OUR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Under the Local Government Act, we have two key roles. 1. To promote the well-being of Wellington and its people. 2. To facilitate democratic local decision-making.

The Wellington City Council is made up of 15 elected representatives – the mayor and 14 councillors. It’s their job to make bylaws, set the city’s overall strategic direction, and approve budgets, policies and plans aimed at achieving that direction. A key part of their role is to listen and take the pulse of the community before making decisions.

The mayor and councillors are supported in their work by the Tawa and Makara/Ohariu Community Boards. The elected representatives are supported by the Council’s chief executive and 1,400+ staff, who provide advice, implement Council decisions, and look after the city’s day-to-day operations.

Responsibilities

We are responsible for community well-being

This means that Councils are responsible not only for core infrastructure such as water supply and transport networks but also for helping the community achieve its aspirations for prosperity, social cohesion, inclusiveness, and safety.

Roles we play

It is left to local authorities, working with their communities, to determine whether well-being is served by Council action, and if so what type of action the Council should take.

The range of options open to us includes:

- advocacy – using local knowledge/expertise to encourage others to act or fund services that contribute to well-being
- facilitation – bringing others together or providing guidance so others can act
- regulation – requiring others to act in particular ways, either to comply with legislative requirement or bylaws
- funding – either directly or through partnerships that leverage external funding, or
- providing a service – directly owning assets and providing services such as pools, libraries, roads, and water pipes.

In many cases, these are unique roles that can only be performed by Councils. At other times we are committed to adding value and playing a unique role, rather than taking on things that could be performed by others.

Determining what action to take

Whether we take action at all, and what type of action we take, depends on a range of factors including:

- legislative requirement
- contractual obligation
- community expectations (see ‘community outcomes’, next page)
- costs and benefits, risks
- impact on others (for example, if we provide a service will someone else withdraw)
- our strategic direction (see next page).

Accountability

The Local Government Act requires us to plan in three-year cycles. Every three years, we publish a long-term plan setting out our intentions for the decade ahead – what we’ll do, how we’ll do it, how much we’ll spend, who will pay, the levels of service we’ll provide, and how we’ll measure the quality and effectiveness of our work. Our last long-term plan was adopted in June 2009.

In-between these long-term plans, we take a fresh look each year at our work programme, consider whether any changes are needed, and publish an annual plan setting out changes to the long-term plan.

We consult before adopting these plans

Before we adopt long-term plans and annual plans, we seek Wellingtonians’ views. On pages 13 and 14 we outline the consultation process we undertook for this plan and the key changes made as a result.

We make ourselves accountable by reporting on how we do for the year

Every September, we publish an annual report. This sets out how we performed against the long-term plan or annual plan for the year. Did we do all we said we’d do? Did we meet our budgets? Did we perform as expected? Did we contribute to improvements in the overall well-being of Wellington and its residents?

Recent changes to our legislation also require Councils to produce a pre-election report. This report will summarise major projects planned for the following three years and financial information, including a statement that compares rates, rate increases, and borrowing with the quantified limits specified in our financial strategy.
This and our other reports will be made available on our website as well as through our libraries and service centres.

Our work is delivered through seven, interconnected areas of activity

As a Council, and in keeping with legislative requirements, we undertake a range of activities to promote the economic, environmental, cultural and social well-being. We group our diverse activities into seven areas called governance, the environment, economic development, cultural well-being, social and recreation services, urban development, and transport.