

OUR APPROACH

One of our statutory functions is to ‘facilitate democratic local decision-making’ – in other words, make sure residents have a say about the city and its direction.

In practice, this means keeping residents informed and providing opportunities for input at all levels – from elections every three years to receiving submissions about strategies and plans, to being able to complain when services aren't working as they should.

This is an ongoing challenge. While residents generally feel well informed and reasonably well consulted, participation in elections is declining in Wellington, as it is in other cities.

Our response is to find new ways to engage – ones that hopefully better meet residents' needs, including direct engagement with communities of interest, and increasing commitment to providing information and receiving feedback online.

CASE STUDY: AWARD-WINNING ACCOUNTABILITY

Our annual report is the country's best – again.

For three years running, Wellington City Council's annual report has won the Supreme Award at the NZ Institute of Chartered Accountants' annual report awards.

At an awards ceremony in July 2008, the 2006/07 report beat competition from New Zealand's biggest corporates and government departments to claim the top prize, as well as winning the local authorities award (for the fourth time in five years) and claiming a commendation for governance reporting. No other organisation has won the supreme award in consecutive years.

The 2008 judges commented that the standard was 'higher than ever before', but singled out our report as 'an especially impressive accountability and communication document'.

'It covered comprehensively all aspects the panel expected to see in an annual report and did so with verve and style. It has taken local authority annual reporting to a new benchmark.'

The report is one example of the Council's commitment to resident information.

More than 70% of residents believe that Council information is easy to access when needed – a result that reflects our commitment to keeping residents informed and making ourselves accountable.

Our Call Centre and website www.Wellington.govt.nz have both been consistent award winners in recent years, with the website taking international as well as New Zealand accolades.

The website was a finalist in the government section of the Webby Awards, the world's largest website awards. The website's new ePetition's feature won the Association of Local Government Information Management 'best new feature' prize in 2008, and the Call Centre won the online (web/email) award at the 2007 CRM Contact Centre Awards.

MORE INCLUSIVE – Wellingtonians will become more actively involved in the direction of their communities.

Local election voter turn-out continues to decline (from 48% in 2001 to 42% in 2004 to 40% in 2007). A slim majority of residents consider their extent of influence on Council decision-making 'about right' (59%, up from 58% in 2007).

MORE ACTIVELY ENGAGED – Wellingtonians will (a) recognise the special position of Maori in the city's history and this will be evident in current relationships; (b) operate an open and honest decision-making process that generates confidence and trust in the decision-making system, and (c) information required by citizens and groups will be easily accessible to enable participation in the community.

A small majority (59%, up from 54% in 2006) of residents believe that Council decisions are made in the city's best interests. There was a minor decrease in the proportion of residents who state they understand how the Council makes decisions. Of our two Treaty partners, one was very satisfied with their relationship with the Council and the other was neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

“[Wellington City Council] has taken local authority annual reporting to a new benchmark.”

– 2008 annual report judges.

Engagement and governance

We contribute to these outcomes through:

Māori engagement (including mana whenua)

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Information, consultation and decision-making

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Māori engagement (including mana whenua)

We acknowledge the special place of Māori in Wellington's history. So our governance arrangement includes formal opportunities for mana whenua to participate.

We work with the city's two mana whenua organisations, Wellington Tenth Trust and Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangatira Incorporated, to ensure their views are represented and their heritage and contribution to the city is appropriately recognised. We also work with the wider Māori community on issues of mutual interest.

WHAT WE DID

We hosted a range of events including Waitangi Day commemorations.

In conjunction with the Wellington Tenth Trust, we hosted celebrations at Waitangi Park on 6 February. The festival attracted the largest participation to date, including an inaugural rangatahi (youth) stage and kai, retail and information stalls.

As part of the Stepping Out walking programme in March, we hosted a guided walk from Rangitatau (Tarakena Bay) to Kirikirī Tatangi (Seatoun foreshore), highlighting Māori heritage in the area.

We also provided a series of free, lunchtime kapa haka performances in June showcasing the talent from local schools as a lead-up to the National Kapa Haka Competitions.

"It's very important to show people in different communities who you really are and that the culture still exists today. Every movement means something."

– bystander at the lunchtime kapa haka sessions

We started to incorporate Māori language signage in Council facilities.

We facilitated a hui between the Wellington Tenth Trust, Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangatira Incorporated, the Public Art Panel and the Wellington Sculpture Trust so that they might work more collaboratively with regard to art in the city, and we worked alongside a Māori community group for wording for the new Wellington Regional Aquatic Centre signage. The new complex was officially opened to the public in February with a blessing by mana whenua kaumatua.

We also translated the Nairnville Recreation Centre signage, with the assistance of a local Māori community group.

