negative impact of restructuring; and support the council to operate seamlessly as one organisation.

Governance Framework Review

The 2016 Governance Framework Review considered how the organisation supports the Auckland Governance Reforms.

The Review recommendations were considered by four workstreams:
*   Funding and Finance
*   Policy
*   Governance and Representation
*   Organisational Support.

The Funding and Finance, Policy, Governance and Representation workstreams were overseen by a political working party comprising governing body and local board members. The Governing Body met and resolved on resolutions on 28 September 2017.

The Organisational Support workstream ran concurrently with the Elected Member Survey and looked at how the organisation currently supports elected members in their governance role. The workstream looked at opportunities and challenges in supporting local boards, opportunities for process and system improvements, organisational culture in supporting local boards, and additional support for staff working with local boards (e.g. education and training).

Workshops were held with 120 local board members to hear direct feedback on current levels of organisational support. Initial findings from the workshops with local board members support two of the three main themes which have emerged from the Elected Member Survey; restructuring and its impacts are problematic and to a lesser extent, dissatisfaction with the impact and influence of local boards.

1.0   Introduction

This report outlines in detail the findings of the 2017 Auckland Council elected members survey (held between 25 July and 13 August, 2017) and focus groups held with governing body and local board members in September 2017. The purpose of the survey and focus groups was to gauge elected members' satisfaction with the advice and support they had received from Auckland Council employees since the start of the electoral term in November 2016.

The council has set a goal of achieving 65 per cent satisfaction with the advice and support provided by council employees overall.

The results will be used for a range of purposes, including the Chief Executive's performance review, organisational and departmental performance indicators, and specific workstreams such as quality advice programme and Kura Kāwana - elected member development programme.

1.1   Background

Auckland's shared governance structure includes 149 local board members, 20 councillors representing 13 wards, and one mayor. These elected members are supported in a number of ways by Auckland Council staff from a range of different departments. It is critical for the effective functioning of local democracy, and for the ultimate success of Auckland as a whole, that this support is effective and appropriate, particularly in the context of ongoing political and organisational change. This report (along with earlier iterations in 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2016) forms a critical part of this continuing cycle of assessment, evaluation and improvement.

1.2   Method

In response to feedback that the 2016 survey was too long and did not offer elected members the opportunity to provide feedback face-to-face, this year's survey contained fewer free text boxes and included the opportunity for governing body and local board members to attend focus groups.

All elected members were sent an email from Chief Executive Stephen Town inviting them to take part in the survey. Respondents were also given the opportunity to complete the survey via hard copy if they preferred.[3] The survey involved mostly quantitative questions but also included two free text boxes that provided elected members with the opportunity to give feedback on the additional support Auckland Council could provide them and to make any additional comments they wished. The survey took on average 10-15 minutes to complete.

---

[3] One elected member requested a hard copy, but did not return it.

Individuals who had not completed the survey in the week following the initial invitation email were sent two email reminders over subsequent weeks and Local Board Services and Democracy Services staff followed up with elected members to encourage participation.

Elected members were invited to participate in focus groups held in September 2017 with local boards (organised and run by Local Board Services staff and held at three cluster workshops) and the governing body (organised and run by RIMU staff). Thematic analysis was undertaken on notes taken during local board focus groups and the sound recording made during the governing body focus group.

The survey questionnaire and focus group were reviewed and approved by the Auckland Council Human Participants Ethics Committee.

1.3 Response rates

A total of 110 survey responses were received, reflecting an overall response rate of 65 per cent, similar to the 62 per cent response rate in 2016. Response rates for governing body and local board members are presented in the table below.

Table 1. Response rates, by elected member type

	Number of sitting elected members	Number of survey responses	Survey response rate %	Per cent of survey sample %
Governing body	21	12	57%	11%
Local board	149	98	66%	89%
Overall	**170**	**110**	**65%**	**100%**

It is important to note when considering 2017 governing body satisfaction rates that each governing body member equates to approximately 8 percentage points.

1.4 This report

1.4.1 Analysis

Quantitative responses to survey questions were analysed overall and then disaggregated to investigate differences between local board and governing body members.

To improve readability and interpretation the 5-point satisfaction scales used throughout the survey have been simplified into 'dissatisfied' (responses '1' and '2'), 'neutral' (response '3'), and 'satisfied' (responses '4' and '5'). For overall graphs, all three response types are included; for governing body and local board comparisons only 'satisfied' percentages are compared.

Details on the analysis methods used can be seen in Appendix A. Percentages have been rounded in figures and may not sum to 100 in all cases.

1.4.2 Written feedback

Elected members were asked to provide feedback on the additional support Auckland Council could provide them to better perform their role, as well as given the opportunity to make any additional comments they wished. An analysis of these comments is included in the relevant sections of the report. For example, feedback provided on quality advice sits alongside quantitative results on that topic. In addition, the main themes that emerged from an overall analysis of these comments are discussed in Section 11.0.

Verbatim quotes are presented in italics throughout the report. When words have been added to maintain the sense of the passage, or removed to preserve the confidentiality of respondents, they appear in square brackets. When two or more words are left out of a quote this is indicated by '…'. Each quote is attributed either to a local board (LB) or governing body (GB) member in order to provide context for the reader. Small spelling and grammatical errors have been corrected in quotes, and where abbreviations have been included in comments, they have been written in full on the first iteration.

1.4.3 Focus group feedback

Following the survey, all elected members were invited to focus groups with their local board or governing body colleagues. An analysis of these comments is included in the relevant sections of the report. For example, feedback provided on quality advice sits alongside quantitative and qualitative survey results on that topic.

Governing body

Two researchers from the Research and Evaluation Unit (RIMU) facilitated a discussion that began with a presentation of top line results from the 2017 survey before focusing on a series of questions designed to provide insight into, and context for, the quantitative results of the survey. These questions focused on overall satisfaction, progress towards a unified organisation, quality advice and four areas where levels of satisfaction had decreased: governance-related strategic and policy advice; the Kura Kāwana Development Programme; the CCO Governance and External Partnerships Team; and engaging communities.

These analyses have been included in the body of the report in the relevant sections.

A total of seven governing body members attended the focus group over the course of the session, with a minimum of three participants present at any one time. An audio recording was made of the session to assist with the analysis; this and the notes taken have now been destroyed.

Local boards

Three optional focus group sessions were run by Local Board Services staff, and were open to all local board members to attend. These were held as part of the local board monthly sub-regional cluster meetings. These meetings are held in three different locations south (Manukau), central (Town Hall) and north (Takapuna). The table below details the number of local board members at each session:

Session	Number in attendance
Monday 18 September - Manukau (9.30am – 11am)	7
Monday 18 September - Auckland Town Hall (1pm – 2.30pm)	14
Monday 25 September - Takapuna (9.30am – 11am)	16

In total, 37 of the 149 local board members attended the focus group sessions equating to 25% of local board members.

The three 90 minute sessions incorporated a presentation of the top line results of the 2017 survey with specific questions to target areas where more detail and clarification from local board members could be provided to supplement the findings from the online survey.

Feedback from the three local board focus group sessions has been incorporated throughout the report in the relevant sections.

1.4.4 Report structure

The sections in this report follow the order of the broad topic areas addressed in the survey and have been written so that individual segments can be read independently. The overall results are presented first in each section, followed by a comparison of governing body and local board member responses.

2.0   Overall Satisfaction

Elected members were asked how satisfied they were overall with the advice and support provided to them by council employees.

2.1 Overall results

Just over half (53%) of all elected members were satisfied (provided a '4' or '5' response) with the overall support provided to them by council employees. Fewer than one in ten (7%) were dissatisfied (provided a '1' or '2' response), and the remainder (40%) were neutral (provided a '3' response).

This reflects a 2 percentage point increase from 51 per cent satisfied in 2016.

Overall satisfaction with advice and support
provided by council employees
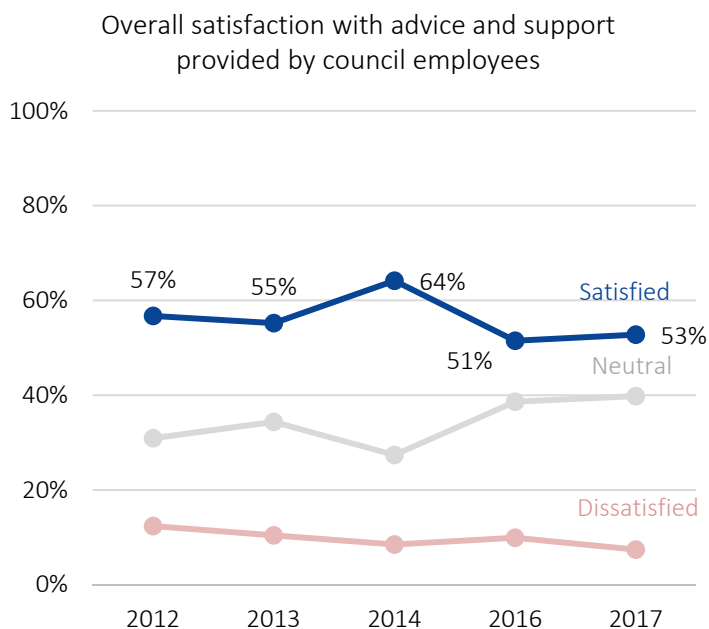
Figure 1. Overall satisfaction, 2012-2017

2.2 Difference by elected member type

Overall satisfaction ratings among local board and governing body members were similar, with 52 per cent of local board respondents and 58 per cent of governing body respondents reporting being satisfied overall.

Although governing body members' satisfaction increased 5 percentage points from 2016, overall satisfaction levels have decreased notably since 2012 for this group of elected members. Local board satisfaction has remained relatively stable over this time.
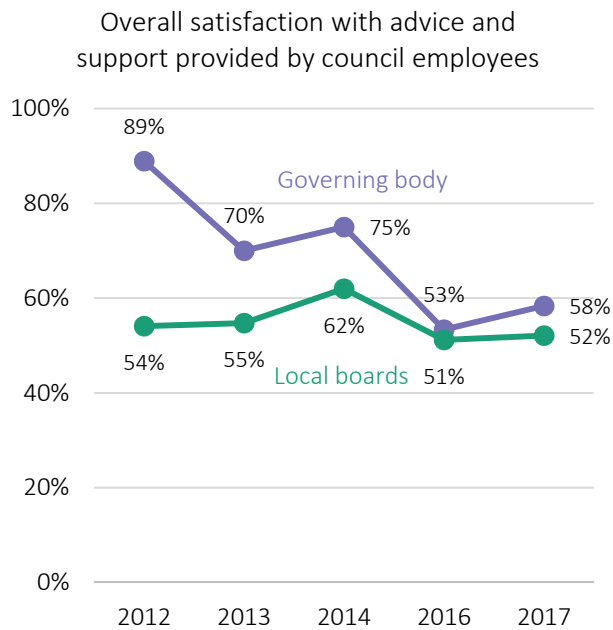
Figure 2. Overall satisfaction, by elected member type (% satisfied only)

2.3 Key driver analysis

A key driver analysis was conducted to identify which areas of council activity were most strongly related to overall satisfaction.

When the 'importance' of each survey question was plotted against the percentage of elected members satisfied for each survey question, the resulting graph can be split up into quadrants to identify key areas for improvement. In particular, the upper left quadrant identifies areas where improvement is both most needed and is likely to have the most impact on elected members' overall satisfaction with council: activities in this quadrant have a strong relationship with overall satisfaction (they are 'key drivers'), but have been identified by elected members as areas of low satisfaction. An interpretation of each quadrant can be seen in Figure 3.

Note, although this analysis identifies key 'drivers' of satisfaction, it is identifying associations rather than *causal* relationships. It should be used only as an overall guide to what improvements are likely to have the strongest flow-on effect on overall satisfaction. For more information on the analysis method used, see Appendix A.

Strong association with overall satisfaction

KEY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

AREAS TO KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK

SECONDARY AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT TO FOCUS ON TO FURTHER SUPPORT AN INCREASE IN SATISFACTION

MAINTENANCE FACTORS

Weak association

Low organisational performance

High organisational performance
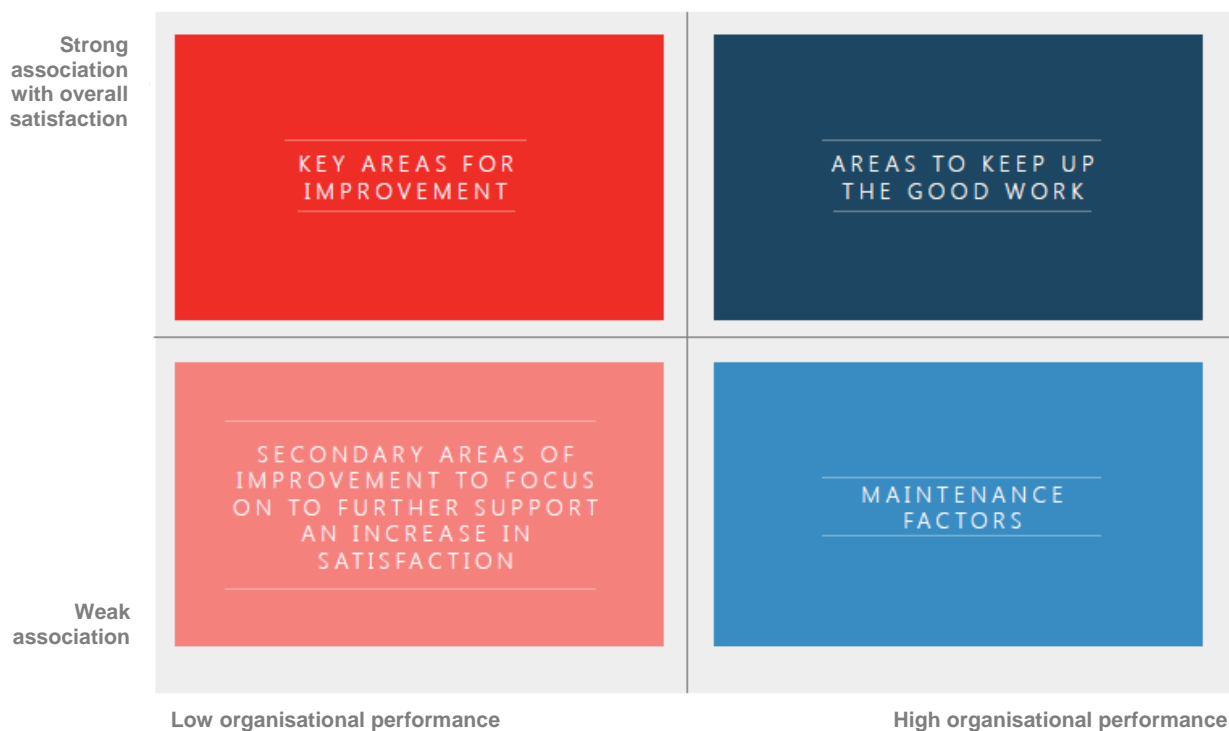
Figure 3. Key drivers of overall satisfaction: interpretation

The analysis highlights the following primary areas for improvement:

- The quality of advice provided to elected members, particularly with respect to timeliness and the advice contained in agenda reports
- The progress of the Auckland Council family (including the governing body, local boards and Council Controlled Organisations [CCOs]) toward one unified organisation
- Engagement from CCOs[4]
- Local Board communications support.

