

Bilingual (Chinese-Mandarin) Community Liaison Officer - Trial Outcomes

Tuesday, 6 June 2023

City Community Services and Culture Committee

Strategic Alignment - Thriving Communities

Program Contact:

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Public

Approving Officer:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an analysis of the recent trial of a Bilingual (Chinese-Mandarin) Community Liaison Officer (CLO) and recommends continuing the service for a further 12 months.

The Bilingual CLO trial was conducted from October 2022 to May 2023 following a Council resolution. The CLO acted as a central contact point for traders and community members, providing connections with relevant service providers and promoting community safety awareness-raising activities. Throughout the trial, a total of 103 initial enquiries were received, with 94 related to City of Adelaide services covering a wide range of functions. As the report highlights, the value of the service has been more than the pure volume of the enquiries received, but in the quality and outcome of the service.

Positive feedback was received throughout the trial, particularly from traders in the Grote and Gouger Street areas. The trial successfully supported opportunities for improved education and compliance in relation to a range of council matters in community safety and other Council functions. The service was well received by stakeholders such as SAPOL, who noted it strengthening the connection between SAPOL and the Chinese community.

As the trial progressed it grew in value and impact, with recent additional developments including establishing successful relationships with media outlets to create CoA-specific content on social media channels and news apps which are popular and targeted to the Mandarin-Chinese speaking community.

Due to the trial feedback, outcomes and potential to continue increasing the value this service provides, it is recommended that the service continue for a further 12-months, at which point a broader review will be undertaken.

RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendation will be presented to Council on 13 June 2023 for consideration

**THAT THE CITY COMMUNITY SERVICES AND CULTURE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS TO COUNCIL:
THAT COUNCIL**

1. Notes the outcomes of the 6-month trial of the Bilingual (Chinese-Mandarin) Community Liaison Officer.
 2. Approves the continuation of the Bilingual Community Liaison Officer at 1.0 FTE to 30 June 2024, to continue developing the service to provide value to the community.
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IMPLICATIONS AND FINANCIALS

City of Adelaide 2020-2024 Strategic Plan	Strategic Alignment – Thriving Communities Support community diversity, cultural expression, experiences and participation.
Policy	Not as a result of this report
Consultation	Not as a result of this report
Resource	If the recommendation is supported, an extra 1.0 FTE will be required (at a cost of \$88,640) in the 2023/24 budget.
Risk / Legal / Legislative	Not as a result of this report
Opportunities	Continue to offer a Bilingual Community Liaison Officer service to the community.
22/23 Budget Allocation	\$42,410 was expended throughout the trial, which was covered from existing vacancy savings.
Proposed 23/24 Budget Allocation	If the recommendation is supported, an extra 1.0 FTE will be required (at a cost of \$88,640) in the 2023/24 budget. It is expected this could be delivered within existing resources for the first quarter of 23/24, and a budget reconsideration undertaken at Q1. Alternatively, it could be added to the current draft budget following consultation.
Life of Project, Service, Initiative or (Expectancy of) Asset	Not as a result of this report
22/23 Budget Reconsideration (if applicable)	Not as a result of this report
Ongoing Costs (eg maintenance cost)	Not as a result of this report
Other Funding Sources	Not as a result of this report

DISCUSSION

Background

1. At the 14 June 2022 meeting, Council resolved:
 - 1.1. *That Council*
 - 1.1.1 *Approve the commencement of a pilot by August 2022 to trial a bilingual (Chinese-Mandarin) community safety officer position to act as a central contact point for traders, particularly in and around Gouger and Grote Street, to deliver a range of community safety awareness-raising activities, including providing connections with relevant service providers.*
 - 1.1.2 *Approve the cost of this pilot will be funding from existing vacancy management budgets in 2022/23 with any ongoing funding to be sought in the first quarter budget review for 2022/23.*
 - 1.1.3 *Approve the outcomes of the trial, including findings and a recommendation for future options, is provided to Council at the conclusion of the trial period.*
2. Chinese-Mandarin is the most commonly spoken language other than English by city residents.

Recruitment of the role

3. Recruitment for the Bilingual Community Safety Officer commenced on 28 June 2022, however did not result in a successful appointment.
4. Subsequently, the position description and title were revised from Community Safety Officer to Community Liaison Officer, more accurately reflecting the intent of the role and ability to attract suitable candidates.
5. The initial incumbent commenced in the role on Monday 17 October 2022, with the 6-month trial running from October to May 2023.
6. Following the incumbent moving interstate, further recruitment occurred with the current CLO commencing on 31 January 2023 and is still engaged currently.
7. As part of the trial, differing hours of operation were tested to balance the value of the service to the community with Council resources.
 - 7.1. From October 2022 to January 2023, the service was offered two days a week, on various weekdays 8.30am-5.00pm.
 - 7.2. From January 2023 to March 2023, the service was offered Tuesday and Thursday, 8.30am-5.00pm.
 - 7.3. The service was increased to full-time from March 2023 to further develop the service offering.

