
APPROVAL OF ENGAGEMENT POLICY AND ACTION PLAN

1. Purpose of report

This paper reports back to the Committee on feedback received during the consultation period on the draft Engagement Policy and associated documents. It also presents the results of other work undertaken to understand people's experience of our engagement practice and how we can improve it.

2. Executive summary

On 1 August 2013, the Committee approved the draft Engagement Policy and Public Commitment for public consultation. The draft documents were consulted on between 6 August and 6 September 2013. 28 submissions were received, many of which contained valuable comments in relation to both documents. The main changes made in response are:

- The *Public Commitment* has been changed to strengthen the importance of explaining our consultation processes and reporting back.
- *Section 5: Service-focused engagement* has been strengthened to ensure that 'good service' is given greater focus and priority.
- *Section 6: Relationship-focussed engagement* provides more detail on what might constitute a critical strategic question and some examples of tools and techniques that might be used.
- Changes have been made to ensure the use of terms throughout the document are explained and used consistently.

A full summary of comments received, and proposed responses to the points raised, is attached as appendix 2. In the main, submitters supported the intent of the Policy and Commitment but expressed a need for the Council to now focus on implementation.

In addition to this, evaluations of our recent engagement practice were progressed and focus groups were held to better understand people's experience of engaging with Council through its decision-making processes. The key findings from this work include:

- There is poor understanding of what Council does and how it makes decisions
- People are sceptical about their ability as individuals to impact on decisions
- People have different needs in terms of how information is provided and how they are engaged with
- People would like greater transparency about how and why Council makes decisions

- Council needs to be better at providing feedback on how people's input was used and its impact on decisions
- People are very positive about their experience of Council's Contact Centre but other customer service experiences are inconsistent

The findings of this work have resulted in changes to the Policy and Public Commitment and will also inform the development of Council's Improvement Plan.

3. Recommendations

Officers recommend that the Strategy and Policy Committee:

1. *Receive the information.*
2. *Agree to the amended text in the Engagement Policy and Public Commitment made in response to submissions received and attached as appendix 1.*
3. *Agree to recommend to Council that it adopts the Engagement Policy and Public Commitment as amended in appendix 1.*
4. *Agree to delegate to the Chief Executive and the Community Engagement Portfolio Leader the authority to amend the Engagement Policy and Public Commitment, based on amendments agreed by the Committee and Council and any associated minor consequential edits.*

4. Background

At its meeting on 1 August 2013, the Strategy & Policy Committee approved the draft Engagement Policy and Public Commitment for public consultation. Councillors were invited to suggest people or groups that we should target during the consultation period and these were approached directly to provide input.

At that meeting it also received recent results from the Council's annual Residents' Monitoring Survey, which indicated a reduction in satisfaction with the level of consultation and their involvement with decision-making. Officers undertook to gather further information on these results through a series of focus groups. Officers also noted that evaluations were underway on Council's recent engagement practices and that the results of these would be provided in this report back to Council.

5. Discussion

5.1 Feedback received during the consultation period

A full analysis of comments made in the 28 submissions received on the draft documents is provided in appendix 2 of this report.

Thorough and thoughtful submissions were received from some individuals and organisations that have a particular and long-standing interest in Council's engagement and other processes. These, along with many other submissions, were supportive of the direction and intent of the Policy and Public Commitment. Their suggestions for changes were focussed on the need to expand the scope of some sections (e.g. *Section 5: Service focused engagement*) or clarify the use and consistency of terms. Officers considered the points raised and have made changes as a result. These are highlighted in the amended version of the Policy and Commitment in appendix 1.

Some submissions communicated a degree of scepticism about Council's decision making processes and frustration with previous experiences. Many emphasised that it is now important that the Council implements the new policy well.

5.2 Results from evaluating recent engagement practices

5.2.1 Early Findings of the Alcohol Management Strategy Engagement Evaluation

The early findings have highlighted some strengths and areas for improvement in our engagement practice. The evaluation was a large process that incorporated a number of stakeholder groups. The groups reported being happy they were consulted on the issue and felt it was an appropriate topic for them to consider. Staff reported the process provided a lot of substance for both the draft strategy and draft policy and it had surfaced a number of ideas that wouldn't have been considered otherwise.