The key driver analysis shows that the organisation is doing well in the following areas:

- Local Board Services and Local Board Financial Advisory support
- Administrative and professional development support
- Democracy Services support.

Local board and governing body members had similar drivers of overall satisfaction. Figure 4 shows an overview of the key driver findings.

The above findings are very similar to the key driver findings from 2016.

---

[4] Note, the average satisfaction calculation for 'Engagement from Auckland Transport' is influenced by a very high level of satisfaction with Auckland Transport Relationship Managers. When considering only Auckland Transport reporting and engagement, the Auckland Transport driver is positioned in the 'primary areas of improvement' quadrant along with other CCOs.
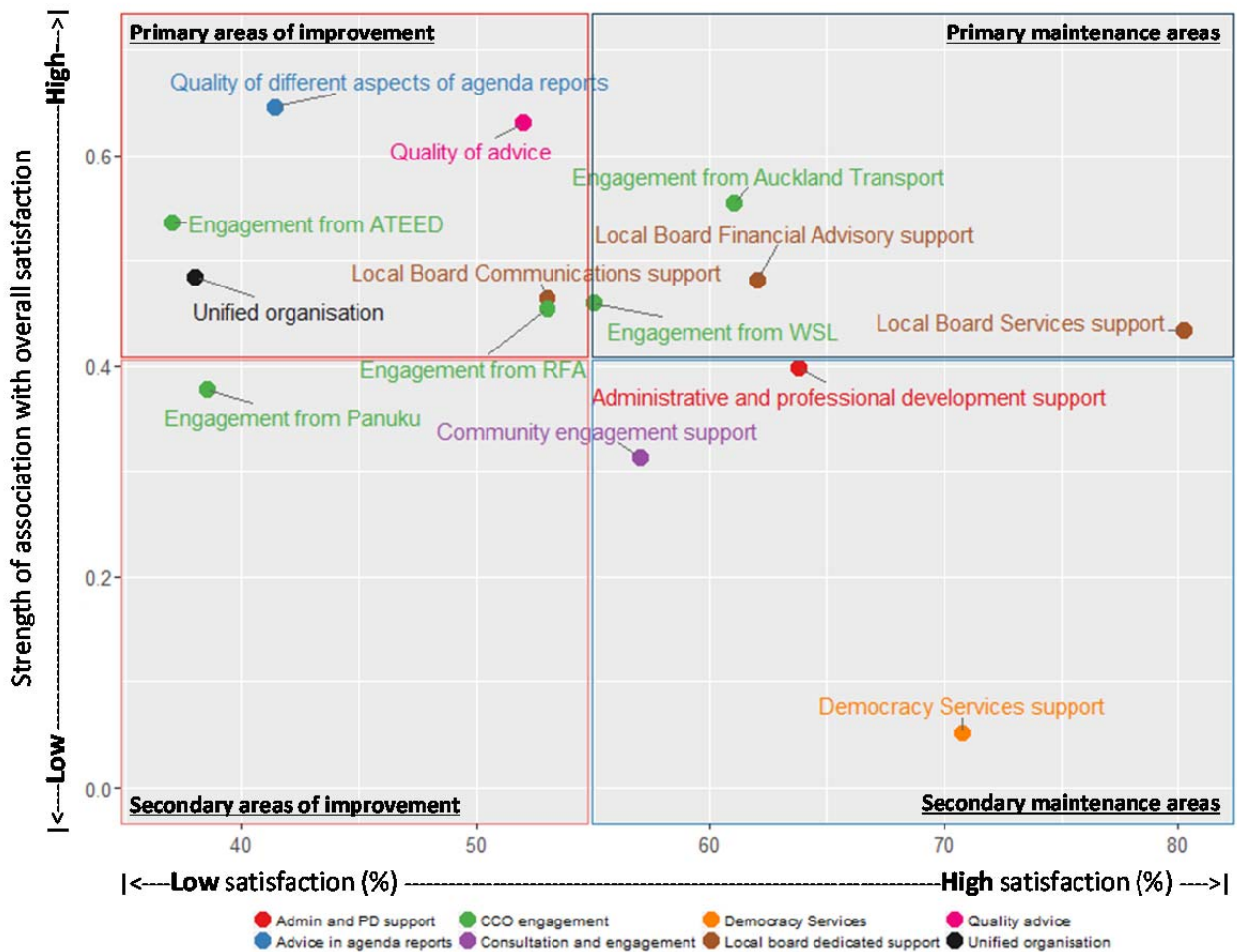
Figure 4. Key drivers of overall satisfaction

A second key driver analysis was conducted investigating the potential role of specific council departments on overall satisfaction. The results identify primary areas for improvement as including:

- CCO Governance and External Partnerships, which itself is likely a reflection of the importance of CCOs on overall elected member satisfaction
- A number of operational departments, such as Community Facilities; Arts, Community and Events; Parks, Sport and Recreation; and Licensing and Compliance
- The policy and strategy teams Auckland Plan, Strategy and Research; and Community and Social Policy
- Auckland Design Office, and Legal and Risk.
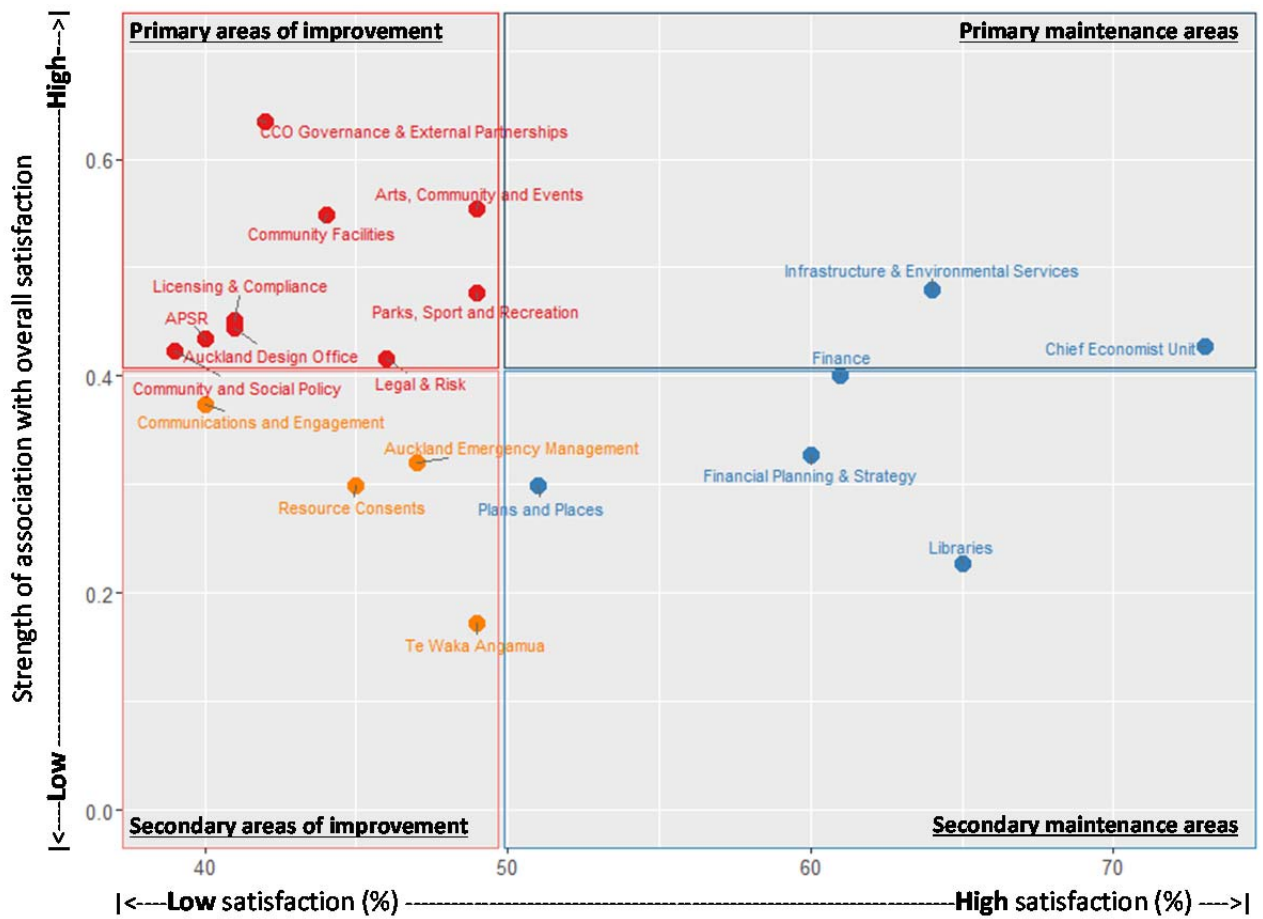
Figure 5. Key drivers of overall satisfaction, council departments

3.0   Progress Toward One Organisation

Elected members were asked to what extent they agreed that the Auckland Council family (including the governing body, local boards and CCOs) is progressing towards performing as one unified organisation.

3.1 Overall results

Approximately one in five elected members (22%) agreed that the council family is progressing toward performing as a unified organisation. A larger proportion disagreed (36%), or were neutral (42%). This was similar to the pattern seen in 2016.
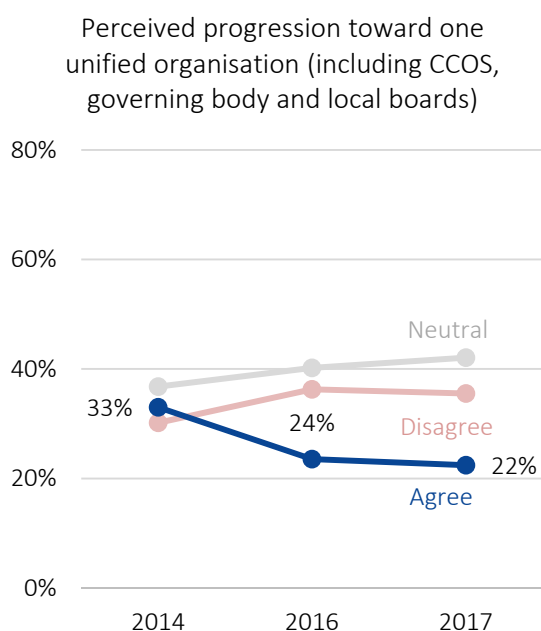
Figure 6. Perceived progress toward one unified organisation

Although the two free text questions in this year's survey did not ask specifically about this topic, some of the feedback provided in response to these questions[5] did address the issue of one unified organisation. Most comments focused on the need for different parts of the organisation to communicate better with each other and to work together in a more joined-up way.

> *We frequently struggle to find a department that will be the "owner" of a project and its budget. Months go by as staff try to find someone within council who can do the work or lead the initiative. (LB)*

---

[5] The questions focused on the additional support Auckland Council could provide elected members to better perform their role; and whether they would like to make any additional comments.

There seem to be parallel processes in council concerning the same resource or facility so that while we on the local board hear a report and are giving feedback, another section of council is proceeding with other plans … It concerns me that council does not seem to be sharing information throughout its own organisation. (LB)

It would be helpful if inter-departments communicate more fully [regarding] local issues … before presenting before the local board to avoid confusion and time delay. (LB)

3.2 Differences by elected member type

In line with the themes discussed above, local board members were less likely than governing body members to agree that council is progressing toward performing as a unified organisation (21% compared to 36% agreed, respectively).

Perceived progression toward one unified organisation (including CCOS, governing body and local boards)
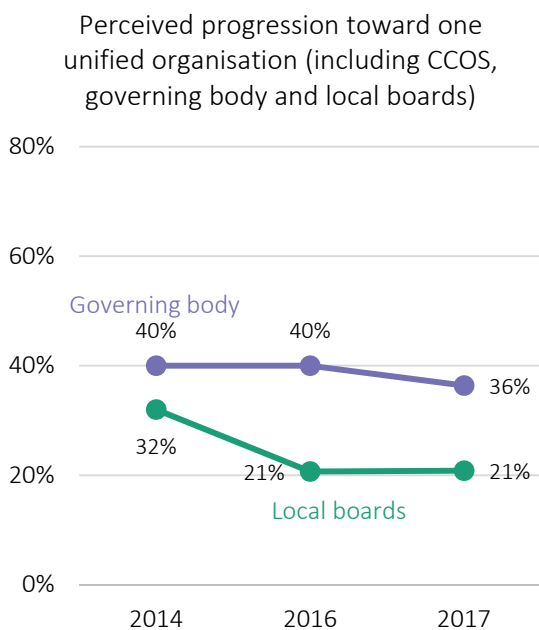
Figure 7. Perceived progress toward one unified organisation, by elected member type (% satisfied only)

3.3 Governing body focus group feedback

Two views emerged about progress toward one unified organisation: first, that the organisational structure itself impedes this process; and second, that the structure in and of itself is not a problem, rather the issue resides in the ways that different parts of the structure relate to and communicate with each other. Looking first at the former interpretation, the argument is that if a unified organisation were the objective, then the organisation should have been structured differently, in other words, the establishment of Council Controlled Organisations (CCOs), local boards, the mayor and the governing body, make it much harder for the organisation to work in a unified way.

The alternative view is that the structure is fine, but that the ways in which communication occurs between each part of the structure is less than optimal. According to this assessment, acting as one unified organisation is impeded by inadequate communication between local boards with their clearly defined local remit; the CCOs with their expert governors; the mayor with his or her staff; and the councillors. It is interesting to note that governing body members focused primarily on the impact of these structural relationships in relation to a unified organisation rather than any perceived lack of co-ordination across council departments.

Extending this dual thinking, some participants suggested a reconsideration of the system; asking whether it is in fact the ideal structure to enable people to work together rather than in competition with each other. Others, however, suggested considering what changes might be required to enable better outcomes within the existing structure. One further suggestion was to remove the term 'co-governance' because it is "unrealistic" and "dishonest" and instead explain the specific contribution made by the governing body, the CCOs and the local boards.

During their reflections on the unified organisation, participants identified a number of challenges associated with the shared governance structure: those related to the relationship between local boards and the governing body; those focused on the governing body only; and those linked to the CCOs. From the point of view of focus group participants, governing body-local board challenges include a division of labour where councillors raise rates and local boards spend them, in other words, that local boards enjoy "power without responsibility". Local communities, they noted, can see and touch the assets created by local boards and this affords board members profile and prestige. In contrast, because links are not made between regional funding and the building of these assets, councillors remain unacknowledged by the communities that have benefited from regional spending.[6]

In addition, participants felt that attempts to support the shared governance model have focused on local boards to the detriment of the governing body. Instead, it was argued, it is important to support both. The increased involvement of councillors in their respective local boards was suggested as a measure to address these issues, thus building trust and enabling the sharing of information. The way that meetings are currently scheduled, it was noted, makes this very difficult or impossible.