We hosted a debate (taupatupatu) in Council Chambers in April between two immersion Maori schools: Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Ngā Mokopuna (in Seatoun) and Te Kura Māori o Porirua. The event is organised by the Māori Women's Welfare League – Te Ngakau Kōtahi Branch. We plan to hold this event again in 2009 in conjunction with Porirua City Council.

We continue to work with our mana whenua representative organisations.

We work with the Wellington Tenth Trust and Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangatira Incorporated in the spirit of good faith and respect captured in our Memoranda of Understanding. These memoranda were designed to ensure that the views of our Treaty partners are represented in decisions about the city.

WHAT IT COST

OPERATING EXPENDITURE (\$000)	2008 ACTUAL	2008 BUDGET	2008 VARIANCE	2007 ACTUAL
Mana Whenua Partnerships (7.2.1)				
Cost	100	110	10	100
Revenue	-	-	-	-
Net Cost	100	110	10	100

HOW WE PERFORMED

INTERVIEWS WITH BOTH MANA WHENUA PARTNERS COVERING A RANGE OF ISSUES RELATING TO THE TREATY PARTNERSHIP.

Source: WCC Planning, Performance and Research (Activity 7.2.1 Mana Whenua Partnership)

From our annual survey with mana whenua representatives, we sought comments on how effective we are at consulting with them on resource management issues and policies, and how we have performed in relation to the terms in our memoranda of understanding.

Our target was for both partners to be at least 'quite satisfied'. Overall one partner was 'very satisfied' and the other stated they were 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' ('1' and '3' respectively – measured on a five point scale).

Information, consultation and decision-making

We aim for a culture of openness where the city's residents can get information about the city and how it runs, and feel that they can make their views known.

Our activities that contribute primarily to this aim include:

- **Consultation and communication** – we keep residents informed through our award-winning website and a wide range of publications, and ask for residents' feedback on issues facing the city.
- **City governance and decision-making** – we run elections every three years, run meetings of the Council and committees, and provide elected members with the support they need to carry out their roles effectively.
- **Civic information** – our Call Centre and service centres answer residents' questions and arrange responses to their service requests and complaints.

Overall we'd like to encourage greater levels of engagement in local decision-making.

WHAT WE DID

We held local body elections in 2007.

Held in October, the elections had a turnout of 40% – down from 42% in 2004 and 49% in 2001. The drop in voter turnout occurred despite our extensive *VOTE for the Wellington YOU Want* public awareness campaign. Lower voter turnouts were reflected across the country. We will work in future elections to improve our voter turnout.

We made it easier to petition the Council.

An ePetition facility launched in 2007 allows residents to petition the Council over the internet on matters relevant to our work, and has become a popular form of citizen engagement with the Council.

After an ePetition has closed, we present it to the relevant Council committee in the same way a paper petition would be. The ePetitions can reach a wider audience than paper petitions and also allow the petitioner to link to supporting background information. In the year since we opened the facility, we have received 25 ePetitions.

We are continuing to research other ways of engaging online with residents. In July 2008, we will launch a series of online questionnaires.

Residents will be asked to choose the electoral system they want for future Council elections.

In February, Council agreed to poll residents to determine which electoral system will be used in the next two elections to elect the Mayor and City Councillors. A postal poll is scheduled for September 2008. Information will be made available on the Single Transferable Vote (STV) and First Past the Post (FPP) electoral systems so registered voters can read up, decide which they prefer and then cast their vote.

More than half a million people contacted us.

We operate a 24-hour Contact Centre, which along with our Service Centre serves as our front line in engaging with the public.

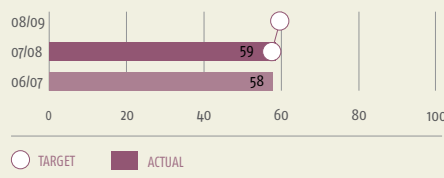
Over 500,000 calls were made to our general line throughout the year, with just over 74% of these answered within 30 seconds. We have installed new telephone technology allowing us to monitor call flows more effectively, and aim to answer 80%+ calls within 30 seconds in future.

Our Call Centre was judged best in New Zealand for online services for the third year running.

The Call Centre expanded the services it provides, and now receives calls about building consents and licensing, and about our Learn 2 Swim programme. The building/licensing line received over 31,000 calls, and the Learn 2 Swim lines received over 44,000 calls.

