
**PROJECT BRIEF: COMMUNICATION AND PARTICIPATION
PROJECT – STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT**

1. Purpose

The purpose of the Communication and Participation Project is to develop a strategic framework that will underpin the Council's Governance, Communication and Participation Portfolio.

2. Executive Summary

The project will develop a strategic framework for the new Governance, Participation and Communication Portfolio. The framework will state what the Council wants to achieve in this area and how it will do so, through the strategic objectives it identifies and the policies and projects it implements. The project will include a review of the Council's current Consultation Policy and practices, and identification of policy gaps that need to be filled.

A number of stakeholder groups have been identified to be involved in the project. Mechanisms for obtaining their views will include workshops, focus groups and surveys. The project will also be closely aligned to the community outcomes process, as it will provide the Council with an additional opportunity to understand the communities' desires in relation to consultation and participation. The findings of the community outcomes process will feed into the development of a strategic framework for the portfolio.

The outcome of this project will be to improve the Council's communication, participation and consultation practices and how it engages with its diverse communities.

3. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. *Receive the information.*
2. *Agree to the project brief for the Communication and Participation Project.*

4. Background

At the recent retreat, Councillors identified that their top priority for the 2004/07 triennium was to examine the way the Council communicates with the public and encourages and enables participation in its decision-making processes.

Under the new governance arrangements for this triennium, the Council has allocated its policies and activities across seven portfolio areas. The *Governance, Communication and Participation Portfolio* was established to oversee the policies and projects falling under the Council activities of governance and decision-making, mana whenua partnerships and citizen information. The specific project and policy areas within the portfolio are:

Council's governance arrangements

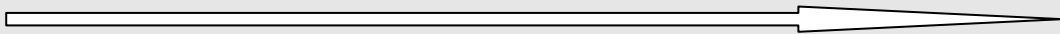
- Council's relationship with its iwi partners and the wider Maori community
- community outcomes process
- annual planning and reporting
- triennial elections
- representation review
- Consultation Policy
- e-Democracy.

4.1 *Current communication and participation framework*

This project will primarily focus on the 'communication' and 'participation' portions of the Governance, Communication and Participation Portfolio. Both of these aspects are focused on the community's role within the Council's decision-making processes rather than on the role of the elected members.

'Consultation' will be considered as a subset of the broader theme of 'participation', as described in the diagram below where it is represented as one of the five models of participation (this diagram was considered by the Councillors at their recent retreat¹). The five models show how different tools are used by the Council depending on the nature of the decision required.

¹ The diagram was developed by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2).

Increasing level of public impact				
				
Inform ⇨ Consult ⇨ Involve ⇨ Collaborate ⇨ Empower				
Objective				
Provide information	Obtain public feedback	Residents and the Council work together to ensure concerns are understood and considered	Partnerships with the public to identify and develop solutions	Enable the public to make decisions
Examples of mechanisms currently used by the Council				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Call centre • APW • Media releases • Newsletters • Customer surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultations/submissions • Contact local councillors • Public participation • Forums and hui • Ward meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory Groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship with iwi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community outcomes process²

5. Key issues

The Communication and Participation Project is being driven by three key issues:

1. *The need for a strategic framework to define the Council's goals and aspirations for the Governance, Communication and Participation Portfolio*

The Governance, Communication and Participation Portfolio currently does not have a framework that states the strategic goals and outcomes the Council is trying to achieve across the policies and projects it undertakes in this area. An integrated strategy is required to provide a:

- direction for how the Council will continue to encourage and enable participation in the Council's decision-making
- basis for understanding and reviewing the effectiveness of the Council's current policies and projects in the area
- basis for identifying further policy issues that may need to be addressed.

This project has been identified as a priority for the Council in the current triennium.