Turning to governing body challenges, participants explained that councillors are still trying to work out how to play a more proactive, higher profile, constructive role. Councillors also described challenges of accountability in relation to the CCOs, where the governing body is held accountable by the public for decisions that are made solely by CCOs. The participants argued that good systems include direct accountability - where those who are making the decisions are directly accountable for them. Although it was acknowledged that these organisations are making a greater

---

[6] Note, a similar but opposite view was expressed in the survey by some local board members who felt that local boards have adequate influence over spending decisions that impact their communities, and that governing body members enjoy notably stronger public profiles than local board members.

effort to be part of the integrated whole, their unelected status allows them to make decisions for which justification is sought from the governing body, not from them.

4.0 Quality Advice

Elected members were asked a number of questions about the quality of advice they receive. These questions focused on their satisfaction with different forms of advice, whether they perceived that the quality of advice over their tenure had improved, stayed the same or worsened, and their satisfaction with specific aspects of agenda reports.

4.1 Perceived change in quality of advice over time

4.1.1 Overall results

When asked how the quality of advice had changed over their tenure as elected members, 38 per cent reported an improvement, 50 per cent no change, and 12 per cent a decrease in quality.[7]

The proportion of elected members who think that the quality of advice has improved has decreased by 5 percentage points since 2016, while the proportion who think it has stayed the same has increased by 7 per cent.
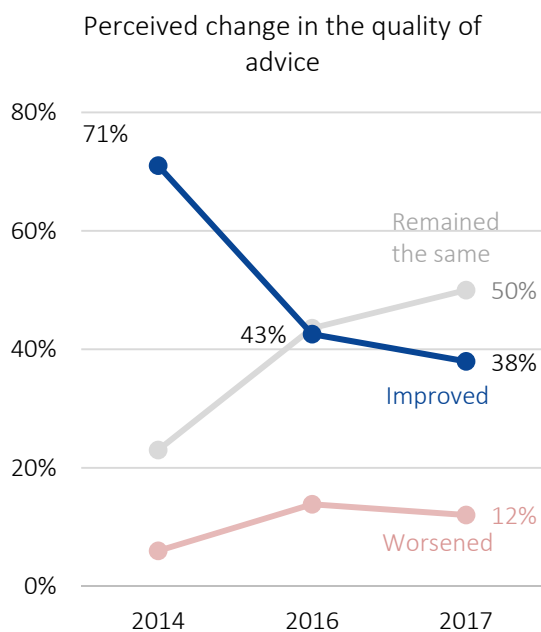
Figure 8. Perceived change in the quality of advice

It is also worth noting, however, that this question is about relative change and that the interpretation of 'staying the same' should be guided by the overall level of satisfaction with advice received.

---

[7] Note, survey respondents were asked "Thinking about the advice you have received in your role to date, has the quality improved, remained the same, or worsened over time?" Most other questions focused on changes since the start of the current electoral term.

What we find when we look at the relationship between this question and overall satisfaction with the advice received in agenda reports, for instance (see Table 2 below), is that just over half (52%) of those who said the quality of advice had stayed the same were satisfied with agenda report advice. Most of the remainder were 'neutral' (37%), and a minority were dissatisfied (11%). This indicates that many of the respondents who reported that the quality of advice had stayed the same were already reasonably happy with the advice they were receiving.

Table 2. Change in quality of advice by satisfaction with advice received in agenda reports

		Perceived change in quality of advice		
		Worsened	Remained the same	Improved
Satisfaction with advice provided in agenda reports	Dissatisfied	46%	11%	2%
	Neutral	31%	37%	29%
	Satisfied	36%	52%	68%
	Total	100%	100%	100%

4.1.2 Differences by elected member type

A greater proportion of governing body members felt that the quality of advice was improving over time (67% compared with 34% of local board members). Similar proportions in both groups felt that the quality of advice was getting worse, however (17% of governing body members and 11% of local board members).

Perceived improvement in the quality of advice
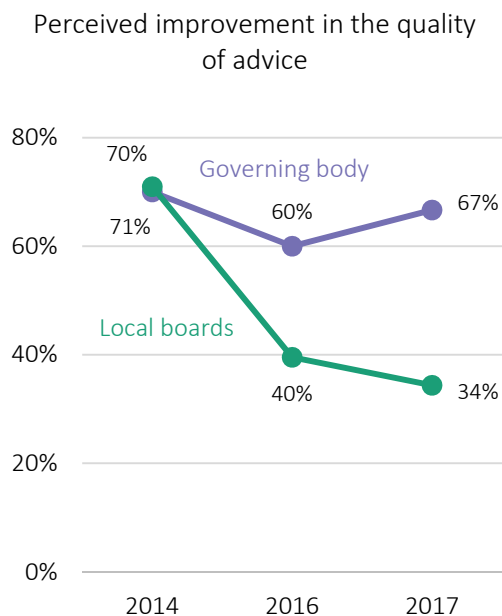
Figure 9. Perceived change in the quality of advice, by elected member type (% 'improved' only)

4.2 Types of advice provided

4.2.1 Overall results

The majority of elected members were satisfied with the quality of advice provided to them in agenda reports (55%), in person at council meetings (62%), and for (and at) workshops (61%). They were less satisfied with the timeliness of advice provided by council employees, with 30 per cent satisfied, and 30 per cent dissatisfied.
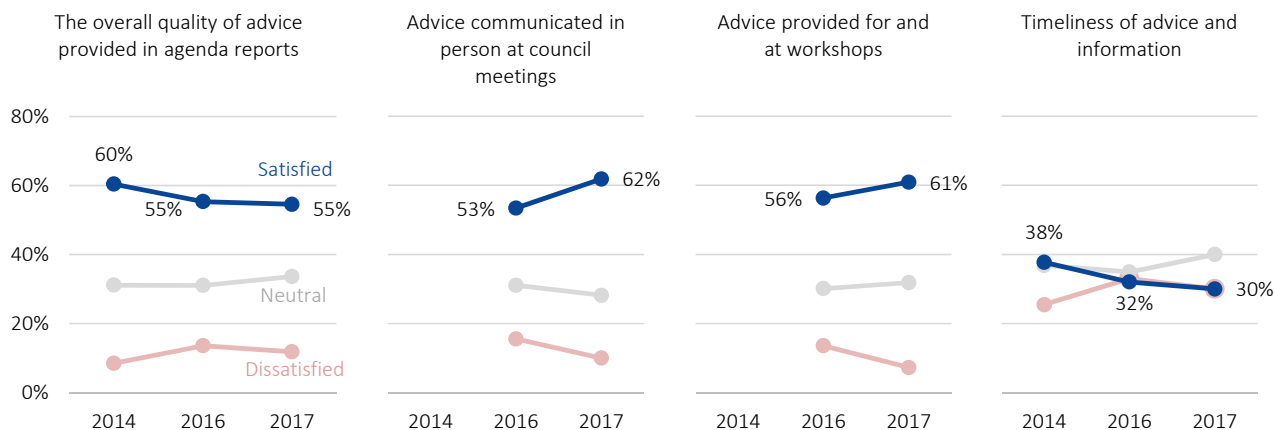
Figure 10. Satisfaction with different forms of advice

4.2.2 Differences by elected member type

Local board and governing body members were broadly similar in their satisfaction with the quality of advice provided in agenda reports (54% and 58%, respectively), advice received in person at workshops (62% and 58%) and at council meetings (60% and 67%), although local board members were considerably less satisfied with the timeliness of advice and information provided by council employees (28% of local board members compared with 50% of governing body members).

When compared to 2014, both local board and governing body members showed an increase in satisfaction with advice provided at workshops, and local board members reported an increase in satisfaction with in-person advice provided at council meetings. Governing body members had decreases in satisfaction with advice provided in agenda reports and the timeliness of advice.
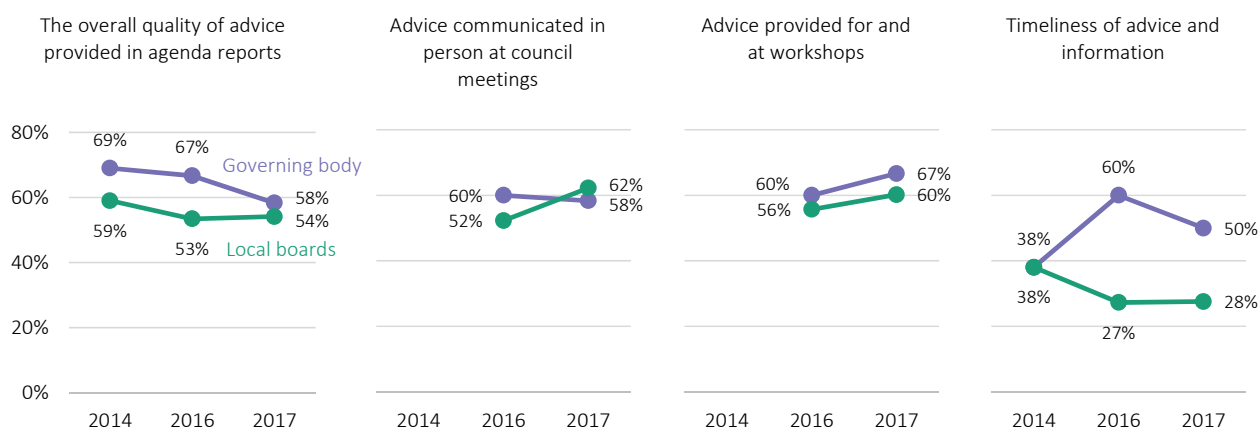
Figure 11. Satisfaction with different forms of advice, by elected member type (% 'satisfied' only)

4.2.3 Local board focus group feedback

Acknowledging that from 2016 to 2017, timeliness of advice has remained steady but low, local board members were asked to provide more detail around what timeliness meant to them and why they felt it wasn't scoring highly. Five key areas were emphasised across the three focus group sessions.

The availability of reports and information with sufficient time to read, digest and consider prior to both business meetings and workshops was seen as an issue. This issue was compounded for those local board members whom are part time and/or have other jobs or responsibilities. It was reflected that, even when statutory timeframes are met, receiving documents a day or two before or even on the day of the meeting or workshop does not enable well-informed and considered decisions or input.

Linking to the first point, it was expressed that the internal sign off process for agenda reports is onerous and time-consuming and goes through too many reviewers/approvers therefore delaying information reaching local boards. In addition, there was a view that this hinders momentum on getting things done. Experiences of follow-up reports taking a number of months to come back to local boards were shared. Similarly, members expressed dissatisfaction about the timeliness of updates on budgets to local boards to enable them to understand where there is a need to reallocate funding to other areas early enough to enable delivery.

Staff not following up on information requests, or not providing timely and proactive updates on progress if delayed, was emphasised. Where local board members were enquiring for a member of the public, this left them to front a difficult conversation with the public.

Local board members also noted that when fronting a report, staff were not always able to answer the board's queries and questions, adding delay to process or decisions while staff obtain answers.

Staff providing realistic timeframes to members when a request for information or advice is sought was seen as a positive step. This would allow the member to plan their workload and ensure staff, local board members and the public (where applicable) have a shared expectation around timeframes and save persistent chasing of information by local board members.

Finally, the capacity of some staff affected by restructures was highlighted as an area that impacts on timeliness. It was felt that some staff members had too much work for one person affecting their capacity to provide information or advice in a timely manner. Local board members also noted issues when there is only one staff member supporting a particular area. If they fall ill or leave the organisation, work is slowed or stops and when it is picked up, the new person doesn't understand the history and context and on occasions, whole pieces of work start again.

4.3 Agenda reports

4.3.1 Overall results

Elected members were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with various aspects of agenda reports. They were most satisfied with the definition of the problem/opportunity (57%) and clarity of recommendations (49%). The levels of satisfaction with all other aspects of agenda reports were relatively low, ranging between 35 and 46 per cent.

Participants were particularly dissatisfied with the following aspects of agenda reports: environmental impact assessments (26% dissatisfied), local board views (25% dissatisfied), Māori impact statements (23% dissatisfied) and local impacts (22% dissatisfied).

The levels of satisfaction over time were relatively stable, with the largest increase seen for environmental impact assessments (+6% points) and the largest decreases seen for clarity of recommendations and local board views (both -4% points).
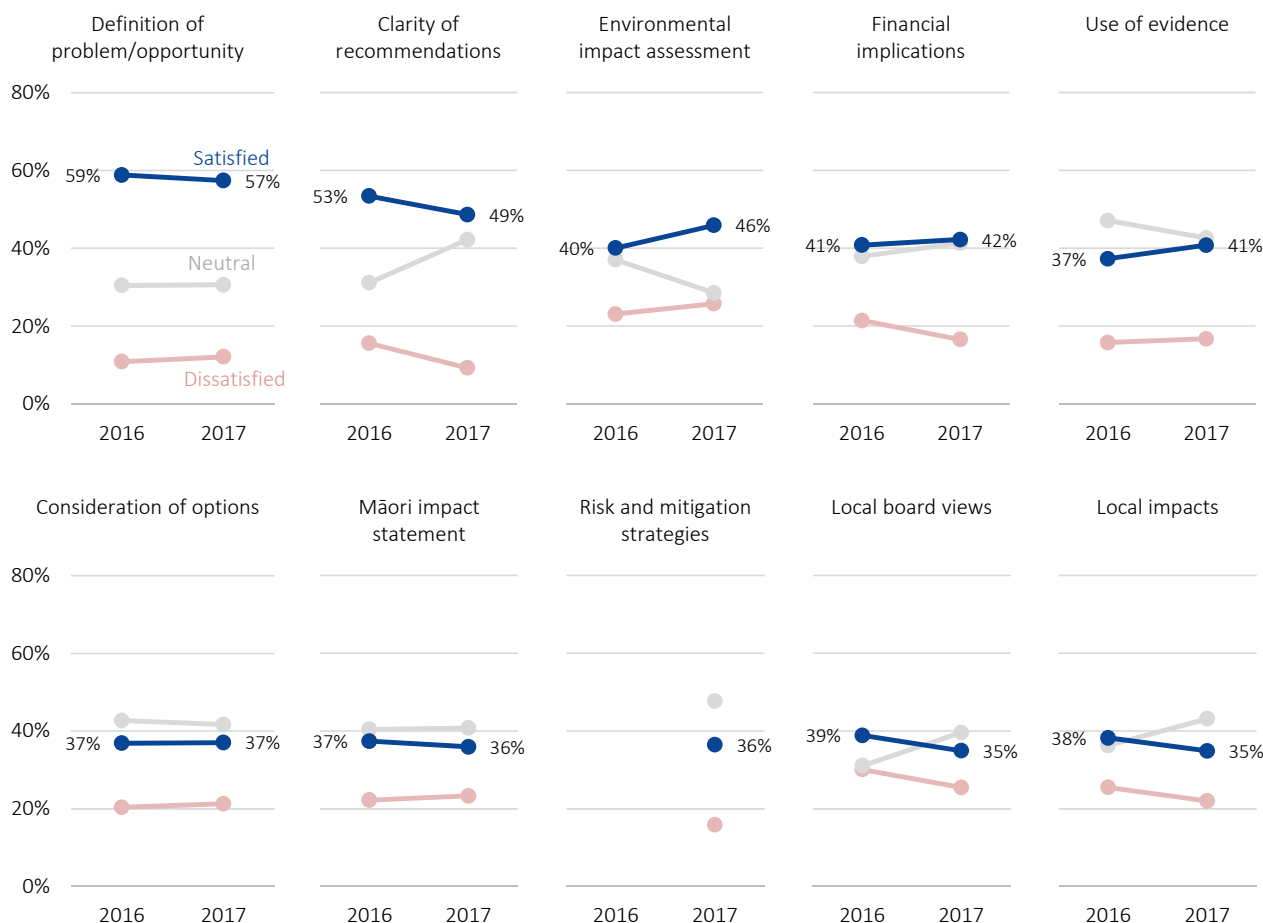
Figure 12. Satisfaction with different aspects of agenda reports

Additional analysis[8] suggests that 'consideration of options', 'assessment of local impacts' and 'clarity of recommendations' most strongly impact on whether elected members are satisfied overall with the agenda reports they receive.

