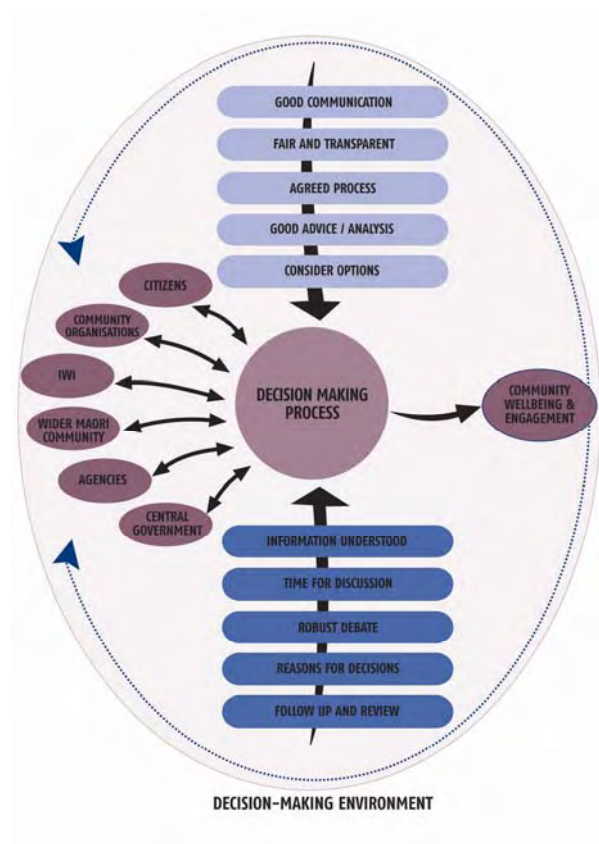


Governance Strategy

Delivering confidence in civic decision-making

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1. Introduction

Wellington City Council is a facilitator and guardian of civic decision-making, a role that puts the Council in a unique position in the local community.

Wellington's society and economy are growing and changing. To ensure that change in the city is perceived positively by its citizens, it is important that there is a high degree of public participation, and trust and confidence in the city's decision-making processes.

The need to attract more skilled labour in order to grow the Wellington economy underscores the importance of successfully functioning local government. Research suggests that while central government will continue to play an important role in setting frameworks in areas such as tax policy and education, the crucial choices that influence people's decisions about whether to come, remain or return will increasingly be made at a regional or local level.

The Local Government New Zealand Know-How guide defines governance as:

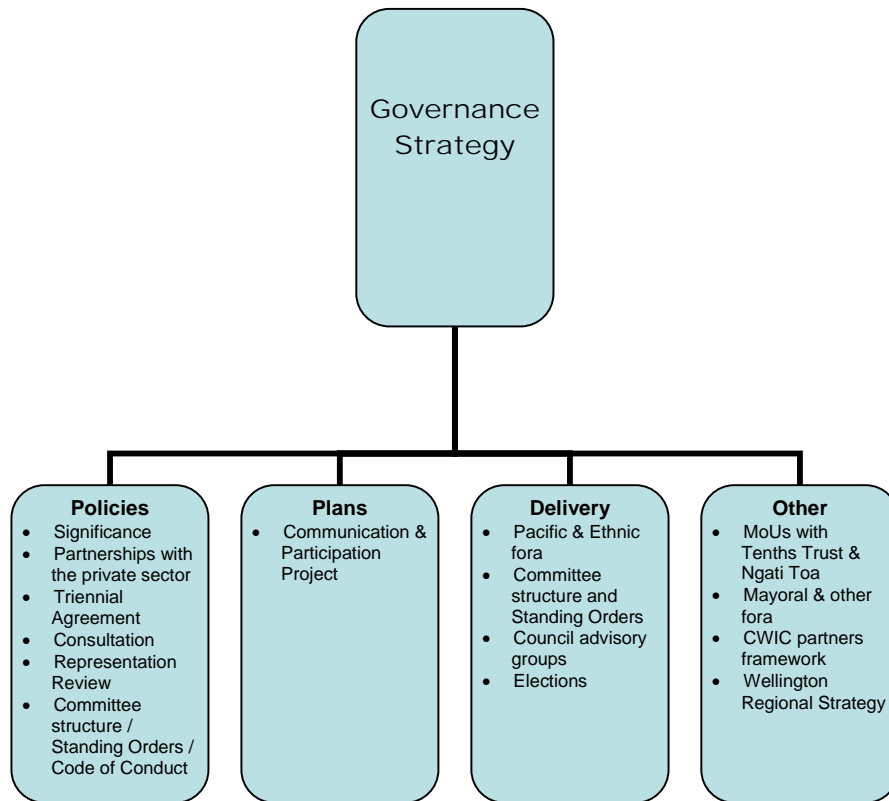
"The means for collective action in society, responding and guiding change that is beyond the capacity of private action. ...It enables values to be realised. ...Governance involves the notion of a collective voice, an avenue for resolving questions of competing priorities and determining the public interest."