Areas for improvement included tailoring the presentations and activity to the group so that it was more relevant to participants and made clear what the Council was wanting. Cultural competency was also raised as a systemic issue that needed addressing, with participants stating that more could have been achieved if staff had more knowledge of the norms and practices of the groups being engaged. Finally, feedback loops are an area that was widely suggested as an area for improvement, with some participants unaware the strategy and policy had been written and put out for consultation. This may be related to the need for greater support and resourcing for the process.

5.2.2 Survey of Oral Submitters to the Annual Plan

Following the consultation for the 2013/14 Annual Plan, a survey was sent to the 70 oral submitters to find out about their experience of the process. The survey was brief, with three questions. Of the 70 submitters, 27 responded to the survey. Overall oral submitters were happy with the process of booking the oral submission, the information provided, the organisation on the day and presenting to Councillors. The satisfaction levels dropped slightly when asked about the communication after their oral submission and the process overall, but still had a majority who were satisfied or very satisfied. Comments for improvement related to having more time to speak, having an online booking system, wanting a more tailored response letter and wanting to see their submission taken seriously by Councillors.

5.2.3 Survey of Councillors on the Annual Plan consultation

The Mayor and Councillors were also surveyed after the consultation for the 2013/14 Annual Plan. Of the 15 members contacted, five responded. This means the results are less likely to be a general view. Of the five who responded, the majority were happy with the process with the only comments asking for a different venue and for an analysis by topic and ward to be provided.

In response to the question on how influential different information streams are (on their decision-making), information provided by staff at meetings and workshops was the common option relied on to a great extent. Media discussion and commentary was the least relied on information stream. The majority of those who responded were happy with the information provided, with one respondent wanting a comparison with performance indicators, other councils, cost and benefit per capita. Most Councillors thought the Annual Plan process was different to other processes, with one Councillor saying this was due to its scale.

5.3 Focus groups on people's perceptions of Council decision-making

To better understand the drop in satisfaction with measures relating to consultation and decision making in the Residents' Satisfaction Survey (conducted in June this year), officers commissioned an external agency to conduct a series of focus groups. The following three focus groups, with an average of six participants, were held on 10 and 11 September:

- Residents aged 50 years and over
- People aged between 18 to 29
- Residents with children under 13 years of age

People from these groups had expressed the least satisfaction with decision-making measures in the residents' survey.

A full report back on the focus groups will be made to the Committee at its pre-meeting for this report. Officers also observed all three focus group sessions with the key findings highlighted in the executive summary to this report.

5.4 Responding to what we have learned

Officers believe that the amended Engagement Policy and Public Commitment provide the right framework for Council to respond to people's needs and concerns.

5.4.1 Service focussed engagement

The framework recognises that most of people's interactions with Council are at a 'service level'. In terms of people's experience of Council, and the impact on our reputation as an organisation, we need to make sure those interactions are positive. The documents emphasise this. Positively, people said in the focus

groups that their experience of Council's Contact Centre, and other service related experiences, is very good. However, Council has received other feedback that the level of customer service is not consistent across Council and consequently, there is a renewed commitment to put this right. The proposed Implementation Plan for this Policy, attached as appendix 3, and other work occurring in Council will provide the impetus for change in this area.

In addition to this, the new Policy highlights opportunities to maximise these service interactions to inform our decision-making processes. Firstly, we can better record the information people share with us about the Council through these everyday service interactions. This information can then be used to not only inform service improvements but also changes to our regulations, programmes and policies. Furthermore, these service interactions are an opportunity to inform the public about what Council is doing and seek their input. This could be through staff proactively asking questions or asking people to complete brief surveys. This would address issues raised during the focus groups, particularly in terms of getting feedback from young people, who are unlikely to contribute to our decision making processes in other ways. Such efforts, along with the use of research tools, to get input from diverse and sometimes 'harder to reach' sections of our community, are essential if Council is going to receive a balanced view from Wellingtonians on key issues.