4.3.2 Differences by elected member types

Although local board satisfaction with the components of agenda reports remained relatively stable over time (with the exception of satisfaction with environmental impact assessments, which rose +9% points), governing body satisfaction was much more changeable.

Governing body respondents exhibited notable increases in satisfaction with financial impacts (+11% point increase) and use of evidence (+10%), and notable decreases in satisfaction with local impacts (-27% point decrease), clarity of recommendations (-23%), environmental impact assessments (-20%), local board views (-18%), Māori impact statements (-17%), and definition of problem/opportunity (-13%).

---

[8] Using regression analysis.

Definition of problem/opportunity
- Governing body: 80% (2016), 67% (2017)
- Local boards: 55% (2016), 56% (2017)

Clarity of recommendations
- 73% (2016), 50% (2017)
- 50% (2016), 48% (2017)

Environmental impact assessment
- 53% (2016), 33% (2017)
- 38% (2016), 47% (2017)

Financial implications
- 47% (2016), 58% (2017)
- 40% (2016), 40% (2017)

Use of evidence
- 40% (2016), 50% (2017)
- 37% (2016), 40% (2017)

Consideration of options
- 47% (2016), 50% (2017)
- 35% (2016), 35% (2017)

Māori impact statement
- 47% (2016), 30% (2017)
- 36% (2016), 37% (2017)

Risk and mitigation strategies
- 38%
- 25%

Local board views
- 60% (2016), 42% (2017)
- 35% (2016), 34% (2017)

Local impacts
- 60% (2016), 35% / 33% (2017)
- 34% (2016), 35% (2017)

Figure 13. Satisfaction with different aspects of agenda reports, by elected member type (% 'satisfied' only)

4.4 Written feedback

Although elected members were not asked specifically about the quality of the advice they had received in this term, some of the responses to the two qualitative questions do address this topic. Participant feedback focused on the overall quality of advice; problems with timeliness; meetings and workshops; and reports. The quotes below are illustrative.

4.4.1 Overall quality of advice

This term, some reports as well as advice and briefings around opportunities to influence long term planning have been highly variable, hence often I have marked '3' when some sections or individuals are '5' but others in the same body or department are very much lower. (LB)

I find the advice that is given is in the best interests of my community and reports are clear and concise. (LB)

I think there is a need for earlier and more egalitarian input into the preparation of advice and recommendations to inform elected member decisions. As a councillor I am less inclined to support decisions that I had little or no part in shaping. (GB)

This is my third term as a local board elected representative. Never have I been so frustrated with the new system - I get told about issues happening in the community from the community. Although I am happy that we have weekly workshops - all knowledge of plans and reports from the legacy council seem to be overlooked, I am referring to projects etc. that were in the pipe line. (LB)

Some officers are very good at producing good evidence for projects, however others aren't as good. (LB)

4.4.2 Timeliness

Timing of advice and relevance is critical. [We are] having to grapple with decision-making without adequate evidence or understanding of implications because officer advice is inadequate, not strategic enough, not future focused, and sometimes provided just on the day of the session with no time allowed to read the advice before having to make a decision. (LB)

I scored lowly on the timely information as I feel that the process for getting reports is very long and arduous and slows down decision-making and getting things done. This is not only frustrating for board members but also the public. (LB)

It would be helpful if staff actually responded to emails, particularly to elected members who have board responsibility for projects, and kept those members up-to-date with progress in a timely way. Not having answers can be an embarrassment to board members who are in the community all the time and are faced with questions about projects. (LB)

When requests come from residents for information, despite local board staff trying to get the information it is very slow coming. (LB)

I get the sense the organisation does not realize that local board members work part-time and that agenda reports and workshop material needs to be provided at least a week in advance so we can read it, take it in and make informed decisions and give well thought out feedback. Sometimes reading material arrives too late and I have to rush through it. (LB)

4.4.3 Meetings and workshops

Time frames are pretty short. Agendas need to be tighter in their written form. (GB)

[I would like] remote attendance at workshops through teleconferencing facilities … more evaluation of meeting requirements - especially workshops - around what purpose, pre-release of info, timing, post-meeting evaluations … delegation to smaller 'teams' - rather than expect all 20 councillors and then IMSB members [to be] present. (GB)

I am lucky to work with an excellent local board services team. I appreciate their advice and knowledge [as] I am a first term member. I do find that in order to attract more working professionals into local government (to add diversity) there needs to be more flexibility in meetings (e.g. outside of business hours) and this is often not able to occur due to council staff not able to work as flexibly as they might like to. I am lucky that my local board services team do meet me outside of hours but we could do more if there was more flexibility. (LB)

When supplied with readings for upcoming workshops [I would like] to also be supplied with some sort of explanation on what outcome/decision we are trying to achieve. [A] short one page document [outlining] 'this is what we are trying to do in the upcoming workshop'. (LB)

Officers need to come to workshops and business meetings better prepared and clearly communicate what it is that they seek from the local board members. Either a decision, guidance, or are they just informing the local board. (LB)

4.4.4 Reports

Important aspects get lost in the plethora of in-depth data. Précis and summaries which relate to topic would be helpful. (LB)

Staff more widely must understand what makes robust advice and good reports. Our local board has had to reject some reports recently - new for us - because mana whenua consultation was not robust, all options not included or similar. Reports have come to business meetings in which workshop questions are not answered or consequent amendments have not been made. (LB)

Not enough background info is provided in the reports, [it's] really difficult if you are a new member. (LB)

4.4.5 Portfolios

Several local board members also gave feedback on the removal of the portfolio system.

Workshop briefings a couple of times a year … cannot replace the portfolio system. This is time-consuming as we now reach business meetings without all members having the benefit of a relevant workshop or officer contact well in advance. Since we do not have the

---

benefit of trusted portfolio-lead colleagues who are across all the details of a project or programme or asset maintenance cycle, we must all now question everything. Business meetings are getting longer and less productive. (LB)

Bring back portfolio holders. It is ridiculous the amount of times we have four to six members turn up at one meeting. We are getting bogged down unnecessarily. (LB)

Good to work in team format now; away from the portfolio and small group set up that has previously been in operation. [There is] less chance of backdoor decisions and hidden / selective information for the rest of the board. (LB)

4.5 Governing body focus group feedback

Focus group participants described the overall state of reports as inadequate (eight out of ten were said to contain errors, some as basic as the name of the local board for whom they were written) but improving, noting in particular the increased quality of Māori impact sections. Similarly, they explained that some workshops were good but that others needed to be tighter, better defined and more targeted. Elected members described the kind of advice that would merit a '5' or an excellent as independent; with a clear articulation of risks and implications; with well-articulated trade-offs; as definitive, lucid and tight with proper options; and as succinct and to the point.

Two of these qualities were emphasised: independence and succinctness. With respect to the former, the expectation was for 'free and frank advice' and 'expert advice from expert staff' without any political interference. Politics, it was claimed, should happen at the meeting and not beforehand. Greater conciseness was also emphasised by several elected members as important for both reporting and workshops. They noted that it is not reasonable to expect councillors to read reports several hundred pages long and queried the need for the inclusion of appendices when links to these would suffice.

The focus group referred officers to the outputs of the political party working group on this topic, explaining that this group included members from the governing body, local boards and the Independent Māori Statutory Board. Participants also noted the responsibilities of elected members in this area; these included demonstrating leadership; reading advice carefully in preparation for meetings; and using meetings to clarify issues rather than expect a re-telling of the advice already provided.

In addition to these reflections on quality advice, participants also described the kinds of abilities that were important to them in council officers. These included trustworthiness, independence, honesty and expertise. As one member noted, 'I'll go to a person where I can feel confident about the advice I'm getting.' Another explained that they were very satisfied with the overall quality of advice they received because they approached those who had undertaken the work rather than their managers.

4.6 Local board focus group feedback

Local board members were asked to describe what the advice in reports would look like for them to select a '5' or 'very satisfied'. The majority of the comments aligned to the council's quality advice standards and wanting those to be followed. Three key areas were particularly highlighted: options and recommendations; history and context; and relevance of the report.

Local board members want clear options and recommendations provided, noting that on occasions only one option is provided in a report. Also, a full analysis of the pros and cons of each option should be provided to assist with decision-making. Board members also noted it would be useful to provide examples of where suggested options have been implemented previously with success. Comments were made that reporting in some areas has improved because there has been more evidence included. To further improve this, it was felt that reports need to give members a more holistic view by integrating advice and broader perspectives from across council enabling options to be more robust, for example including a biodiversity lens when looking at a recreational issue.

In addition, a lack of history and context provided in reports proved difficult particularly post elections with new local board members but also when there are changes to staff citing that in some instances work has been duplicated because no history was provided. The local board members commented that this could be solved with old reports being referenced in reports and/or being easily accessible allowing members to refer back to them.

Local board members expressed the need for agenda reports to be relevant and tailored to their local board area rather than covering information that is not applicable. This requires an understanding of the local board area and advice that identifies the impacts or implications of reported options and recommendations on the local board and their area including how they will contribute to or affect specific local board outcomes and priorities. This links to staff understanding and education of the local board's role.

5.0 Administrative and Professional Development Support

All elected members were asked about their satisfaction with the administrative and professional development support they had received since the start of the electoral term.

5.1 Overall results

Increases in satisfaction were seen for all forms of administrative and professional development support provided to elected members. Notable increases were seen for the professional development opportunities provided through the Kura Kāwana programme (+19% point increase) and technology equipment and support (+13%).
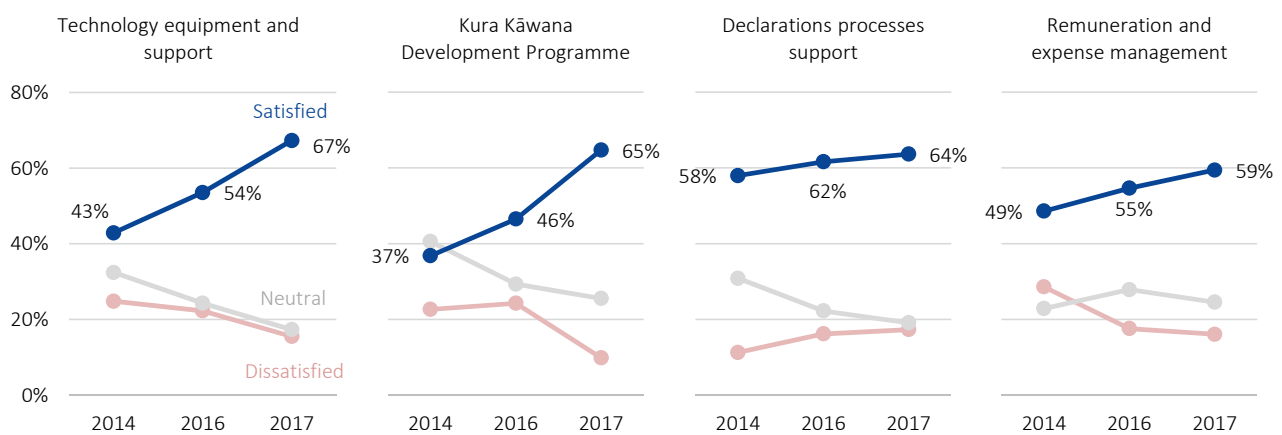

Figure 14. Administrative and professional development support

5.2 Differences by elected member type

Governing body members tended to be more satisfied than local board members with all types of administrative and professional development support provided by council staff, with the exception of the Kura Kāwana professional development programme.

Satisfaction with the Kura Kāwana development programme increased markedly for local board members (+24% point increase), but decreased for governing body members (-18% point decrease). The latter result may in part be attributable to governing body members' low awareness of the courses available to them, as noted in Section **Error! Reference source not found.**.
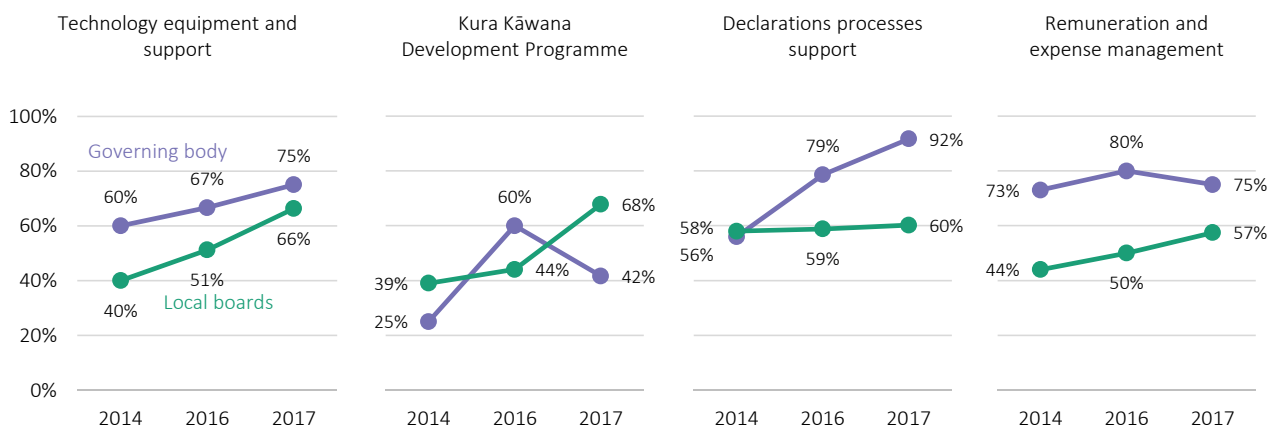
Figure 15. Administrative support, by elected member type (% 'satisfied' only)

5.2.1 Written feedback

Survey respondents made a number of comments about administrative and professional development support, focusing on two main areas: technology and equipment support; and training and development, including the Kura Kāwana Development Programme.

Despite increases in the satisfaction ratings for technology equipment and support presented in Figure 15, comments on this area of support were largely negative. This feedback focused on the technology itself, the support provided for the technology, and the Hub, as illustrated in the quotes below.

