

SECTION 1: Overview

1.1 Policy Purpose

This policy articulates what Wellington residents can expect from the Council when they engage with the Council, be it through:

- the contact members of the public have with the Council through the everyday Council services, activities and facilities they use
- the ongoing relationships the Council develops and maintains with its different communities² and sector groups
- the consultation processes undertaken when a decision is to be made.

The policy provides principles Council staff will adhere to across the different types of engagement that occur.

The consultation obligations of the Local Government Act 2002 (LGA) are specifically discussed in Section 5 of the policy. This section outlines the Council's commitment to providing opportunities for individuals and communities to participate in democratic life and influence the decisions that affect them and the city.

1.2 Policy Context

The LGA outlines an expectation that the Council will be oriented towards its communities – open to understanding the different needs and aspirations of those communities, while responsibly exercising its role as the guardian of local resources by taking the diversity of views and interests into account.

The LGA has tasked the Council with:

- enabling democratic decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities
- promoting the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of communities, in the present and for the future.

The LGA extends the Council's concern beyond the services it provides to the overall welfare of the community. The Council not only needs to keep itself informed of what communities want, but help build the conditions where communities are strong and active in the city, and able to communicate their needs and aspirations in ways that suit them.

The Council is committed to its communities and over the next ten years seeks to build a city that is *more inclusive* and *more actively engaged*.³

The Council is always looking to build the public's trust and confidence in the Council and its decision-making. To the Council this means:

² Communities in this policy refers to geographically defined communities, ethnic communities, and communities of shared experience.

³ Council outcomes described in the 2006-16 Long Term Council Community Plan.

- it works closely with communities. The Council is interested in facilitating greater involvement and participation with the community and voluntary sector in such areas as sports clubs, ethnic, and cultural and community groups (including those focused on youth, disability and increasing inclusion). It works with communities and organisations both to understand more about the issues that confront them and to assist them to address those issues.
- transparency and quality processes for involving the public in decision-making. Through operating an open and honest decision-making process, Wellington residents and communities will be given the opportunity to be more actively involved in the future direction of their communities and city.

1.3 Policy objectives

This policy aims to:

- Build public trust and confidence in the Council and its decision-making
- Encourage increased engagement from different communities and sector groups – involving them in the things that affect them, enabling them to influence city direction and to better provide for their own wellbeing
- Strengthen and improve the way the Council interacts with and involves communities in civic decision-making
- Ensure the Council is informed of the views, needs and aspirations of its communities and sector groups and considers this information in the decisions it makes (including in the services and facilities it provides)
- Ensure high quality decision-making, that is informed by complete, relevant and necessary information
- Establish and maintain opportunities for Maori to participate in and contribute to local government decision-making processes, including considering ways the Council may work with Maori to continue enhancing Maori capacity to make this contribution.

1.4 What is engagement?

Engagement is the broad term which covers the different interactions that occur between the Council and its residents and communities, as well as between different communities.

Engagement between the Council and its residents occurs in a number of ways, including through:

- the contact members of the public have with the Council through the everyday Council services, activities and facilities they use
- the ongoing relationships the Council develops and maintains with its different communities and sector groups
- the consultation processes undertaken when a decision is to be made.

These types of engagement all contribute to different outcomes, such as facilitating the development of strong, connected communities and supporting the perception of

the Council as a highly effective organisation, able to provide high quality service and facilities.

Engagement outside of the decision-making process is also essential for contributing to the conditions that create a willingness to engage at the civic level. The experiences communities, individuals, organisations and different sector groups have of Council services and their relationship with the Council will impact on the trust and confidence they have in the way the Council operates. High quality services and real ongoing relationships help contribute to a positive environment where engagement in civic decision-making can flourish.

1.5 Why does the Council engage?

- ***To strengthen its decision-making***

The Council believes engagement overall will result in improved decision-making and better outcomes or results. The people most involved or affected by an issue are usually in the best position to advise on it and provide information the Council may otherwise not have access to. Better decisions tend to result from the consideration of a wide range of perspectives and viewpoints, and means the Council has a better chance of making the right decision the first time. It also creates opportunities for the community to own and support the Council's decisions, which makes decisions easier to put in place.

- ***To understand the needs and aspirations of the community and different sector interests***

Engagement enables the Council to help communities achieve the outcomes and services they want. The Council wants to know what different communities and sector groups in Wellington want and expect for their city and what issues concern them most. By better understanding needs, the Council is also able to advocate to other agencies on behalf of communities.

- ***To foster strong communities***

Strong communities have a high level of social capital, where people are connected to one another and involved in community life. Engagement can foster a sense of belonging in and ownership of the city, creating citizens who identify strongly with the city.

- ***To recognise and enhance the Council's relationship with Maori – mana whenua and the wider Maori community***

The Council has entered into a partnership with mana whenua. They are not just another interest group, but must be engaged with in a way that reflects a partnership. The Council is also committed to ensuring appropriate opportunities are given to the wider Maori community to encourage increased participation in civic life and decision-making. The Council's 2006-16 Long Term Council Community Plan (p314) outlines how the Council provides opportunities for and fosters the development of techniques and strategies to engage with Maori.