The Council recognises the need to increase the numbers of citizens who are meaningfully engaged in democratic processes and has prepared this Governance Strategy to address the long-term need to make the city more *inclusive* and its citizens more *actively engaged* in the civic decision-making process.

Through its wide-ranging activities, the Council will play a key role in promoting robust decision-making. These are summarised in the Governance Strategy Tree below.

2. Context

Existing Framework



The context

Wellington City Council facilitates local democratic processes in a number of ways. From elections through to decision-making made by Council and its committees and community boards, citizens' rights are maintained, and the community is brought together to work for the common good.

Council operates along a continuum in the way that the community is involved in decisions as illustrated below:

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives or decisions	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure the public and private concerns are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public

A fundamental aspect to Council's governance role is its relationship with tangata whenua. This involves difficult constitutional and democratic principles. The current focus at Council is on direct

strategic relationships with iwi, and the use of focus groups to address issues of concern to the wider Maori community.

Council must also address its role as a repository of community and citizen information. It has direct access to property, planning and land use information, and acts as a focal point for information on the social, cultural, environmental and economic wellbeing of communities. Easy, appropriate access to information and services is therefore important.

At the same time, Council must attempt to address wider societal changes, including:

- a decline in the trust placed in institutions by individuals
- time pressures in modern society, which make it difficult to participate
- dissatisfaction with consultation processes from some people
- greater accountability and transparency for public bodies, and increasing expectations of service levels
- the strong influence of the media on public perceptions of institutions, and
- greater quality of information, including auditing of financial information, not necessarily enhancing levels of trust and confidence.

Dissatisfaction does not equate to a complete lack of confidence in the system. Maintaining the option for citizens to exercise their democratic voice remains critically important, even if they rarely exercise it.

The challenge

The challenge is to develop and implement a governance strategy that addresses fundamental issues in the democratic decision-making system, focusing on building levels of trust and confidence. Clearly, trust can be hard to gain and is easily eroded, but its central importance makes it a vital objective for the governance area.

