

Consultation Policy

The Council Commitment to Consultation

The Wellington City Council is committed to on-going and effective community consultation. We welcome and value input from the people of this city so we can adequately reflect their views in our decision making. We believe our decision making is greatly improved as a result.

Council is also committed to determining the overall community view as accurately as possible and will use the appropriate techniques to meet this objective.

Elected members of the Council have been voted in to govern the city and make decisions on behalf of the community. Consultation will enhance this democratic process by contributing to the decision making function of the Council.

The Council is committed to acknowledging the unique perspectives of Maori as Mana Whenua and Taura Here in its consultation.

What is Consultation?

Consultation can be defined as any contact with the community. For the purpose of this policy the Wellington City Council has adopted the following definition of consultation:

Consultation is Dialogue Followed by Decision Making

Consultation is NOT:

- providing information
- a substitute for decision making
- always about reaching an agreement or consensus
- always about negotiation

Consultation is not always appropriate when:

- a decision has already been made
- there is a need for commercial sensitivity
- the likely decision is apparent
- it is a small issue with little public interest

According to this definition above, consultation generally means the Council will:

- present a proposal that has not been decided upon
- listen to what others have to say
- consider their comments
- decide how the proposal should be changed
- report on the final decision, and then;
- respond to the people involved in the process.

According to this definition, the public's role in consultation will generally be one of expressing an opinion *not* casting a vote (unless a referendum is held as a consultation technique). Consultation may include market research techniques such as surveys

Types of consultation

The Wellington City Council identifies four main types of consultation. The extent of the dialogue differs in each of the four types. For each consultation, the Wellington City Council will choose the type best suited to the decision making it must do.

1. **Partnering** - people are involved right from the beginning and work together or plan jointly to achieve mutually acceptable goals. The Council **shares** decision making with the group of people involved. To date, this type of consultation has not been used often and only within specific boundaries. An example is when the Council granted some money to establish a Youth Centre. The goal was clear but the decision of how to establish the centre has been shared between Council staff and representatives of the city's youth.
2. **Participatory** - representatives of the community are involved throughout a decision making process. They work together with the Council to try to identify a compromise or consensus solution. Council **facilitates** the process, but retains final decision-making. The development of the waterfront is using this type of consultation. At various stages throughout the project, community representatives have had opportunities to work with the Council to progress the project.
3. **Interactive** - plans are formulated or modified after contact with the community. Reasonable information is provided and people are given reasonable opportunity to comment. The Council **leads** the process. an example of this type of consultation is the development of the Council's Annual Plan. People are given detailed information on the proposed plan and their response is carefully considered.
4. **Reactive** - information is provided to the community when their input or advice is required on a proposal that is, or is nearly, complete. The Council **directs** this consultation. An example is the decision on whether to sell the Council's shares in Wellington International Airport (1998). We decided to use this type of consultation because there were only a few well-defined options, we obtained extensive specialist advice and public feedback was only one of the factors which would influence the decision.

(Note: The word Consultation is used throughout this document in a general way to encompass all four types, unless it is stated otherwise).

Consultation Principles

The Council uses the following principles to consult with the community. They may not all apply to a particular situation.

Inclusiveness

Set up and run the consultation in a way which encourages the participation of people who are affected by a decision.

Timing

Allow enough time for participants to contribute and to raise unexpected issues.

Focus

Consultation is purpose-driven.

Information Provision

Information relating to the consultation is readily available so that participants can make informed and timely contributions.

Resourcing

Consultations are carefully costed. The Council will consider providing some form of assistance to groups who would otherwise be unable to contribute.

Responsiveness

The Council is genuinely committed to considering and responding to participants' contributions.

Consultation with Maori

Council consultation acknowledges the unique perspectives of Maori as Mana Whenua and Taura Here in the city.

Accuracy

Use market research and other quantifiable research methods if necessary to ensure the information gathered summarises the views of a whole community.

Implementation and Feedback

Evaluate all consultations after the decision making is complete. Provide feedback to participants whenever possible.

Pragmatism and Balance

Consultation will not take place when a decision has essentially been made, or the Council must act quickly in the interests of the City, or the issue is not of significance.