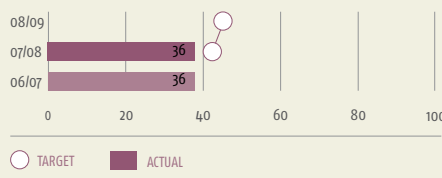
RESIDENTS (%) WHO ARE SATISFIED THE COUNCIL CONSULTS WITH THEM THE "RIGHT AMOUNT"

Source: WCC Resident Survey 2008
(Activity 7.1.1 Consultation and communication)



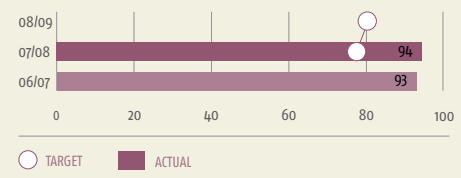
RESIDENTS (%) WHO ARE SATISFIED WITH THE WAY THE COUNCIL INVOLVES PEOPLE IN DECISION-MAKING

Source: WCC Resident Survey 2008
(Activity 7.2.2 City governance and decision-making)



COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE AGENDAS THAT ARE MADE AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC AT LEAST FIVE DAYS PRIOR TO THE MEETING

Source: WCC Democratic Services
(Activity 7.2.2 City governance and decision-making)



We also act as the Hutt City Council's after hours call service, and we have set up a partnership agreement with Meridian Energy to act as a contact point for Project West Wind.

The excellence of our service was recognised once again in the CRM Contact Centre Customer Service Awards 2007 in the Online (web/email) category. We placed first in this category for the third year running.

We consulted on decisions facing the Council.

We continue to communicate with the public via our weekly *Our Wellington* page in the *Dominion Post*, our three-monthly *Absolutely Positive Wellington* newspaper, and specialist newsletters on issues such as the environment, building, emergency management, and the food industry.

We asked for residents' views on many issues including drafts of our Parking Policy, Water Supply Bylaw, Public Health Bylaw, plan for restoration of Central Park, Open Spaces Bylaw, reclassification of land on the South Coast, Northern Reserves Management Plan, and our 2008/09 Annual Plan which sets out our priorities and spending plans.

Our annual report was again judged the best in New Zealand.

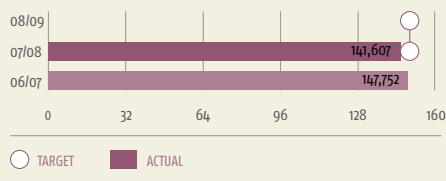
We continually strive to make ourselves accountable to the public through our annual report. In 2008, for the third year running, we received the Supreme Award at the 2008 NZ Institute of Chartered Accountants Annual Report Awards.

No other local authority has won the supreme award and no other organisation has won the award in consecutive years. Our report also won the local government category and was commended for our governance reporting.

HOW WE PERFORMED

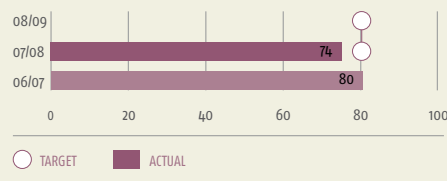
BUSINESS TRANSACTIONS CARRIED-OUT AT THE SERVICE CENTRES

Source: Wellington City Libraries (Activity 7.2.3 Civic information)



TELEPHONE CALLS (%) ANSWERED WITHIN 30 SECONDS AT THE CONTACT CENTRE

Source: WCC Contact Centre (Activity 7.2.3 Civic information)



We are processing fewer business transactions at WCC Service Centres. This trend can be directly attributed to our introduction of online transaction facilities. We expect this trend of reducing service centre transactions to continue.

Achievement in this area has remained broadly in line with past performance. Although only 36% of residents are satisfied with the way the Council involves them in decision-making, a considerable proportion of residents (38%) are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with Council decision-making processes.

This trend could suggest a low level of concern or interest. A lack of concern or interest from residents should not be misinterpreted as a lack of opportunities for community input. Consultations such as the Ngauranga to Airport Transport Study with 4,673 submissions suggest that when residents do want to participate in decision-making, systems are in place to capture input. Also, the Council's key information and accountability tools (web centre, contact centre and annual report) are continually recognised as industry leaders.

WHAT IT COST

OPERATING EXPENDITURE (\$000)	2008 ACTUAL	2008 BUDGET	2008 VARIANCE	2007 ACTUAL
Consultation and Communication (7.1.1)				
Cost	52	106	54	47
Revenue	-	(2)	(2)	(2)
Net Cost	52	104	52	45
City Governance and Decision-making (7.2.2)				
Cost	8,483	8,540	57	7,696
Revenue	(552)	(522)	30	(337)
Net Cost	7,931	8,018	87	7,359
Citizen Information (7.2.3)¹				
Cost	5,756	5,024	(732)	5,109
Revenue	(536)	(504)	32	(567)
Net Cost	5,220	4,520	(700)	4,542
CAPITAL EXPENDITURE (\$000)	2008 ACTUAL	2008 BUDGET	2008 VARIANCE	2007 ACTUAL
City Governance and Decision-making (7.2.2)				
Cost	58	58	-	101
Unspent portion of budget to be carried forward	-	22	-	-

¹ Increase in operating costs is due to increased personnel costs from high staff turnover and increased staffing levels and overtime to meet call volumes within the Contact Centre.

“The winning annual report was an especially impressive accountability and communication document. It covered comprehensively all aspects the panel expected to see in an annual report and did so with verve and style.”

- Judges' citation.