
REPORT 2
(1215/52/IM)

LONG TERM COUNCIL COMMUNITY PLAN – EARLY ENGAGEMENT

1. Purpose of Report

To present to the Strategy and Policy Committee an overview of the Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) early engagement programme and a summary of the views provided.

2. Executive Summary

In preparing for the draft LTCCP the Council initiated a broad programme of engagement with the community. The programme had dual objectives of raising awareness of the community and seeking input from the community to the draft LTCCP. Officers have synthesised the information and drawn out common themes as well as reported the views that were given.

Common themes that emerged were the Council's role as an advocate, facilitator and leader, utilising volunteers and general support for wider engagement by the Council. In response to the economic recession there was a general theme that Council-owned and operated facilities such as libraries, parks, tracks and playgrounds would become more important as people had less discretionary income to spend. There was general support for the Council's approach and aim for only a 4% rates increase.

The issues that received the greatest responses were the proposals to reduce library hours, the proposal to reduce casual lane space with learn to swim and the out of town levy. There was also a lot of comment around the Indoor Community Sports Centre with the predominant view being the project should be deferred until the Council was in a better financial position to build it.

3. Recommendations

Officers recommend that the Committee:

- 1. Receive the information.*
- 2. Note that a broad engagement programme raised awareness of the LTCCP process and sought community input for the draft LTCCP.*

3. *Note the views of the community generated from the early engagement programme in the attached report as part of the draft LTCCP deliberations.*
4. *Note that input received from the early engagement programme informed the recommendations of the key issues paper being presented to this Committee concurrently.*

4. Background

Engagement Programme

In preparing for the draft LTCCP, the Council initiated a broad programme of engagement with the community. That engagement programme was designed to give the Strategy and Policy Committee information about the views of the community to inform their deliberations on the draft LTCCP.

The programme had dual objectives of raising the awareness of the community and seeking input from the community to the draft LTCCP. To ensure the community was aware of the programme weekly advertisements were placed in Our Wellington Page, APW (Absolutely Positively Wellington newspaper) included a two page item on the engagement process, there was media coverage and the front page of Rates News publicised the programme. There was also promotion of the programme in less traditional modes such as social networking, blogs and roadshows. Officers are confident that there was high awareness of the programme.

Mechanisms used within the programme were:

- The Mayor and Councillors Hotline – each Thursday night from 14 January to 26 February, people could ring elected members between 7pm and 9pm. The number of calls received gradually increased, starting with 20 on the first night and peaking at 56 on Thursday 19 February
- Roadshows – information and banners were taken to events and to Johnsonville Mall and the Reading Cinema complex. Officers and sometimes elected members and members of the Youth Councils discussed the LTCCP with passers by (12 Roadshows).
- Workshops – 8 workshops with a particular focus were held – 2 each with the arts (33 people); environmental (50 people) and sport (96 people) sectors; and with the Disability Reference Group (9 people)
- Roundtable discussions of about two hours were held six times – 84 people attended. One had an economic focus, one had a social focus and the remainder were general.
- A Residents' Panel was established. The Panel is made up of 41 people who are a) from Council stakeholder groups, b) self nominated and c) drawn from the community by a research company with a view to composing a diverse panel that reflected the demographic characteristics of the Wellington community. The Panel has met twice and a separate

report of panel members preliminary views is being presented to this meeting. Further meetings are scheduled to consider the draft LTCCP.

- Ward Clinics were held in each ward
- Presentations outlining the process and challenges were given to nine groups, for example the community boards, Ethnic Council and Pacific Advisory Group
- E-engagement – this included discussion boards, a budget simulator and a Facebook group which attracted 268 friends.
- An online survey of 504 people by AC Nielsen to explore how people's opinions on the options that the Council has proposed.
- Booklets providing an overview of the approach to the LTCCP and of Council activities and spending were produced (about 1500 were distributed). Feedback sheets reflecting the contents of the booklet were also produced.

In addition there was a programme of Maori Engagement. Focus groups were held with kaumatua, Maori with urban perspectives, rangatahi (youth) and service providers. The Chief Executive and officers met with the Wellington Tenth Trust and Te Runanga o Toa Rangatira Inc to discuss input to the LTCCP.

There was little input that could be aggregated in relation to trade-offs. Possibly the mechanism that derived the most consideration of trade-offs was the budget simulator. The results, however give little indication of preference for trade-offs. Most face to face engagement encouraged discussion about trade-offs.

Attached, as Appendix 1, is a report on the findings from the early engagement programme.

The Council supported the Federation of Wellington Progressive Residents Associations in running six workshops and their report is attached as Appendix 2. The Federation established a wiki as a method of collecting and disseminating information. The Federation was keen not to interpret or edit the comments but present them as direct input from the community. That is, the views are not necessarily those of the Federation. The wiki had over 60 different topics, some of which were not relevant to the LTCCP process. Those pages that were concerned with operational procedures or non-LTCCP matters have not been included in this report. Officers have agreed to address those issues separately with the Federation.