> *IT has been really badly done. The equipment is not good and has hindered me doing my job well. I chose the iPad and it is not a good computer. I was told I couldn't change once my decision was made. (LB)*

> *We have had a couple of device resets and it puts a spanner in the works - you can't read the information for the next workshop. Other board members have had no end of trouble with their phones etc. You should have swap out devices so board members can continue to do their job while the technicians fix the problem. (LB)*

> *Better IT support - waiting a long time for phones being answered. (LB)*

> *I've had good support from IT but there have been far too many IT issues for members to deal with this term. (LB)*

> *Stop being so hell bent on paper reduction, the Hub does not work! It is clunky, not user friendly, and isn't nimble enough for how we need to use it. Let us have printers. Do a quick survey to see how many members are actually using it. You may be surprised by the lack of uptake. (LB)*

Technology still remains a problem. More departments need to use the Hub for all their presentations, especially workshops where multiple boards and governing body members are invited to attend. (LB)

A lot was made of new technology this term but telecommuting, skype for business etc. is not widely used and, while it could support portfolio meetings, is not used to facilitate [them]. (LB)

As illustrated in Figure 15, governing body member satisfaction with the Kura Kāwana Development Programme decreased from 60 per cent in 2016 to 42 per cent this year. As governing body survey respondents did not provide any written feedback that might give insight into this decrease, they were asked about this in the follow up focus group (see Section 5.2.2 below). Local board members, however, made several comments about training and development broadly and about the Kura Kāwana Development Programme more specifically, as shown below.

I would have appreciated a little more mentoring at the start especially in relation to [the] code of conduct, ways of working, building relationships and financial management but I have now found my feet on all these issues through the support [of] local board services. (LB)

I suggest all local boards (whether new or not) are given opportunities for team building with each other and the wider local board services team. By building personal relationships we will be able to relate [more easily] to each other and provide better communication and understanding. It will also present a more united view to the public and benefit us all. (LB)

I currently can't make elected member training sessions on Fridays when [they] all seem to be scheduled. (LB)

The workshops that Kura Kāwana are running have been very valuable for me. Unfortunately, because local board work is so widespread now that we do not have portfolio holders, a lot of our elected members are missing very valuable learning opportunities. (LB)

Additional training [courses] to outline the Local Government (Auckland Council) Act and the role of members … there is a need to understand that if a member stands on a ticket and [is] elected that they will be representing many varied views. (LB)

5.2.2 Governing body focus group feedback

Governing body members were asked why their satisfaction with the Kura Kāwana Development Programme had decreased between 2016 and 2017. This question required further explanation of the programme and its content; participants were given a spreadsheet that outlined the courses offered to elected members during their term. Only two of the focus group participants had

attended any of the training listed and the low satisfaction levels, it was felt, were linked to the low attendance of governing body members rather than the quality or content of the training offered.

5.2.3   Local board focus group feedback

As the uptake of, and satisfaction with, Kura Kāwana offerings has been much higher for local board members than their governing body counterparts, the focus group focused on what local board members thought would be useful in terms of content and how that is delivered to assist with the development of the programme for 2018.

Some local board members indicated that the timing of offerings needed to be considered as the majority of local board members are part-time and many were unable to attend early morning or evening sessions, whilst conversely others were only able to attend during the day. Linking to this was the request for more use of the technology available to elected members, for example, holding sessions over skype for business, webinars or online self-learning tools will save travel time and allow elected members to do training when it best suits their schedule.

Some members commented that in planning the induction sessions for the next term, there was a need to space the sessions out so as not to overwhelm new members with information. In addition it was noted that when new members are elected, this may require significant changes to many aspects of their life and so to commit to a scheduled programme almost from the first week is tough.

In terms of the content of the programme, local board members commented that they felt the level of learning was good but the offerings could be altered to cater for new and returning members as their needs and requirements are different. Specific areas highlighted for future programming were additional sessions of the existing *Obligations and Opportunities: Māori, Te Tiriti/the Treaty, and Auckland Council* offering; more about the CCOs and how local boards can influence them; understanding how all the council plans fit together; and understanding the roles of staff who are directly supporting the local boards.

Frustration around the lack of attendance by their colleagues was raised by those members who had attended the courses to date. It was felt that there needed to be some encouragement at a peer to peer level to increase attendance and that local board chairs could play a role in this.

6.0   Democracy Services Support

Governing body members were asked about their satisfaction with different aspects of the dedicated support they received from Democracy Services.[9]

6.1   Overall results

Governing body members reported high levels of satisfaction with the overall support provided to them by Democracy Services (75%), although this decreased 5 percentage points from 2016. Satisfaction increased for both democracy advice and meeting support (92%) and Councillor Support Advisor (CSA) support (83%).

Satisfaction with governance-related strategic and policy advice provided by Democracy Services decreased 38 percentage points to 33 per cent satisfied in 2017.
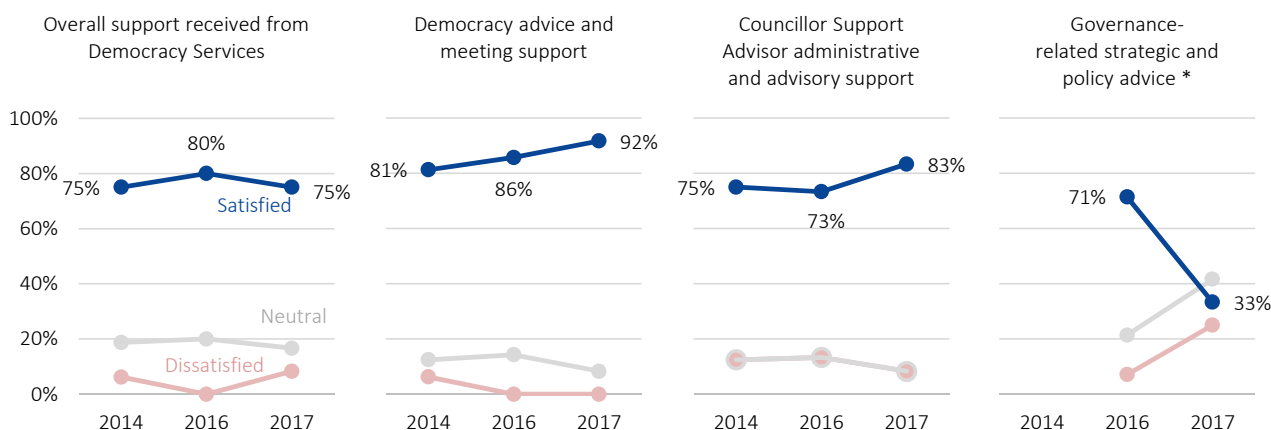

Figure 16. Democracy and advisory support
Previously "Strategic and policy advice"

Governing body members provided a number of comments and suggestions about the support they had received from Democracy Services since the start of the current term in November 2016. While broadly appreciative of the department and the assistance provided by its staff, the responses suggest that current support levels are perceived as inadequate with respect to quantity, not quality. This may go some way towards explaining the small decrease in satisfaction presented in Figure 16.

> *I am very grateful to have a wonderful CSA. (GB)*

> *The Councillor Support Advisors do a fantastic job, but because there is so much work, most of their role becomes reactive instead of proactive. If there were more of them or more resources then there would be more time for them to provide more strategic advice and*

---

[9] This question was not asked of local board members who are provided with dedicated support by Local Board Services.

support to us. By reactive I mean they are responding all the time to information coming in to us … It does make our roles as councillors very stressful and non-stop because we are always reacting to incoming information instead of being more proactive about pushing ideas and policies and plans ourselves. (GB)

Our staff work so hard to make things work but we are still falling behind with our day-to-day proactive support of our ratepayers. Because our support as elected members is a little bit sparse ... we are not able to service the needs of our ratepayers on a daily basis. (GB)

Having one dedicated CSA instead of multiple shared ones would be much better. (GB)

6.1.1 Governing body focus group feedback

Governing body members were asked about the decline in satisfaction with 'governance-related strategic and policy advice'. Most participants were unclear about the meaning of this question and were therefore given a list of all the reports authored by Democracy Services and provided to the governing body since the beginning of the term. None could recall problems with any of the reports listed and the consensus was that the low rating was undeserved and likely connected to a wider political mood of general 'grumpiness' and/or the nature of the report topics, rather than the actions or advice provided by council officers.

7.0 Dedicated Support for Local Boards

Local board members were asked about their satisfaction with different aspects of dedicated support received from Local Board Services, the Local Board Communications team and the Local Board Financial Advisory Services team.

7.1 Local Board Services overall results

The overall satisfaction with the dedicated support provided to local board members by Local Board Services was very high at 86 per cent. Satisfaction with the range of Local Board Services support functions was similarly high. Most scores were stable over time, with the exception of strategic and governance advice, which decreased 7 percentage points to 77 per cent in 2017.
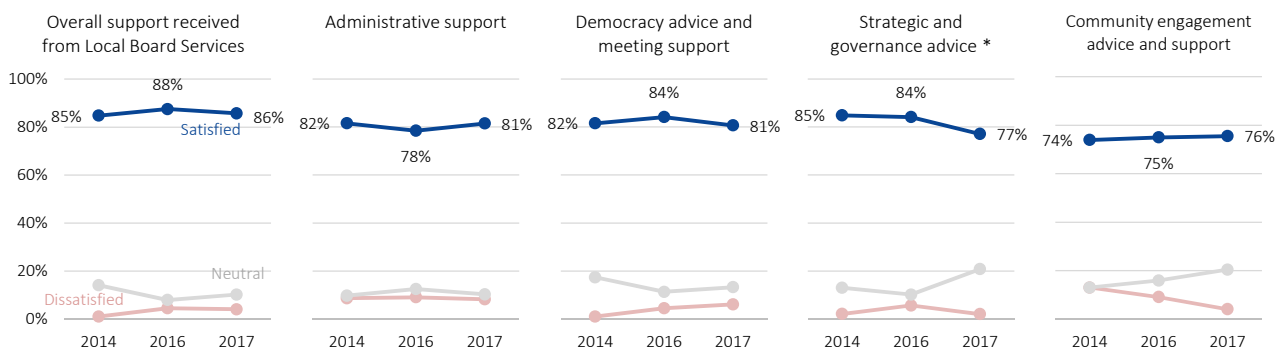

Figure 17. Local board dedicated support
Previously "Strategic and policy advice"

Local board members also made a number of comments about local board services staff and the support they provide. The feedback was generally very positive but focused also on the perceived inadequacies of current support and staffing levels.

> *The local board staff are very experienced and very good, I couldn't ask for better. (LB)*

> *My senior advisor is outstanding. Always positive, open to discussion, well considered in their feedback and easy going to work with, while remaining professional at all times. Has a 'can do attitude' and makes my role more effective because of the high quality support I receive. (LB)*

> *Local Board Services has without exception been marvellous. (LB)*

> *Our local board support staff do an amazing job - we feel we can trust them. It is very important to have 'trust' between the decision makers and the staff that support us and give us advice. (LB)*

The … team servicing the local board is understaffed. The issue is the quantum of support, not the quality in Local Board Services. (LB)

Our local board services team are excellent, but I know I often hesitate to get assistance at times as I know that they are always very busy. I think another .5 of a position could contribute to improving my experience and also take some of the pressure off the staff; I would like them not to burn out! (LB)

The staffing levels in Local Board Services are too low and/or not utilized properly. Requests for information from staff, or to meet to discuss issues is problematic. There is always too much work for staff but it makes it difficult when they are supposed to be supporting us on monitoring and providing input to our work programmes and governance. (LB)

I believe that the board staff achieve a significant amount and seem to be understaffed. They do a great job. (LB)

7.1.1 Local board focus group feedback

While the results for dedicated support to local boards remains high, there was a drop in the area of strategic and governance advice. This was investigated with members at the focus groups with the main suggestion being this could be linked to relationships not being fully established post-election or following changes/turnover in staff, as well as members being unclear about the meaning of strategic and governance advice and which local board services staff provided this support.

It was also suggested that the chair and deputy chair tend to receive more of this advice than the majority of other local board members which may have contributed to an overall lower score.

7.2 Local Board Financial Advisory and Communications team support

The level of satisfaction with the services provided by the Local Board Financial Advisory team was 62 per cent, down 5 percentage points from 2016, while that of the Local Board Communications team was 53 per cent, the same as in 2016.
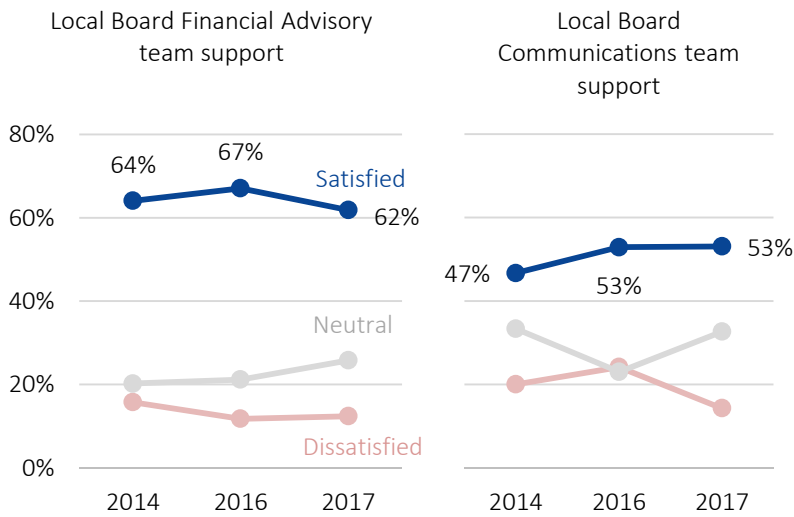

Figure 18. Local board dedicated financial advice and communications support

8.0 Consultation and Engagement

All elected members were asked about their satisfaction with the support they had received since the beginning of the electoral term in engaging with communities to increase their participation with, and understanding of, Auckland Council.

8.1 Overall results

Just over half of all elected members (57%) were satisfied with the support received in engaging with communities, with 29 per cent neutral and 14 per cent dissatisfied.

This represents a 7 percentage point increase in satisfaction since 2016. Dissatisfaction has remained low over the last three years.
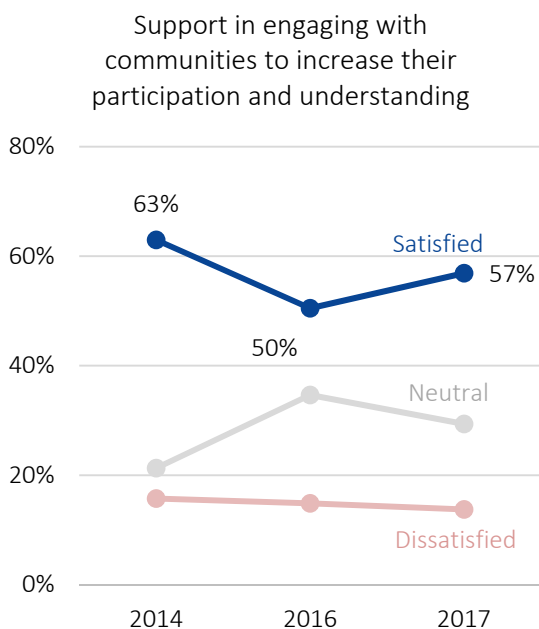

Figure 19. Community engagement support

8.2 Differences by elected member type

Local board respondents had notably higher levels of satisfaction with engagement support than governing body members (61% and 25%, respectively). The gap between local board and governing body satisfaction widened between 2014 and 2016.