5.4.2 Relationship-focussed engagement

The Policy highlights the value of receiving input into its work from entities with which it has a relationship. The key message from all our partners is that we need to involve them earlier in our processes, provide them with feedback on how their input was used and explain how the final decisions were made. This has been given stronger emphasis in the amended Policy and Public Commitment.

Organisations that participated in the development of the new Policy are supportive of the idea that Council will identify critical and/or strategic issues that it wants to engage on at the beginning of its planning cycles and develop clear engagement plans to encourage people's participation in the process of addressing them. They believe that this will result in earlier, deeper but less frequent engagement processes that they can more effectively participate in. This desire has also been expressed by Council's advisory groups in their recent annual reports. These groups have evolved over time and are now expressing a desire to have more strategic input into Council's planning and decision making. While the Policy supports this approach, a review of Council's reference groups and forums from an operational perspective will be undertaken as part of the Improvement Plan. The purpose of this review is to ensure that the groups and forums are operating effectively and aligned to Council's priorities.

Participants in the focus groups acknowledged the role that entities play in Council decision-making processes and believe that their input is likely to have a greater impact than the input of an individual. While they may not be members of a group that makes submissions, some people acknowledged the efforts that some groups (e.g. certain residents' associations) make to proactively inform their communities about Council activities and ask for their input. Such actions by groups we work with should be encouraged and

supported by Council where appropriate. Some submitters questioned section 6.2 of the Policy, where it states that Council will encourage groups to provide evidence around who they represent and how they involved people in developing their position on an issue. These provisions were included in the previous policy and officers believe they should be retained, especially as Councillors are asking officers to appropriately weight input from representative bodies in relation to individual submissions and survey results.

5.4.3 Decision-making engagement

Recent evaluations of our engagement practices show that the Council is doing some things well and is making efforts to improve its approach and consultation processes.

However, evaluations of recent processes did highlight that Council cannot take a 'one-size fits all' approach to its engagement. People have different needs in terms of how information is provided and how we interact with them. Looking at how Council can 'do better' in this regard will be a focus of the Implementation Plan. Specific initiatives include the development of a guide for staff on working with Pacific communities, as recommended by Council's Pacific Advisory Group.

The most frequent issue raised is that people want greater transparency around our decision-making processes. In particular, people want to know how their input was taken into consideration and why a particular decision was made. The need for Council to pay attention to this has been strengthened in the amended documents. One focus group member noted that reporting on civic matters and decisions are not as strongly reported in mainstream media as they used to be. Participants in engagement process suggested innovative ideas for how Council could provide greater transparency and these will be considered as part of the Improvement Plan and Engagement Guide. Feedback suggests that making improvements in this area would have a positive impact on perceptions of, and satisfaction with, Council's decision-making processes.

Officers are already progressing one project that will have an impact in this area. We are planning to introduce a new engagement database to be used for all formal consultation processes. It will deliver a number of benefits including:

- A consistent submission processes
- Improved customer service for internal and external stakeholders
- Better data management
- Improved reporting of information on and within submissions
- Better interface with Council's e-democracy project
- More tailored responses to submitters

Officers are working towards using the new database for consultation on the draft 2014/15 Annual Plan.

5.5 Better Local Government programme

At the end of August, Local Government Minister Chris Tremain announced changes that will require councils to undertake longer-term infrastructure

planning, while streamlining other planning requirements. The latter will involve removing requirements that the Local Government Efficiency Taskforce identified as increasing the costs and compliance burden on councils. This includes:

- Streamlining annual plans and removing the need to re-consult on matters that have already been consulted on;
- Introducing streamlined, focused consultation documents rather than basing public consultation on technical and overly detailed documents;
- Providing greater flexibility about methods and frequency of consultation.

Further details of the changes are unavailable at this time. However, the recommendations of the Efficiency Taskforce did inform the development of the draft policy and officers believe that it will be consistent with, or able to accommodate, proposed changes. Officers will proactively seek to be involved in the development of these changes with Council's local government partners including the Society of Local Government Managers and Local Government New Zealand.