Promotion of the Service

8. The service was promoted and advertised through:
 - 8.1. Information shared with Elected Members via eNews on 21 October 2022.
 - 8.2. Face to face engagement with businesses and the community – the CLO was active in the field walking the streets and visiting businesses in person by themselves or with Community Safety Officers, other Council staff, or SAPOL.
 - 8.3. Social media posts from the City of Adelaide.
 - 8.4. Engagement and collaboration with SAPOL, where we were able to promote the differing responsibilities between Local and State Government.
 - 8.5. Establishing a WeChat account exclusively for point-to-point enquiries with the CLO.
 - 8.6. Promotional flyers in Mandarin (Link 1 view [here](#)) and English (Link 2 view [here](#)) distributed in April 2023. Flyers were provided to Elected Members, the Customer Centre, a Chinese Business Event held at Adelaide Town Hall and the Gouger Street Traders Association.

Trial results – quantitative outcomes

9. Throughout the trial period from October 2022 to May 2023, a total of 103 initial enquiries were received (Link 3 view [here](#)).
 - 9.1. Of these enquiries, 94 were related to Council services across a wide variety of functions. The most common topics were matters regarding Community Safety, Community Engagement & Environmental Health.

- 9.2. The non-Council enquiries were also varied, with the most common type relating to enquiries to/from SAPOL regarding crime reporting, community engagement and safety with businesses in the Gouger and Grote Street area.
10. In addition to direct one-one-one engagement, the CLO function assisted with translating 13 Council documents from English to Mandarin, with the majority intended for distribution to customers.

Trial results – qualitative outcomes

11. Based purely on volume of 'initial enquiries', 103 across 6 months may not appear significant. However, this figure represents the 'initial enquiry' only, and it is noted that many initial enquiries led to further contacts and ongoing communication with community members throughout the trial about other matters which are not captured in this figure.
12. It is also noted that the volume and quantitative analysis does not represent the complete value for a service to the community of this nature.
13. The following examples, with personal information removed, are presented to provide context of the value of individual engagements with the community and Council:
 - 13.1. Field Street Works: Stakeholders in the street raised concerns with aspects of the works and communication they had received. These concerns were raised with staff and Elected Member(s) even though Council had issued proactive communications. To support the situation, the CLO was engaged and collaborated with Council's Project Delivery team to create revised written communication and engagement materials. These materials were tailored for the Chinese-Mandarin speaking community and issued to relevant businesses and customers to inform about ongoing works and provide solutions for any future works.
 - 13.1.1. As a result, customers and business owners on Field Street have since expressed their satisfaction with the CLO role, highlighting how it has led to more effective communication and reduced frustration due to improved clarity in the information provided.
 - 13.2. Supporting sustainability: The CLO has been active in collaborating with Council teams and Green Industries SA to promote the Single Use Plastics Ban resources to both the Chinese business community and traders in Grote and Gouger Streets. This has been effective in raising awareness of the environmental impact of single-use plastics, promoting sustainable practices, and encouraging participation in initiatives that benefit the community and the planet.
 - 13.3. Kerbside waste compliance: The CLO assisted driving a significant improvement in compliance with the placement of cardboard collection from businesses in the local area. Of 36 businesses approached, 30 were found to comply with the guidelines, with 18 of these located in the Grote and Gouger Street area, and 12 in Hindley Street and Rundle Mall.
14. Traders in the Grote and Gouger Street areas have reported feeling better supported and understood by the CLO, resulting in prompt responses from Council and less frustration for traders.
15. Additionally, buskers have indicated that they feel more supported and have a better understanding of their conditions, leading to reduced isolation and improved compliance.
16. The case-study examples above are presented to provide context that measures of success for the service may not be limited to only the quantity of interactions, but through successfully engaging with a segment of the community that is generating greater levels of satisfaction with Council's approach, that would otherwise not have been possible.
17. The service has also strengthened the connection between Council and SAPOL officers, and SAPOL with the Chinese community.
 - 17.1. The CLO has assisted SAPOL with channelling multiple contacts from businesses and individuals who have reported crimes. These contacts have given SAPOL additional leads to follow up on crimes and engage in further crime prevention work.
 - 17.2. SAPOL have been supportive of the trial and actively engaged with the CLO to assist with clarity around the services SAPOL and Council provide.
 - 17.3. SAPOL have indicated support for the continuation of the CLO position, emphasising the importance of cross-collaboration.
18. An aspect not originally considered but developed throughout the trial has been establishing relationships with media outlets that support and target the Chinese-speaking community.
19. A number of agencies have indicated willingness to create and promote CoA-related content on their social media channels and news apps, supporting the sharing of Council services.