2. *Key concerns expressed by members of the public and elected members*

Some concerns have been expressed about the Council's communication and participation practices, including:³

- stakeholders do not appear to be sufficiently involved in each stage of decision-making

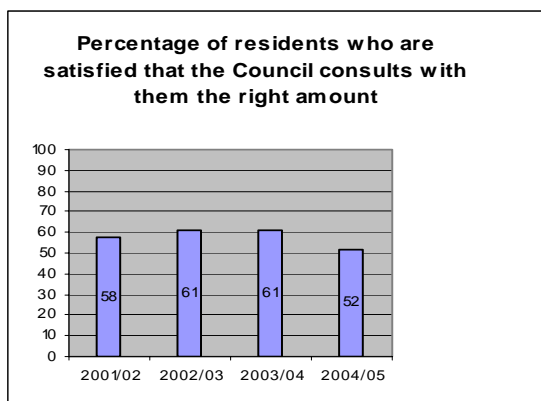
² The community outcomes process is owned by the public and it is proposed a public review panel finalise the community outcomes.

³ These concerns were expressed by representatives of some of Wellington's residents' associations and pressure groups (in conversations held during the preparation of this project brief).

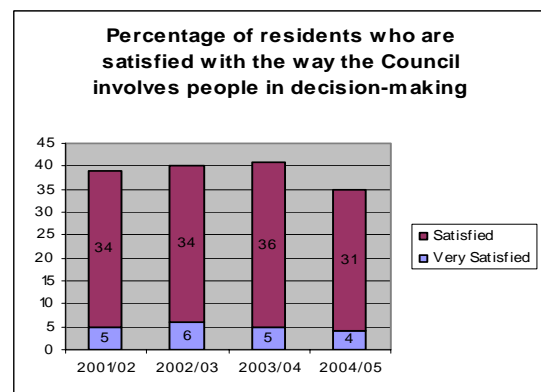
- submissions made in response to consultation do not appear to affect the outcome of the final decision
- Council decisions can appear pre-determined, and tend to support the view originally proposed by the Council
- the Council does not appear to have a robust process for working through divergent opinions
- public participation can appear restricted – through limited hearings times or short consultation timeframes
- the information provided can be inadequate – particularly where consultation documents only provide a single proposal for response rather than a series of options.

Other concerns expressed are that the Council has not been adequately co-ordinating its consultations (resulting in “consultation fatigue” in the community) and that the Council does not seem to be able to get views from a representative cross-section of the community.

This year’s annual Residents’ Satisfaction Survey has shown a marked drop in satisfaction levels around how much residents are consulted and the way they are involved in decision-making. This breaks an upward trend experienced over the last few years (although the trends were still below target levels).



Target – 70%



Target – 45%

The project will further examine the above issues, to understand the rationale behind them and how they can best be addressed.

3. *Demonstrating how the Council meets the requirements of the Local Government Act 2002*

The 2002 Local Government Act has tasked local authorities with taking community views into account in all of their decision-making. Local authorities are obliged to determine who will be affected by a decision early in the decision-making process and to ensure that all affected persons are adequately informed and heard throughout the process, although the Council is able to apply some discretion to these requirements.

The Council’s Consultation Policy needs to be updated so that it explains when and how the public can expect the Council to exercise the discretion it has been given in

determining when and how it will take community views into account. For example, although the policy is largely consistent with the Act, it will need to be reviewed to provide officers with an increased level of guidance in the areas of:

- providing options analysis information
- identifying target groups and “affected” parties
- ensuring that all target groups/affected parties are involved early in any decision-making process
- ensuring an adequate level of information is provided in feedback to submitters.

6. Objectives

The overall objective of the project is to develop a strategic framework for the new Governance, Participation and Communication Portfolio. The framework will state what the Council wants to achieve in this area and how it will do so, through the policies and projects it implements.