The solution

A governance strategy that builds confidence and trust in civic decision-making

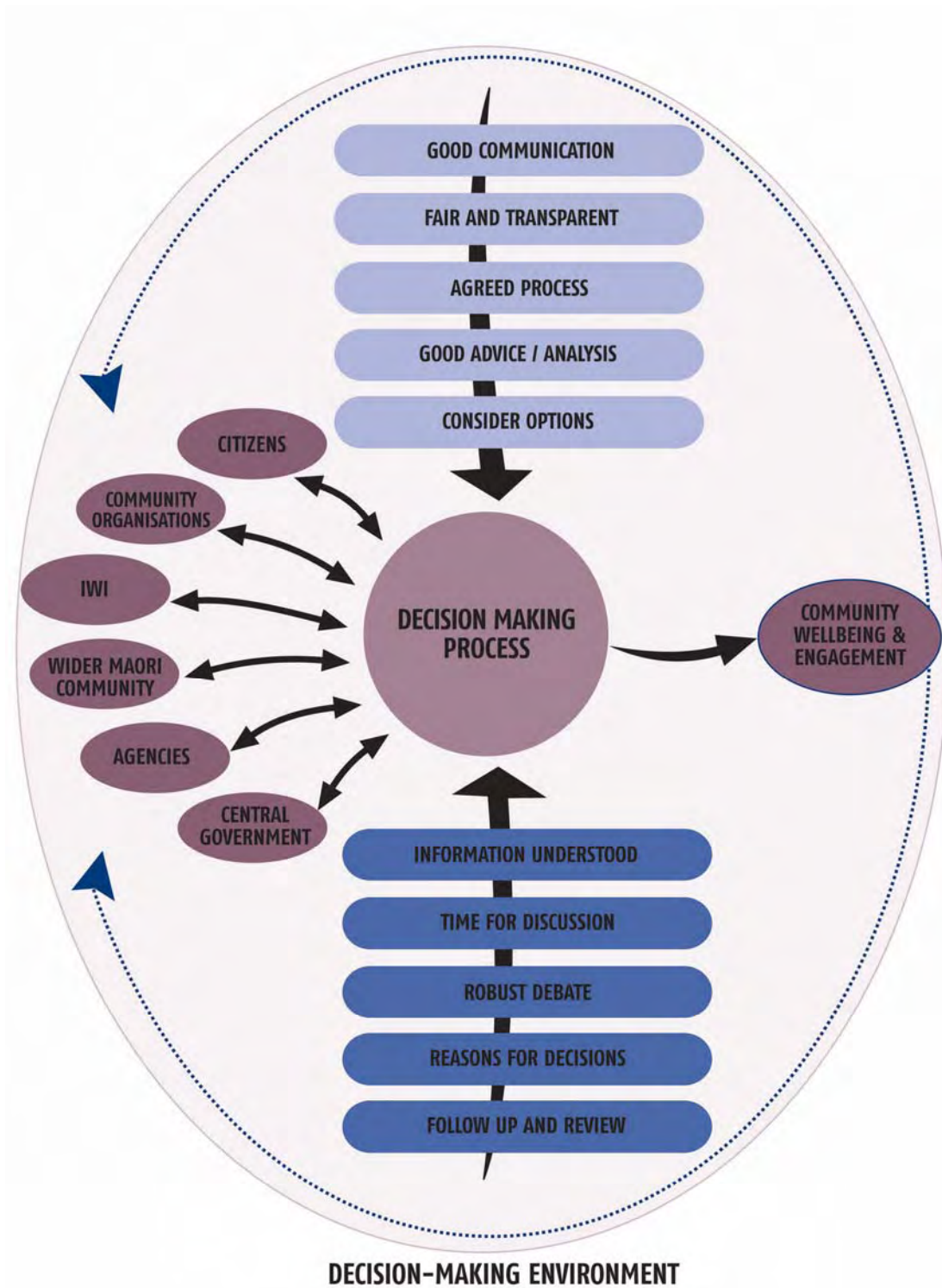
The term "civic" decision-making (rather than "local") is used because of the objective of involving citizens more in the future direction of their city.

The pre-conditions

The successful realisation of this strategy will require:

- Long-term commitment to making the decision-making process work better
- Further strengthening of collaborative relationships with other councils and government agencies

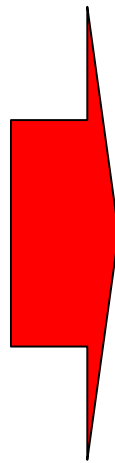
3. Long-term direction for governance



From Community Outcomes to Council Outcomes

Community Outcomes

The Treaty partnership will continue to be acknowledged in all local decision-making processes.
Wellington will have a culture of open and honest, no surprises consultation involving all age groups that is genuine, timely and well informed.
Wellington's governing bodies will comply with all legislative requirements, and will behave in an ethical and fair manner.
Information required by citizens and groups will be easily accessible, to enable participation in the community.
Wellington's media will be diverse, open and accessible to all people.
Wellingtonians will be actively involved in their communities and work with others to make things happen.
Wellington, as New Zealand's capital city, will house and engage effectively with central government, embassies and corporates.



Proposed Wellington City Council Outcomes

7.1 More inclusive:

Wellingtonians will be more actively involved in the future direction of their communities.

7.2 More actively engaged:

Wellingtonians will recognise the special position of Maori in the history of this place and this will be evident in current relationships.

7.3 More actively engaged:

Wellington will operate an open and honest decision-making process that generates confidence and trust in the democratic system.

7.4 More actively engaged:

Information required by citizens and groups will be easily accessible, to enable participation in the community.