Data Analysis

Through the engagement programme, officers were sometimes asked about how input would be weighted – was one source of information more important than another source? Although it is acknowledged that informed input is often more helpful than uninformed input, this is an early engagement process looking to capture community views.

The early engagement programme sought opinions, ideas and advice from a broad range of people. Some input has been developed after people had discussed and considered information and other input was provided in a context where people were giving an initial reaction. Officers have synthesised the information and drawn out common themes as well as reported the views that were given.

The Residents' Panel and the Federation of Wellington Progressive Association's wiki have been reported separately with little editing or modification to the views expressed. The wiki in particular is very detailed. The views captured with the remainder of the engagement programme are broadly in line with the views expressed in those two reports, the exception was that the Federation reported that the wiki and their own consultation highlighted civil defence (including reliability of water supply) as a major concern of Wellingtonians. This issue was not apparent in our engagement programme (it may be a factor that the Council engagement programme raised many issues for discussion and civil defence was not one of them).

For some groups, there was an expectation that as with formal consultation processes there would be an opportunity to make submissions. Those letters, emails and documents have been taken into account in the attached reports. There are at least two groups who are providing information after this report is prepared and officers will provide an update in the oral presentation to Strategy and Policy Committee.

By using a variety of mechanisms it was anticipated that different techniques would give rise to different levels and types of input. The following table summarises the issues most commonly raised for each mechanism.

TABLE ONE: Summary of early engagement feedback

Type of engagement	Top issues raised
<p>Feedback sheets 191 received in total across strategies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Strategic Approach</u> - people love the vibrancy of Wellington and don't want to lose momentum • <u>Environment</u> - people generally agreed we should defer construction of new walking tracks but maintain existing ones • <u>Economic Development</u> - people agreed we should reduce economic grants • <u>Transport</u> - put more money into cycling and walking • <u>Governance</u> - reduce printed quality of documents
<p>Environment Workshop 2 workshops 51 people attended</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Strategic Approach</u> - maintain what we have over new capital investment • <u>Strategic Approach</u> - don't cut back on infrastructure investment as it just pushes it to the out years • <u>Environment</u> – importance of public facilities during a recession • <u>Environment</u> – support for water conservation and role of Council as educator for this • <u>Environment</u> - use and support volunteers networks
<p>Arts Workshop 2 workshops 44 people attended</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Economic Development</u> - general support to investigate a regional amenities levy • <u>Cultural</u> - opposition to charging for entry to the city's galleries and museums • <u>Cultural</u> - need for Wellington to keep being innovative and encouraging entrepreneurs in the arts sector. • <u>Cultural</u> - an Arts Hub will be very important - place to meet to collaborate and discuss ideas,.
<p>Sport and Recreation Workshop 2 workshops 96 people attended</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Social and Recreation</u> – sense that people don't want to lose or delay the indoor sports centre or synthetic turfs • <u>Social and Recreation</u> - sessionalising pools was not seen as a means to resolve the issue of pressure at peak periods • <u>Social and Recreation</u> - that reducing casual lane space and using for more learn to swim was not acceptable • <u>Social and Recreation</u> – programmes could be run more efficiently through partnerships with sports groups
<p>Roundtable workshop 6 workshops 84 people attended</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Strategic Approach</u> - Council should leverage off Central Government and other local councils • <u>Governance</u> - strong support for local community engagement • <u>Strategic Approach</u> - general agreement with 4% rates rise • <u>Environment</u> - education needs to happen around water demand • <u>Transport</u> - walking and cycling should not be competing for funding • <u>Urban Development</u> - heritage buildings are important • <u>Social and Recreation</u> - sports centre should be deferred. • <u>Social and Recreation</u> - don't reduce library hours

<p>Hotline 231 calls, 178 answered</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Transport</u> - put money into walking and cycling • <u>Social and Recreation</u> - indoor sports centre: majority wanting to defer construction • <u>Social and Recreation</u> - opposition to a reduction in library hours • <u>Environment</u> - maintain funding for parks and gardens maintenance/mowing etc
<p>Emails 147 messages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Social and Recreation</u> – more artificial turf needed as a priority • <u>Social and Recreation</u> - 50/50 mix of emails for and against proceeding with the Indoor Community Sports Centre • <u>Social and Recreation</u> – opposition to sessionalising pool space • <u>Cultural</u> – support to reduce the spend on public art • <u>Cultural</u> - opposition to out of town visitor fee's at museums • <u>Governance</u> - reduce catering budgets and printed quality of documents
<p>Discussion Board 918 unique users 15,945 page views</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Social and Recreation</u> - opposition to spending on major projects like the Indoor Community Sports Centre • <u>Environment</u> - support for continuing use of green recycling bins • <u>Environment</u> – support for water meters provided that property owners don't need to pay for installation • <u>Economic</u> - ratepayers should not have to pay for Rugby World Cup • <u>Transport</u> - support for a cycling and walking-friendly city • <u>Social and Recreation</u> - opposition to a reduction in library hours • <u>Social and Recreation</u> – opposition to sessionalising pool space
<p>Facebook 277 members as at 27/02/09</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Environment</u> – support for the continuation of free recycling and 'green bins' • <u>Cultural</u> - support to reduce the spend on public art • <u>Transport</u> – “save Manners Mall”, opposition to the proposed bus route • <u>Social and Recreation</u> - opposition to the proposed spend on the Indoor Community Sports Centre, • <u>Social and Recreation</u> - opposition to a reduction in library hours

5. Discussion

5.1 *General themes and findings*

Typically there were a range of views on most topics in a variety of contexts. For example, at a roadshow there were some in-depth conversations; some very brief indications from people about their thoughts and also some people went away with feedback sheets that were sent in later after further consideration. However some general themes did emerge particularly around the Council's role and its relationship with the community.