A core function of the local boards is to understand, engage with and represent their local communities. It is worth noting that at the time the survey took place local boards had recently undertaken their local board plan engagement. Local board plans are strategic three-year plans

developed in consultation with the community that highlight the local board's priorities and vision for its area.

Interestingly, the 2014 survey was conducted in a similar timeframe to the 2014 local board plan and shows a higher level of satisfaction at 71% compared with 61% for 2017.

Support in engaging with communities to increase their participation and understanding
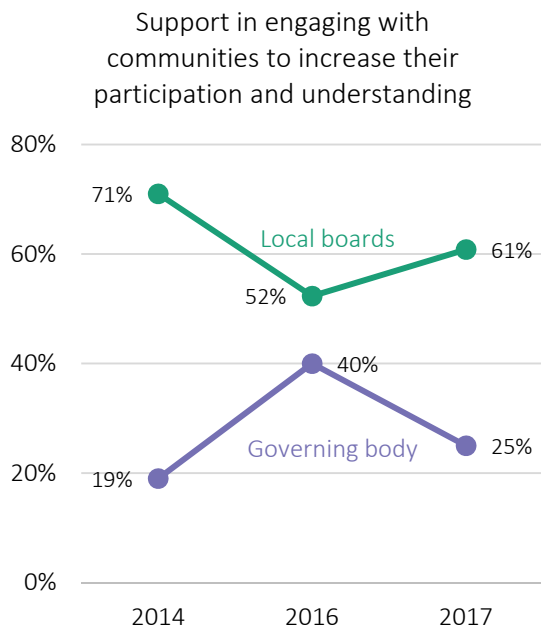

Figure 20. Community engagement support, by elected member type (% 'satisfied' only)

8.2.1 Governing body focus group feedback

Governing body focus group participants were asked why satisfaction with engaging with communities had decreased since 2016. According to participants the decrease in governing body satisfaction in this area is linked not to staff performance but to the fact that councillors feel invisible in their communities. This invisibility is related to the lack of support provided to councillors to engage with communities on regional issues; a lack of acknowledgement from local boards of the positive impact of regional funding; and to broader concerns around the shared governance model described above.

9.0   Support from Council Departments

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the overall support they had received from elected-member facing departments since the start of the electoral term.

Local board and governing body members were asked about the same departments, with the exception of the Chief Economist Unit, which was asked only of governing body members.

9.1 Overall results

Highest satisfaction levels were recorded for the Chief Economist Unit (73%), Libraries and Information (65%), Infrastructure and Environmental Services (64%), Finance (61%) and Financial Planning and Strategy (60%). The greatest dissatisfaction was reported with the CCO Governance and External Partnerships team (32% dissatisfied), Auckland Design Office (29% dissatisfied), Legal and Risk (25% dissatisfied) and Auckland Plan, Strategy and Research (24% dissatisfied).

The largest increases in satisfaction from 2016 were seen for Plans and Places (+18% point increase), Infrastructure and Environmental Services (+9%) and the Auckland Design Office, while the largest decreases were experienced by CCO Governance and External Partnerships (-37%), the Chief Economist Unit (-20%) and Parks, Sport and Recreation (-13%).

Because the Chief Economist Unit was asked only of governing body members, their results are displayed immediately below. All other departments are shown on the following page.
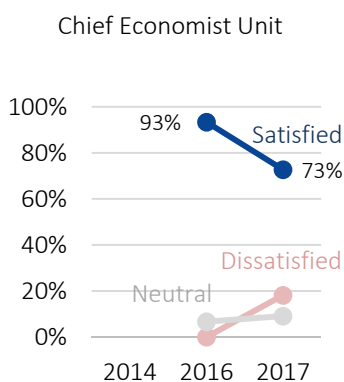
Chief Economist Unit

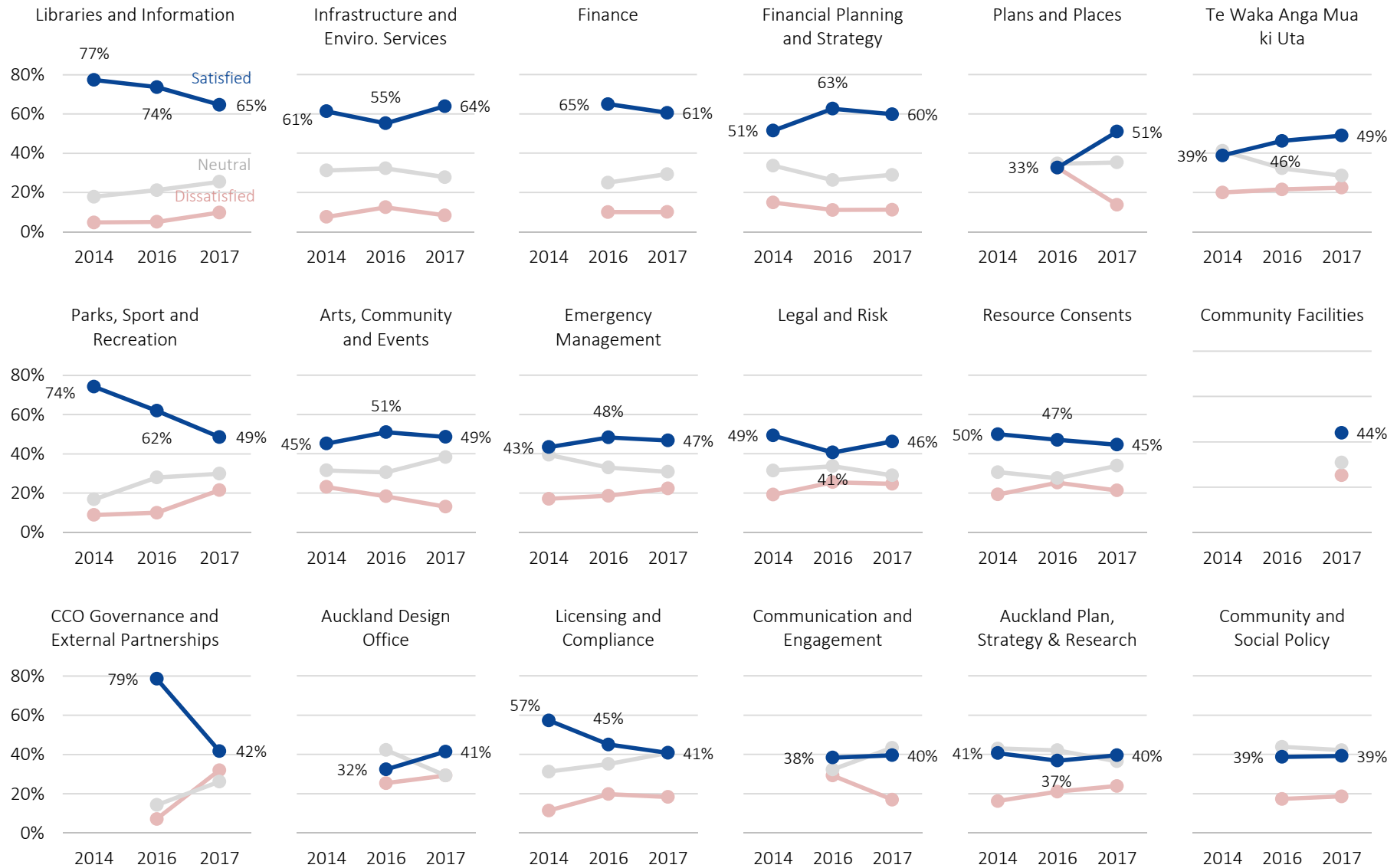Figure 21. Support from the Chief Economist Unit (governing body only)

Figure 22. Support from council departments

Note: Departments are ordered left-to-right by 2017 satisfaction levels.

9.2 Differences by elected member type

Governing body members tended to be more satisfied than local board members with the support received from council departments. Governing body members were most satisfied with Civil Defence and Emergency Management (89%) and Legal and Risk (83%) and most dissatisfied with Community Facilities (25% dissatisfied), Communication and Engagement (25% dissatisfied) and Auckland Plan Strategy and Research (25% dissatisfied).

Local board members were most satisfied with Libraries and Information (64%) and Infrastructure and Environmental Services (63%) and most dissatisfied with CCO Governance and External Partnerships (34% dissatisfied), the Auckland Design Office (32% dissatisfied) and Legal and Risk (27% dissatisfied).

9.3 Written feedback

Although respondents were not asked to provide feedback on specific departments in this year's survey, some included this kind of feedback in their responses to the two qualitative questions. A series of separate reports will provide additional comments on the relevant departments.
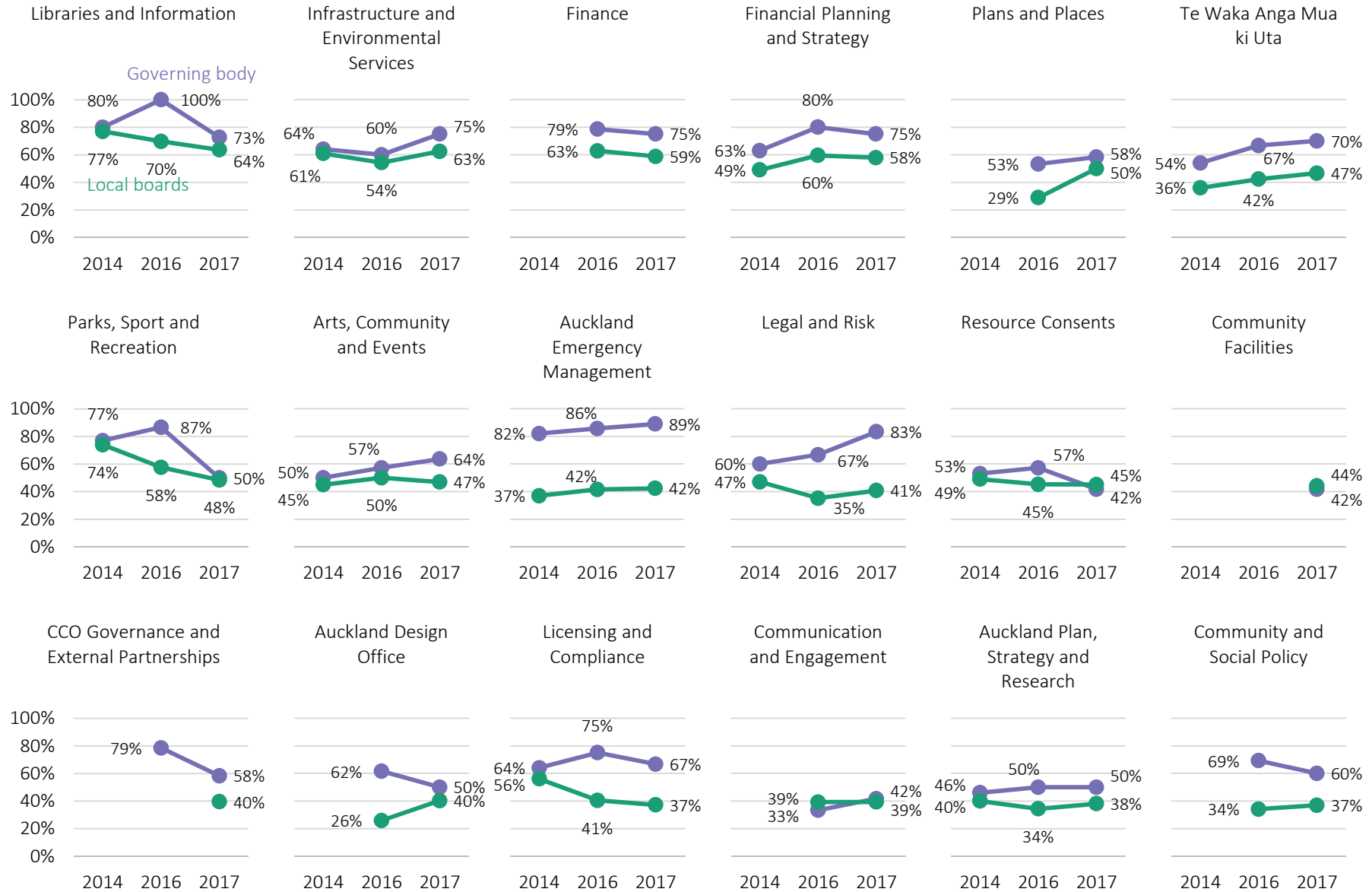
Figure 23. Support from council departments, by elected member type (% 'satisfied' only)

9.4 Governing body focus group feedback

9.4.1 Libraries and Information; and Parks, Sports and Recreation

Governing body focus group participants were asked about why satisfaction ratings had decreased for Libraries and Information; and Parks, Sports and Recreation. Recent restructures were considered the reason for decreases in governing body satisfaction with body departments. With respect to Parks, Sports and Recreation, the absence of parks officers and the need to go through Community Facilities has led to councillors and local board members feeling that they have no direct influence in the way that they used to.

Focus group participants were also asked about the decrease in satisfaction ratings for the CCO Governance and External Partnerships team. There was some uncertainty around why this decline was seen, although participants provided some broader CCO-related issues as some explanation. On the one hand participants noted that there were more opportunities for the governing body to ask questions of CCOs, and on the other there were fewer opportunities to be directly in front of CCOs in a formal way. In addition, councillors also felt there is some confusion about what these opportunities are and that this is impacting on this result. Two suggestions were made to address these issues: to increase the frequency and clarity of CCO reporting to specific committees; and that the Appointments and Performance Review Committee take on CCO governance.

9.5 Local board focus group feedback

Two noteworthy improvements in local board member satisfaction from 2016 were seen for Plans and Places and the Auckland Design Office. To assist in understanding these increases, local board members were asked for their views on what these departments have done which has increased their results. For both departments, comments were generally positive and notably so where the departments had engaged or worked with particular local boards. For local boards where engagement hadn't been as predominant, members felt information was more generic and lacked local detail.

In terms of Plans and Places, local board members felt that now the significant work on the Unitary Plan had been completed the department had more capacity to engage with local boards. Where Plans and Place had engaged with local boards, this has proved really positive. A specific example provided was the Kumeu Centre Plan. The board members felt that they had been listened to around what engagement would work in their communities with the Plans and Places team being open to trying different approaches of consultation and all involved were willing to think outside the box.

Comments around the Auckland Design Office were made that where they had engaged with local boards they had done this well and did a good job of explaining what it is they do. Board members acknowledged that it was good to see them doing more work outside the CBD.

Interestingly at all three local board focus groups, there were remarks that comment couldn't be made on either department as members don't know what the departments do.