- 19.1. It is not expected that this will lead to promoting new content for CoA, but rather assisting in identifying suitable existing CoA content for translating and promoting via these mediums for additional reach and engagement.
20. Additionally, throughout the trial we have identified a need and opportunity to translate Council regulations, policies, and media releases that benefit the Chinese community.

Learnings

21. Initial engagement with the trial was low, which was in part due to launching during caretaker and limited promotion.
22. Increased customer enquiries followed from proactive promotion, but also notably through the use of WeChat as a point-to-point communication tool for the CLO.
23. As the service is largely responsive to customer enquiries, the role experienced periods of 'downtime' during the trial which required management and consideration, particularly early in the trial. As a result, decisions were made to alter the hours per week to ensure efficient use of resources, and develop value-add functions such as document translation.
24. Attempts to recruit for a skillset that met the Community Safety Officer function – which is an Authorised Officer with powers to expiate and enforce – with bilingual skills was not successful, leading to a reframing of the role to focus on community liaison.
25. Despite having previously contacted the Customer Centre to achieve their outcomes, some community members chose to only reach out to the CLO once aware of the service, which duplicated Council's existing service and took time away from those that relied on the bilingual service to meet their needs.
26. Should the role continue and have time to further evolve, a clear definition of the CLO and other responsibilities in Council (e.g. Customer Centre) will assist with a more efficient service and less ambiguity regarding the duties associated with the role.

Next Steps

27. A range of options have been considered based on the trial and feedback, including:
 - 27.1. Continuing the service for a further 12 months with considerations for further defining the services, responsibilities and placement within the organisation (*recommended option*).
 - 27.2. Periodic engagement with Grote and Gouger Street traders and the Chinese/Mandarin speaking community through the use of a contractor to continue engagement and connection to relevant services.
 - 27.3. Continuation of the WeChat account with monitoring by an external organisation to direct enquiries to the appropriate area of Council or external agencies.
 - 27.4. A free interpreting service, similar to City of Sydney, through TIS National ([Get help in your language - City of Sydney \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.tisnational.com.au)).
 - 27.5. Ceasing the service and approach.
28. While noting the volume of enquiries, the service has been highly valued to the segment of the community it sought to target, as it provided a means of communication that would otherwise not be possible.
29. Many of the enquiries have resulted in multiple follow up conversations with the customer and relevant staff to ensure all information has been accurately conveyed and understood. The time taken with these follow up conversations has assisted to build confidence and trust with the community in working to a resolution to their matter.
30. The CLO has achieved positive outcomes that would not have been possible without their service, receiving favourable feedback from both internal and external stakeholders, including SAPOL.
31. As the role continues to evolve, it is believed the service can be further developed to provide greater value for the community in future. For this reason, it is proposed to continue the trial for the 2023/24 financial year on a full time basis.
32. Continuing the function for the next 12 months will provide the opportunity to consolidate and expand the service, as well as exploring how to deliver the greatest outcomes for the community and efficiencies internally.
33. At the conclusion of the additional 12 months of service, the following performance measures are proposed to evaluate the success of the trial, which would be based on data collection, internal feedback and a planned survey of key customers/stakeholders:

- 33.1. A notable increase in the number of direct enquiries made to the CLO.
- 33.2. Customer Feedback on the value of the service.
- 33.3. The variety and quality of outcomes achieved.
- 33.4. Clear and distinct responsibilities, ensuring there is minimal duplication with existing services.
- 33.5. Regular updates provided to traders and the broader community.
- 33.6. Continued collaboration with SAPOL and other relevant agencies.

DATA AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Link 1 – Bilingual (Chinese-Mandarin) Community Liaison Officer Trial Council Report – Flyer – Mandarin

Link 2 – Bilingual (Chinese-Mandarin) Community Liaison Officer Trial Council Report – Flyer – English

Link 3 – Bilingual (Chinese-Mandarin) Community Liaison Officer Trial Council Report – Statistics

ATTACHMENTS

Nil

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