
Project title: Consultation and Participation Project
Strategy area: Governance

1. The Proposal

The focus of the Consultation and Participation Project (the Project) is to consider how Wellington's communities can best be enabled to participate in Council's decision making processes.

The Project is a review of Council's consultation policy and guidelines and seeks to ensure participation in decision-making processes:

- meets the needs of the community and elected members
- is undertaken within a framework of representative democracy (where elected members are responsible for final decision-making), and
- where the efficiency of the decision making process is not unduly compromised
- fulfils the requirements of the Local Government Act 2002.

A discussion document with high level findings from work undertaken to date will be presented to committee early in 2006 for consideration. An updated consultation policy and guidelines will be presented to committee for adoption in April 2006.

2. Strategic Fit

The Project has strategic fit with the following two priorities:

Priority 13 The Council will improve civic decision-making, transparency and public involvement

Priority 15 The Council will improve communication with communities

This project will directly contribute to the following outcomes:

Council outcome 6

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

Community outcome

'Wellington will have a culture of open and honest, no-surprises consultation involving all age groups that is genuine, timely and well-informed.'

3. Relationship to Existing Activities

Consultation and community participation in decision-making is a cross-organisational function. The Project considers how Wellington's communities can best be enabled to participate in Council's decision making processes and therefore has links to all council activities.

The Project has strong links to council communications. It seeks to improve how Council communicates in relation to its consultation exercises (i.e. how and why council is consulting, managing community expectations around decision-making, etc.).

4. Proposal Costs

The costs for this project will be met from existing budgets.

5. Project Outline

Drivers for the project

The identified drivers for the project are:

- concerns expressed by elected members and members of the community about Council's consultation and participation practices
- a declining level of satisfaction in regard to the amount Council consults, and the way Council involves people in decision making (February 2005 Resident Satisfaction Survey).

Objectives

The objectives of the Project are:

- i) to engage in a thorough review of Council's consultation policy and guidelines
- ii) implement all reasonable and practicable options for improving consultation and participation as determined by finding under process (a); and
- iii) as a consequence of (a) and (b) build trust and confidence in Council's consultation and decision-making processes.

Benefits

The potential high level benefits to accrue from the Project are:

- improved community involvement in decision-making processes
- clarity over how the participatory principles of the 2002 LGA are to be carried out within a framework of representative democracy
- clarity over how the public can expect the Council to exercise the discretion it has been given in determining when and how it will take community views into account and to provide guidance to officers on how to exercise this discretion
- to demonstrate and communicate Council's compliance with the LGA 2002.

Where we are at

In April 2005, Council agreed to a review of the consultation policy and guidelines¹. This initiative is already well progressed. The review to date, has consisted of both qualitative and quantitative research, including case studies, interviews with community and environmental groups, and survey work.

Where to from here

To ensure a comprehensive breadth of views are considered more interviews are scheduled with cultural, business and sporting groups in late November 2005. Information and data sourced through survey work, case studies and interviews will be

¹ The review was agreed as part of the *Communication and Participation Project – Strategic Framework Development* project brief.

used in a series of focus groups scheduled for December 2005. A discussion document with high level findings will be presented to committee for consideration early in 2006.

Deliverables²

The deliverables of the Project are:

- an updated consultation policy;
- updated consultation guidelines;
- training of officers on new consultation requirements.

6. Conclusion

A review of Council's consultation policy and practices was agreed to earlier this year to determine how the community could best be enabled to participate in Council decision-making. There is considerable interest in the Project by the community and elected members, and the project has a strong strategic fit with community outcomes, and council outcomes and priorities. Work on the Project is well progressed.

² Other deliverables being investigated include the development of a consultation coordination database.