Local board members were asked for their observations on why they felt Community and Social Policy remained steady but low in their results. Noting there was only time to ask this question at the centrally based focus group, the general consensus was that members were unclear what the department does.

10.0 Engagement from Council Controlled Organisations (CCOs)

Local board members were asked about their satisfaction with engagement from CCOs. Governing body members were not asked about this as they have a governance relationship with CCOs focused on statement of intent-based accountability.

CCOs are required to proactively build relationships with local boards, as well as develop engagement plans with them. The types of engagement that CCOs must provide for in their local board engagement plans are set out in the Governance Manual for Substantive CCOs.

In general, CCOs are expected to proactively build relationships with local boards based on transparent communication of their activities. CCOs also need to keep up-to-date with local board priorities and objectives in local board plans and to ensure these are considered through their annual statement of intent planning processes.

The survey questions focused on the particular ways in which CCOs are expected to engage with local boards based on these principles. Respondents were asked to assess the way all CCOs included in the survey:

- report to local boards (e.g. on upcoming projects)
- consult with local boards about projects in their local board area.

Almost all local board members had engaged with Auckland Transport (93%), and the vast majority with ATEED (80%) and Panuku Development Auckland (79%). Fewer local board members reported having engaged with Watercare (61%) and RFA (56%). Two respondents had not worked with any CCO. These results are not surprising, as local boards have generally experienced higher levels of engagement from those CCOs whose responsibilities are most relevant or of higher interest to local boards.

Table 3. Percentage of local board members who have engaged with CCOs

	N	%
Auckland Transport (AT)	91	93
Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development (ATEED)	78	80
Panuku Development Auckland	77	79
Watercare Services	60	61
Regional Facilities Auckland (RFA)	55	56
None	2	2

10.1 Auckland Transport (AT)

10.1.1 Overall results

In addition to the engagement areas noted above, respondents were asked about their satisfaction with their AT relationship managers, who act as a primary point of contact for local boards on all transport issues.

Like the results from 2016, a clear distinction was observed between local board members' satisfaction with their AT relationship manager (85%) and their satisfaction with the way AT reports to (56%) and consults with (42%) local boards. Almost a third (30%) were dissatisfied with AT's consultation with their local board.

Auckland Transport's elected member relationship unit has a plan to improve the overall quality of reports to local boards. They are also focused on providing advice to support local boards with their transport capital fund decisions. Council's quality advice programme is working with Auckland Transport on the plan's implementation which involves providing feedback on their monthly reports. The year-long plan will be reviewed and refreshed in June 2018 if needed.
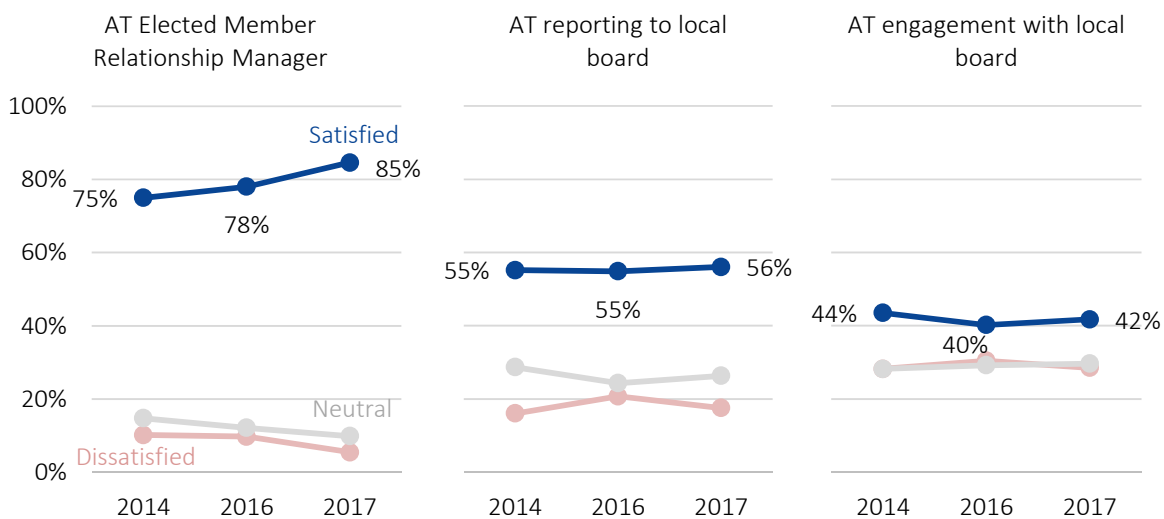
Figure 24. Engagement from Auckland Transport

10.1.2 Written feedback

Feedback on the CCOs, while not specifically sought in this year's survey, was provided by some elected members and focused predominantly on Auckland Transport. The majority of these comments addressed the perceived inadequacies of AT's engagement with local boards including its responsiveness, timeliness, openness and genuine desire for local board input. These provide some context to the quantitative results presented in the previous section.

Auckland Transport fails dismally in its public relations with local board members. It is very slow to respond and when it finally does its decisions fall well below what is expected. (LB)

I consider elected members are poorly served by the CCOs particularly Auckland Transport … AT is very poor in recognising local boards and keeping them informed. AT's version of consultation is to tell and not seek genuine consultation and feedback from the public or from local boards. (LB)

AT consultation and advice is telling us what will happen, they have made up their mind in most instances and are not willing to change. (LB)

Auckland Transport needs to start listening to the community. Ninety per cent of complaints coming across my desk are to do with AT and their lack of ability to understand what the community's needs are. They say they go out for consultation but really they have fully made up their minds and consultation is purely a word to them without meaning. (LB)

We see waste of money every day when it comes to AT, very little is done correctly the first time and needs to be revisited many times before the job is done to satisfaction … Sort AT out and Auckland will be a better city for it, just doing that I would be able to better perform my role. (LB)

AT drive their own agenda onto the public and this has resulted in poor outcomes, reputational damage, and millions in financial cost. (LB)

There were also a number of positive comments:

My board is well served by our … AT Liaison. (LB)

I find working with Auckland Transport in the [   ] area excellent, they have gone above and beyond to get our area back into a safe asset. (LB)

10.2 Watercare Services Limited

Watercare continues to provide services to the local boards based on the level of project activity in their respective areas and in response to constituent escalations and communication requirements.

Watercare is also looking to more actively involve local board members in the promotion of local projects and activities such as some of the inflow and infiltration programmes, local matters newsletters or promotion of projects.

The different information needs and demands of the local boards is recognised and information is normally presented where it aids understanding or value or where feedback is required.

This year, Watercare also involved the local boards as key stakeholders in the active communication around the Tasman Tempest weather event and Watercare's response to discoloured water in the Hunua Dams.

The good relationship with the local board chairs and members is also maintained through effective and timely responses to escalations and constituent issues. Such matters are normally dealt with immediately or within a few days.

All activity with local boards is also reported in the public session of Watercare's monthly board papers available on-line.

10.2.1 Overall results

Satisfaction with Watercare's reporting to and engagement with the local board were both 55 per cent. Although satisfaction with reporting has dropped from 62 to 55 per cent since 2016, the trend towards improving ratings for engagement continues with an +8 per cent increase on the previous year.
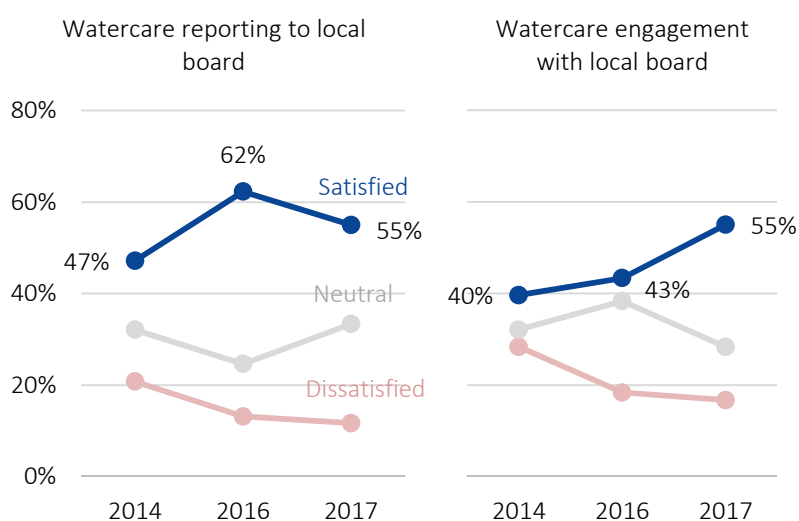

Figure 25. Engagement from Watercare

10.3 Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development (ATEED)

Since the last elected member survey ATEED has specifically focused on continually testing and improving its day to day relationship with elected members. ATEED have made some changes and improvements to their engagement with elected members including:

- implementing a more personal interface through three Senior Strategic Advisors, who have responsibility for ATEED's engagement with their appointed local boards and one Strategic Planner Local Economic Development and two Local Economic Development Advisors who work day-to-day on developing localised strategies and tactics by local board

- designing and delivering more meaningful engagement to elected members through relationship building, staff availability to members, working across the council family, providing six-monthly reports to local boards in collaboration with operational, strategy and planning teams and enhancing reports to elected members to deliver more insight and detail while being easier to read.

10.3.1 Overall results

Local economic development functions shifted from council to ATEED in August 2015. During the 2016/17 financial year, ATEED established and delivered economic development work programmes with local boards, with engagement around these projects beginning around the time of the 2016 survey. Alongside this work, and in response to the 2014 survey results, ATEED implemented a number of measures to improve its engagement with local boards, in particular piloting engagement and activity plans in six local board areas and hiring dedicated staff to support this local board engagement.

ATEED's 2017 results show continued improvements over previous surveys, with reporting satisfaction up +8 per cent from 2016 to 41 per cent, and engagement satisfaction increasing slightly from 30 per cent in 2016 to 33 per cent this year. Similarly, although elected member dissatisfaction with ATEED in 2016 was high compared to AT and Watercare, these levels have continued their downward trend in both reporting (from 27% to 24%) and engagement (from 37% to 27%).
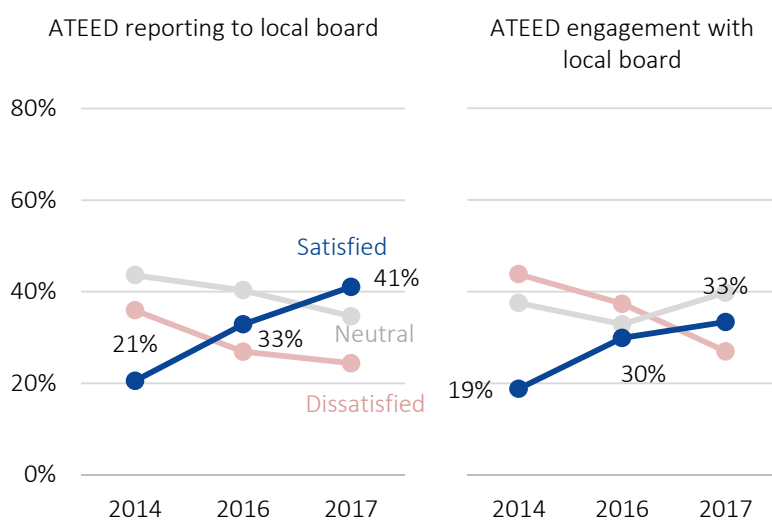

Figure 26. Engagement from ATEED

10.3.2 Local board focus group feedback

Comments in the local board focus groups were mixed. Some boards have great engagement and relationships with ATEED and some do not.

There was feedback that in some areas it has been a journey, and although in the past relationships and engagement have been poor, it has improved over time and continues to do so. Others commented that the thought of working with ATEED excites them but were disappointed when reports and presentations have come to the board because they are generic and lack integration.

A number of members felt that there was a lack of engagement with boards. The World Masters Games was specifically mentioned and that it could have been a great opportunity to have some integration and links with the local communities. Some members felt that ATEED is more about events & tourism and less about economic development.

10.4 Regional Facilities Auckland (RFA)

Regional Facilities Auckland provides a regional approach to Auckland's arts, culture and heritage, sport and leisure sector. RFA manages more than $1 billion worth of major facilities and landmark venues across the region, including the ANZ Viaduct Events Centre, Aotea Centre, Aotea Square, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, Auckland Town Hall, Auckland Zoo, Bruce Mason Centre, Mt Smart Stadium, The Civic, QBE Stadium and Western Springs Stadium.

RFA provides a designated engagement manager, who is the first point of contact for local boards, and ensures all engagement requirements are met. The engagement manager works to develop and maintain relationships with the local boards in order to facilitate efficient and constructive communication. The engagement manager is responsible for the reporting of RFA activities.

Consultation in regard to RFA facilities primarily takes place with the four local boards (Waitematā, Upper Harbour, Māungakiekie-Tamaki and Devonport-Takapuna) that have RFA facilities within their areas. It is also acknowledged that other boards, particularly those in close proximity to a particular facility, may also have an interest on behalf of their communities and wish to be consulted on particular issues or developments.

Six-monthly reports to the four local boards with RFA facilities keep each board informed of upcoming projects and activities being undertaken in their area. The reports include regional and sub-regional projects of interest to the local board, and any actions RFA has taken in relation to a local board plan.

Within the first six months of each three-year term of Auckland Council, the engagement manager visits all local boards to make an overview presentation about RFA. All local board members are also invited to an annual event held at a different regional facility.

10.4.1 Overall results

After achieving similar levels of satisfaction in both the 2014 and 2016 surveys, local board members' satisfaction with both RFA reporting and engagement has more than doubled since 2016 from 54 per cent and 52 per cent, respectively. Levels of dissatisfaction remain relatively steady at just over 20 per cent.
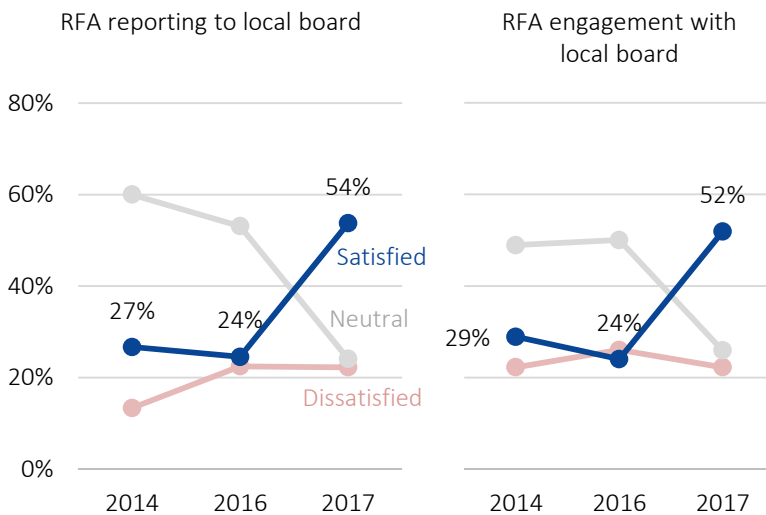

Figure 27. Engagement from RFA

10.5 Panuku Development Auckland

10.5.1 Overall results

Panuku Development Auckland was formed in September 2015, from the merger of Waterfront Auckland and Auckland Council Property Limited (ACPL). The 2016 survey measured initial levels of satisfaction amongst local board members. Since 2016, satisfaction with Panuku has decreased from 53 to 38 per cent for reporting and from 50 to 39 per cent for engagement.