Through the process of developing the strategic framework, the core aims of the project will be to:

- fully identify and understand residents’, organisations’ and elected members’ issues around how the Council currently communicates and encourages participation in decision-making (for example, through research, focus groups and an analysis of the consultations the Council has undertaken)
- determine the communities’ and the Council’s strategic goals and aspirations for the portfolio – including how the portfolio enhances and supports the Council’s *Creative Wellington – Innovation Capital* vision (particularly around such principles as collaborative leadership)
- understand how current Council policies and projects contribute to the identified strategic goals and aspirations
- review the Council’s Consultation Policy to provide an increased level of guidance to officers in how they exercise their discretion
- identify gaps that may require a review of current policy or development of new policy
- enable all stakeholders to fully understand:
 - how the participatory principles of the 2002 Local Government Act can be effectively carried out within a framework of representative democracy (where elected members are responsible for final decision-making)
 - the role of consultation within the broader participatory framework, including how it may and may not impact on the Council’s decision-making.

This project should result in a comprehensive strategic framework providing direction to this priority area as well as ensuring the Council’s communication and participation processes are inline with best practice.

7. Council linkages

The Communication and Participation Project has a strong linkage with, and will be closely aligned to, the community outcomes process (discussed in another paper on this committee's agenda). The processes will run in parallel and the findings of each will be drawn together and reflected in the strategic framework to be developed.

Other Council projects linked to the project are:

- a review of the way the Council engages with iwi and the wider Maori community
- the representation review the Council will be initiating later this year, in response to the Local Government Commission's determination of April 2004.

8. Public involvement

Stakeholder groups, members of the community and elected members will be given the opportunity to identify their key issues with the Council's participation framework (including its consultation practices) and state what their goals and aspirations are for the city in this area. This information will be obtained through workshops, focus groups and surveys.

The project will also be closely aligned to the community outcomes process. Through this process the Council will be engaging with a broad range of agencies (government, local authorities, community organisations, businesses, ministries) and the public to discuss the issues they see the city facing and their aspirations and priorities for Wellington over the next ten years and beyond. As this information will lead to the development of a set of outcomes that reflect the communities' desires in relation to consultation and participation, it will provide invaluable input into the new strategic framework.

8.1 Identified Agencies/Stakeholders

A number of representatives from local residents' associations and interest groups have already approached or been approached by the Council to be involved in this project. The following groups will be involved:

- elected members
- residents' associations (Brooklyn, Mt Victoria, Newlands/Paparangi, Strathmore Park and Vogelmorn residents' associations and the Federation of Residents Associations have already indicated an interest in being involved)
- Council's advisory groups (the Pacific Advisory Group, Disability Reference Group, Youth Council, Environmental Reference Group, Road Safety Reference Group)
- pressure groups (members of Listen2Wgtn and Waterfront Watch have already indicated an interest in being involved)
- other groups such as business, retail and sports groups, and groups established specifically to liaise with Council (for example, the "Friends of..." groups)
- the general public (through focus groups, surveys, etc.).

In preparing this brief, officers have already had some input from community groups. Officers will actively seek views from a range of community groups and organisations, and the general public.

9. Proposed timeline

The timeframes of this project will be managed to ensure that the input obtained through the community outcomes project can inform the strategic framework being developed for the Governance, Participation and Communication Portfolio.

A cross-organisational team will oversee the project and participate in the development of the final framework.

Phase	Description	Deadline
1. Identify key issues	1. Stocktake to assess: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> residents' satisfaction survey results previous consultations the Council has undertaken 	May 2005
	2. Carry out interviews, workshops, focus groups and surveys to determine stakeholders' and the general public's views on the Council's participation and consultation practices	May – June 2005
	3. Obtain feedback/information through the community outcomes process.	May – August 2005
2. Development of strategy and policy framework	From the above, officers will develop the strategic framework for the portfolio as well as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> review the Consultation Policy identify policy and project gaps 	August – September 2005
3. Follow-up work	Continue to work on policy and project gaps.	Ongoing

Contact Officer: *Adele Gibson, Policy Adviser*