Our long-term outcomes

Over the next 10 years, we aspire to the following outcomes:

7.1 More Inclusive: *Wellingtonians will be more actively involved in the future direction of their communities.*

Democracy is a way of making decisions for the community but it is also instrumental in involving people in the future direction of their community. Fostering civic engagement leads to better decisions and a sense of belonging. It also builds self-reliance and moves away from an emphasis on expecting public bodies to resolve issues.

Developing more active involvement will mean:

- supporting community groups and organizations, and
- lifting levels of participation

7.2 More actively engaged: *Wellingtonians will recognise the special position of Maori in the history of this place and this will be evident in current relationships.*

Wellington has a long history of occupation by iwi who enjoyed its natural harbour and plentiful food supplies. This is part of Wellington's rich history and is recognised in many ways including place names, land ownership, public art and monuments.

The Treaty partnership relationship created by the Treaty of Waitangi and subsequent court decisions is clearly between Maori and the Crown. This relationship distinguishes between iwi and the wider Maori community. However, local government acts under a mandate from Parliament and is responsible for many of the resource allocation and regulatory decisions, which are of direct interest to Maori, in a local area. This results in a unique relationship between Council and Maori.

Improving Maori partnerships will mean:

- visible recognition of the historical relationship of Maori within the Wellington area
- operating under memoranda of understanding with the Wellington Tenth Trust and Ngati Toa Rangatira
- opportunities for iwi to be involved in Council decision-making processes, and
- working with the wider Maori community on specific issues.

7.3 More actively engaged: *Wellington will operate an open and honest decision-making process that generates confidence and trust in the democratic system.*

Democracy is a foundation for our society, and Council is uniquely placed to facilitate the decision-making processes that support this on behalf of the community. Our system is ultimately representative democracy but with a high level of participation in the process. Many people, having voted, clearly expect their representatives to make decisions on their behalf. A critical aspect of democracy is having the *option* to participate and make your views known, even if that option is not exercised. In this sense, the perception and reality that this option remains open is hugely important.

Developing an open and honest decision-making processes will mean:

- early participation of interested parties in decision-making
- developing a network of Council advisory groups
- more open and honest communication policies, and
- improving the levels of community engagement.

7.4 More actively engaged: *Information required by citizens and groups will be easily accessible to enable participation in the community*

The Council accepts its responsibility to ensure that people have easy access to information about Council business, and city events and attractions. The Council provides a number of public services to facilitate the flow of information. These include the City Service Centre in the main foyer of the Council buildings in Wakefield Street, and our call centre, which fields calls about all Council business. We also provide the public with the information on property values and access to the vast amount of historical information found in the Wellington City Archives.

Better access to information will mean:

- maintaining high quality information databases
- being highly responsive to enquiries, and
- providing easy access to information.

4. Our three year priorities

For the period 2006-09, we've identified the following three priorities for our governance work. These priorities are important stepping stones towards our long-term goals.

- We will improve the transparency and quality of processes for public involvement in civic decision-making
- We will improve communication with communities
- We will increase participation rates in democratic processes.

How we plan to achieve these priorities

We already play a vital role in facilitating local decision-making and keeping residents informed. Our work includes: holding local elections every three years; running Council meetings; providing elected councillors with information, advice and support to help them in their decision-making; developing strategies and plans to shape the city's future direction; consulting residents and stakeholders to ensure councillors are informed about community views before they make decisions; seeking input from local iwi and other partners; informing residents (through our website, Contact Centre, newspapers and other publications); reporting on our financial and service performance; and dealing with residents' queries and concerns.

We're considering several options to encourage more people to vote in local elections. This includes steps that will make it easier to vote, and initiatives that will raise the profile of local elections.

We're also working on ways to increase our levels of engagement with the people of Wellington, and make it easier for residents to have a say before councillors make decisions. As a first step, in the coming year we plan to publish simple "Have your say" guidelines explaining how to take part in city decision-making. We're also reviewing our Consultation

Policy and considering other initiatives such as setting up community panels to give feedback on issues facing the city, and increasing opportunities for people to provide comment through our website or e-petitions.

We're also looking to support central government's civic education initiatives which will help school students learn about local government and how they can influence decisions.

5. Strategy Tree - Governance