Similarly, levels of dissatisfaction have increased from 27 per cent to 39 per cent for engagement and from 25 to 32 per cent for reporting over the same period. A substantial minority of respondents dissatisfied with these two aspects reported being 'very dissatisfied' (14 per cent for both engagement and reporting).
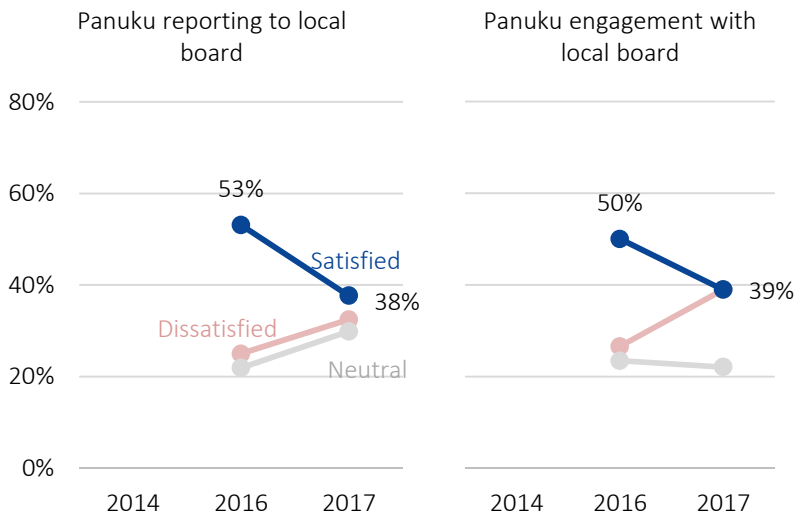
Figure 28. Engagement from Panuku Development Auckland

10.5.2 Local board focus group feedback

Panuku Development Auckland has shown a decrease in satisfaction from local board members over the last 18 months. Members were asked to provide their views on what may have caused this decrease.

Although there was some support of Panuku, generally the feedback from members was that the results didn't surprise them. A number of members noted that engagement from Panuku with the local boards is poor and often seems like a box ticking exercise as it feels like decisions have been made prior to meeting with them and therefore, no consideration is given to local board views.

Members commented that reporting from Panuku is very generic and doesn't let the boards know what is happening in their areas. Comments were made around a lack of understanding from Panuku staff about the local board role and that maybe there needed to be some education around this. Comments from some local board members indicated a low level of trust and confidence in Panuku.

10.6 General comments about CCOs

Several local board members made general comments about CCOs; the most common theme was the variability in performance across and within the organisations and the need for them to build stronger relationships with local boards.

> *All CCOs could do more to build stronger relationships with local boards, however this is a two-way street and I appreciate we do not make it easy for them. (LB)*

Some of the rankings are difficult as within a CCO I have had a good experience and a bad experience. (LB)

The support from the CCOs varies very widely. (LB)

Some of the CCOs … don't leave me with the feeling they are really committed to meaningful engagement with members, it too often feels like a box ticking exercise. (LB)

11.0 Written feedback

As noted in Section 1.4.2, respondents were asked to provide feedback on the additional support Auckland Council could provide them to better perform their role, and to make any additional comments they wished. An analysis of this input is included in the relevant sections of the report; additional key themes are discussed below. These are: restructuring and its impacts identified as problematic; the perception that some staff lack impartiality; and dissatisfaction with the impact and influence of local boards.

11.1 Restructuring and its impacts identified as problematic

Restructuring was identified as problematic by elected members. This theme centres on the multiple impacts of restructures which include a loss of institutional expertise, knowledge and understanding; a decrease in the quantity and sometimes quality of support provided to elected members; and the subsequent impacts of these changes on timeliness, accuracy and ultimately on public confidence.

> *The endless restructuring of departments is having a detrimental effect on our governance role … Relationships built up with staff that are useful and result in good outcomes are lost after restructures and we are sometimes left - as with the parks restructure - not knowing who we are supposed to be working with. The changes lead to a culture of demoralised staff who are not sure if they're going to have a job in a year and some chuck it in and go and work in the private sector. This is a pity as we're losing institutional knowledge as a result. I don't think there is one department that has not been through this in the four years I have been a board member. The organisation needs a break from this before it starts to really affect the delivery of services. (LB)*

> *There has been far too much change within council within a very short period and this has left members feeling out of touch, poorly informed and losing a serious amount of expertise. This runs right through the organisation but with an emphasis on parks staff and secondly with administration and internal staffing. It would be helpful if council could find ways to retain staff for longer periods of time to maintain continuity. (LB)*

> *Elected members rely heavily upon the information provided by council officers to enable decisions to be made. It is extremely difficult to build a rapport/relationship with these officers, and have confidence in their advice when they have little or no knowledge of our ward; they have little knowledge of their area of specialty - because it is new to them; they are here today - and gone tomorrow; and they do not provide answers to the questions asked. (LB)*

> *Under our new structures, we have gained strategic staff with no historical knowledge of our area or projects; and fewer operational staff. Elected members are always out of touch*

with what's happening in our own patch and have little chance to assist staff to get up to speed or to have important blue skies discussions around parks, facilities and some areas of arts and culture, let alone lead. (LB)

There have been problems with the restructure. Council officers are having to service larger areas with fewer people, some do not report back in a timely manner if at all and make mistakes. It's not their fault - they are being asked to do too much. In a few instances they have continued on their work without checking in with the board and gone completely off track. (LB)

I have not been impressed with the way restructuring has taken place particularly in environmental service education programmes, libraries and parks. We must be consulted more at the beginning of the process. The changes have undermined public confidence in council which is at an all-time low. (LB)

11.2 The perception that some staff lack impartiality

The perception that some staff lack impartiality was also considered problematic by some elected members. They expressed concern about the independence of the advice they are given by council officers, noting that they have found some staff to be 'too involved', 'opinionated', 'biased' or 'obstructive'.

I am very concerned about the disconnect between political expectations and the direction set by some managers … change is needed in this space. (GB)

More options should be presented to the board and officers should not presume that boards will go with a certain option - we had a workshop where an officer was asking the board for direction on KPIs, the board had not yet decided whether to fund that [   ] organisation as part of our work program or consider a grant through our contestable granting process. Some board members are new and would have gone along and recommended KPIs not understanding that a decision was still to be made about whether or not to fund the group and how. This happens all too often and serves to circumvent local boards' decision-making role - effectively the officer has made the decision to fund the group and was asking the board about KPIs for that funding agreement!!! Some board members rely more than others on the advice they receive from officers and can be 'easily led' into a decision - the starting point should always be a neutral one from officers - it should always be 'These are the options ... the decision is up to the board ... what do you decide?' - only then, after the board members have actually considered all of the options etc. and made a decision would you get into the details of KPIs and such. (LB)

At times, it is glaringly obvious to us that officers give us very 'tailored' advice. We have become suspicious of some staff and the advice they give us. We had an issue last

financial year with a group that was chosen by an officer to deliver one of our programs - the board had no say in who was to deliver the program. The program was very poorly delivered - but officers seemed to try their best to cover for the group rather than demand that they be accountable. It would have been better if the officer had consulted the board on who would be the best group to deliver the initiative - the board are all locals and have knowledge about who would be best placed to deliver certain programs. (LB)

I do feel that some staff get so involved with their area that they do not give impartial advice as they are conflicted. This makes decision making harder. (LB)

Advice feels like advocacy rather than impartial advice. (LB)

11.2.1 Local board focus group feedback

To help understand the theme of impartiality that came from the comments made in the survey, local board members were asked to explain what they see and hear which tells them that advice they are receiving isn't impartial.

Some members commented that they felt that long-term established relationships between some staff and communities can unconsciously influence the advice that the local board is provided.

Local board members highlighted that on occasions they see staff who are really enthusiastic, excited or express their personal opinion on a decision the board is being asked to make which then undermines the confidence the board have in the staff member's advice reflecting the need for staff to maintain a careful balance. Some members shared on instances where staff members have provided their personal opinions and that there was need for staff to understand that these are not relevant as they are not a board member and should be providing professional advice.

Linking to this point and the following theme of dissatisfaction with the impact and influence of local boards, some members felt that there is still a lack of understanding by staff of the local board role. Comments were made around the need for staff education around the role of local boards as well as knowing how to talk to a report and give unbiased advice. On occasions, it is felt that new staff can sometimes come into the role with a negative attitude because they don't understand the local board's role and/or haven't been provided the history or context of a project and don't appreciate the board can provide this.

11.3 Dissatisfaction with the impact and influence of local boards

Some local board members were also concerned about a perceived lack of impact and influence on council decision-making; about being inadequately informed; and about being poorly regarded in comparison to their governing body counterparts. The most common suggestion for addressing these issues was the education of council staff and the community more broadly on the role and

function of local boards within Auckland's shared governance model. This aligns to a similar theme that has emerged from the organisational support workstream of the governance framework review.

I personally feel the [local] board members are at the end of the food chain about almost everything and I feel very disheartened. (LB)

Very frustrated that local board members are briefed but have little or no impact on decisions. (LB)

There is still confusion in the electorates about the role of governing body members … and local boards/members, with many in the community seeing the council as being just the councillors, and being a superior body to local boards, and that a ward councillor will be able to sort out local issues. There is still limited understanding by many staff, and in the CCOs, about the legal role of local boards in the shared governance model with reports still referring to "council and local boards" in one sentence. (LB)

12.0 Future Research

Focus group participants also reflected on the survey questions and the appropriateness of the survey method in assessing elected member satisfaction with the support they receive from council. In line with feedback received from other elected members, participants noted the difficulty of selecting one number to reflect their overall satisfaction with the support they are provided. As one elected member explained, 'when you ask for overall satisfaction you don't deal with an organisation overall, you deal with it member by member'. Participants were also concerned about the fact that they required explanations and additional documentation to 'decode' the meaning of several of the survey questions during the focus group. This has somewhat diminished their confidence in the survey results and as a consequence also made them wary of work programmes that are developed on the basis of these satisfaction measures.

Frustration at the survey response rate and focus group attendance was a factor for councillors. Suggestions to improve these included: that the mayor announce the survey during one of his morning teas and explain to councillors that issues can only be fixed once they are identified; and that CSAs remind them until they complete it. Face-to-face sessions like this one, participants felt, allowed for a better, more nuanced understanding of their views. They suggested that the timing of any future session be carefully considered in order to encourage more participation; that it could be held as an integral part of a governing body or full committee meeting; and that holding several over different days and times might also be helpful.

There was minimal feedback from the local board members on the focus group approach, however, feedback post the sessions highlighted having the use of technology .

> *'More elected members may participate once council upgrades to modern technology to allow for long distance learning or attendance to participate. I am presently involved in a [ ] working party and we have been conference calling once a fortnight for our meetings. Most business people conduct business via video linkages today.' (LB)*

13.0 Areas of Future Focus for Auckland Council

This survey has generated useful insights into elected members' satisfaction with the support they have received from Auckland Council staff since November 2016. In the previous survey, overall satisfaction levels for Democracy Services and Local Board Services were already strong, and this year's results are similar. The findings also demonstrate that we can celebrate improvements in administrative and professional development support; higher levels of satisfaction for Plans and Places and Infrastructure and Environmental Services; and notable increases in satisfaction for Auckland Tourism Events and Economic Development (ATEED) and Regional Facilities Auckland (RFA).

Despite these encouraging findings, however, the survey results also suggest that there is a lot more work to do. This is reflected in three findings: declining levels of satisfaction in several departments; a lack of improvement across a range of important issues; and the fact that some of these results sit at relatively low levels. The first finding is evident in overall satisfaction rates remaining around 50 per cent since 2014; levels of satisfaction with the quality of advice in agenda reports remaining the same as 2014 (55%); and satisfaction with most of the components of agenda reports remaining largely unchanged since the previous survey, moving no more than 6 percentage points in either direction. With respect to the second, only around 20 per cent of elected members agree that the council family is progressing toward performing as a unified organisation; satisfaction with the timeliness of advice and information has not yet risen above 38 per cent; and many of the components of agenda reports including consideration of options, Māori impact statement and local impact have not risen above 40 per cent in the two most recent surveys. And in relation to the third, levels of satisfaction decreased for 10 out of 19 council departments between 2016 and 2017.

The survey results shed light on areas for future focus in order to address the concerns of elected members moving forward. The need for further improvements in the **quality of advice** provided to elected members remains critical. Ensuring the delivery of timely, evidence-based advice that clearly outlines different options and potential impacts for elected decision-makers is fundamental to a thriving local democracy. A related issue is the need to address the negative impact on elected members of **restructuring**. The lack of continuity in staffing has caused delays and disruptions in work flows and also led to a loss of institutional expertise, knowledge and understanding that elected members – who are in temporary roles themselves – rely on.

This year's results, like those from 2016, indicate that elected members are seeking **further progress towards Auckland Council operating seamlessly as a unified organisation** and that this is a need for different parts of the organisation to communicate better with each other and to work together in a more joined-up way. Similarly, there is again **dissatisfaction with the impact and influence of local boards**, an issue which some local board members believe could be ameliorated by greater awareness and understanding of the shared governance model at both council and community levels. Some of this local board discontent around impact and influence is mirrored in the reporting and engagement scores of the various CCOs and in the comments on

specific CCOs and more broadly. For all CCOs, including those that have shown improving satisfaction scores this year such as ATEED and RFA as well as those whose levels have been relatively static, the highest result was 55 per cent. There is a sense that CCOs need to better recognise local board priorities and consult more meaningfully with them. In light of these areas of concern, council's on-going emphasis on making its size work for efficient and effective outcomes and in a manner that is responsive to local level concerns continues to be relevant and important moving forward.

Appendix A Data analysis methods

The following section outlines the methods used in the analysis of the data.

Quantitative analysis

All quantitative analyses were conducted in R statistical analysis software.

Summary statistics

Summary statistics (*N*s and percentages) were calculated for each question. In order to ensure percentages were calculated from those who provided a meaningful / interpretable response, 'Don't know' and 'Not applicable' responses were excluded from bases used to calculate percentages. The base sizes for each survey question can be seen on the relevant figure.

Key driver analysis

A key driver analysis was conducted by calculating bivariate correlations between overall satisfaction and a range of survey questions. The correlation coefficients were then plotted against the mean level of satisfaction (or agreement, in the case of progress toward one unified organisation) with each survey question. This plot identifies which areas of council work are more likely to play an important role in influencing overall satisfaction, as well as whether the organisation is doing well or poorly in those areas.

Qualitative analysis

Responses to the two open-ended survey questions were analysed together and coded into themes. These themes were developed according to both the strength and volume of feedback provided by elected members.

All proper names and other identifying information were removed from the comments reported on in this report.