5.1.1 Council's Role

Many people indicated that the Council should use its position to leverage as much as possible from other agencies. It could do so as an advocate or as a facilitator.

5.1.2 Volunteers

Volunteers who worked with the Council are a critical resource and the Council could utilise volunteers more, particularly in difficult economic times when it is important to keep people connected to their communities and they may have more capacity to volunteer. For example, Friends of Wellington's Botanic Gardens note that the Council could be more pro-active in using groups such as theirs to develop and fund projects.

5.1.3 Community Engagement

There was general support for the engagement programme and indications were that the community would like such programmes to continue. It can be noted that there were some people who were cynical about the engagement programme and suspicious that the Council would not listen.

5.1.4 Bi-cultural city

Increasing the bi-cultural nature of the city should be a priority. Initiatives should include higher visibility of Maori culture through the public art programme, bi-lingual signage and greater diversity in engagement with Maori.

5.1.5 Maintain city foundations

Provision of infrastructure was seen as a core role for Council and its maintenance was a priority. Health and safety implications of deferring any maintenance were raised as an issue.

5.2 *Overall approach*

Generally, when people commented on the approach of maintaining Wellington's vibrancy, reducing services rather than stopping them and maintaining essential services - the feedback was positive. It seemed that most people were comfortable with the Council aiming for a 4% rates rise although there was a significant minority who believed that a higher rates rise was acceptable and also a group who believe that any rates rise should be in line with the rate of inflation. In addition, a significant number of people said that the Council was overly pessimistic about the recession.

5.3 Specific Issues

Specific issues that were raised relatively regularly were libraries and swimming pools and the Indoor Community Sports Centre. Common comments for both the pools and libraries were that access by working people to those amenities would be reduced unreasonably by removing casual lane swimming and evening hours at the branch libraries. People liked the option of being able to access those facilities in the evening even if they did not intend to personally use them. Access to community facilities was seen as particularly important in times of recession. Many people felt that it would be timely to defer or cancel the Indoor Community Sports Centre or that the site was not the right one. There was support for maintaining infrastructure as a priority.

There was little evidence of organised campaigns to lobby for or against a particular option other than approximately 75 emails of identical or similar content calling for accelerated prioritisation of artificial sports surfaces.

5.4 Recycling and Manners Mall

During the early engagement programme SPC considered two papers on recycling and the Council had been consulting on the Golden Mile bus route and street changes. Both of these topics are separate from the decision making process of the LTCCP. That is, proposals had been developed and the Council is seeking responses to those proposals rather than early input therefore those issues were not incorporated into the early engagement programme. However there was consistent feedback through all channels of the programme that indicated opposition to Manners Mall reverting to road and opposition to moving from green bins to recyclable plastic bags. Both issues will be formally consulted upon with the draft LTCCP.

5.5 Success of engagement programme

The early engagement programme was a departure from normal practice for the Council in that over a short period of time there was a range of activities and tools used to engage with the community and to increase awareness of the LTCCP. It seems that the different methods of engaging with people meant that groups of people who are normally not reached may have been on this occasion.

This engagement programme has raised the community's awareness of the LTCCP and the challenges facing the Council. It was regularly commented at workshops that it was a difficult task to consider service levels and appropriate interventions by the Council while concurrently aiming to have a modest rate rise. In some instances people modified or changed their views following discussion.

Councillors have been updated on a weekly basis on key activities.

It is intended that officers will review the engagement programme following the LTCCP consultation process with a view to identifying those techniques that worked well and those that were less successful. This will inform future work around community engagement. At this stage it is probably reasonable to conclude that the engagement programme has gained some momentum and it would be beneficial to continue to build on that momentum.

6. Conclusion

An early engagement programme, using a variety of mechanisms, was carried out by the Council to capture community views for input to the draft LTCCP. A report is attached.

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Supporting Information

1) Strategic Fit / Strategic Outcome

This report is aligned with Council Outcome 7.1 More Inclusive and 7.2 More actively engaged

2) LTCCP/Annual Plan reference and long term financial impact

This paper provides input to SPC deliberations on the LTCCP

3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations

n/a

4) Decision-Making

This is not a significant decision.

5) Consultation

a) General Consultation

This report is a component of a programme of engagement activities.

b) Consultation with Maori

Engagement with Maori occurred as a specific component of the engagement programme

6) Legal Implications

There are no legal implications

7) Consistency with existing policy

This report is consistent with existing policy