6. Conclusion

In developing the proposed Engagement Policy and associated documents, officers have looked to apply the new approach contained within it in the following ways:

- we reviewed the information people had already told us to inform the development of the Policy
- we involved those organisations we identified as being interested in the work at an early stage in its development
- we took the resulting work back to them so as to be transparent about what we were thinking and doing
- we sought the Committee's approval to consult on the draft documents and informed interested parties and the public of their opportunity to give input
- we sought information from 'harder to reach' members of the public to gain a balanced view on how we engage with people
- we evaluated our existing practice to identify areas for improvement
- we did not hold a formal oral submissions process but did provide an opportunity for submitters to collectively speak to Engagement Working Party members about their submissions. Six people took up this opportunity. No new issues were raised but the feedback from the participants was positive
- the key points raised during the consultation period have been summarised and responses proposed
- changes to the Policy and Public Commitment have now been made based on that feedback
- individual responses will be provided to each submitter

Officers recommend that this committee agrees to the amended Engagement Policy and Public Commitment and subsequently recommends it to Council for adoption.

Officers will now focus on implementing the policy through how they undertake engagement activities, and by continuing to progress the Improvement Plan.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1) Strategic fit / Strategic outcome

The policy supports Council's overall vision of *Wellington Towards 2040: Smart Capital* by improving the way we engage the public and stakeholders in developing and delivering on our strategic direction.

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

Engagement activities are undertaken by multiple business units and across multiple projects.

3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations

The Local Government Act 2002 does contain specific provisions in relation to consultation and engagement with Māori.

4) Decision-making

The recommendations in this paper do not involve 'significant decisions' and so the use of the full Special Consultative Procedure is not proposed. The decisions are primarily operational in nature.

5) Consultation

a) General consultation

The processes used to engage stakeholders in this work are outlined in this paper.

b) Consultation with Māori

Both of Council's mana whenua partners have been spoken to during the development of this paper.

6) Legal implications

Council's lawyers have been consulted on the potential implications of the 'engagement commitment' recommended in this paper. Their advice is that neither the Policy nor the Public Commitment is likely to create a legitimate expectation that consultation will occur.

7) Consistency with existing policy

This paper proposes that Council's existing Engagement Policy is replaced by the final version of the draft policy attached to this paper.

Appendix One – Revised Wording of WELLINGTON CITY COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT POLICY

* All added words are underlined

* Deleted words are ~~struck through~~

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WELLINGTON CITY COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT POLICY

SECTION 1: OVERVIEW

1.1 Policy purpose

Wellington City Council (the Council) is committed to engaging with the people of Wellington, communities and other stakeholders. It has developed this Engagement Policy so that people are able to participate in and contribute to advancing the city.

This policy also relates to the integrated approach that the Council takes as an organisation to continue building and strengthening its engagement with all stakeholders through all of these channels.

1.2 What is engagement?

Engagement is the broad term which covers the different interactions that occur between the Council and the people of Wellington, communities (of place, interest or identity), and other stakeholders.

Engagement can be both proactive and responsive. It can happen in a number of ways, all of which provide a solid platform for engagement to occur. This includes:

- how the Council undertakes everyday services and activities
- the relationships that the Council develops and maintains with communities ~~and~~ sector groups
- the range of consultation processes it undertakes when a decision is to be made.

Engagement provides the Council with a strong base to develop a relationship with Wellington communities. It provides the opportunity for the Council to learn about diverse views, insights and issues. It also enables the Council to better partner with others to advance the city.

1.3 Local Government Act

The policy is also informed by the Local Government Act, 2002. This legislation sets out obligations for the Council when exercising its responsibilities as the guardian of the local resources. In doing so, the legislation requires the Council to understand the different needs and aspirations of its people and communities by taking diverse views and interests into account.

1.4 Policy overview

This policy is the first of four key parts of the Council's engagement practice. It will inform:

- a *Public Commitment*, the commitment by the Council to engage with Wellingtonians
- an *Improvement Plan* to further develop the Council's engagement capability
- an *Engagement Guide* for Council managers and staff.

These will be published by the Council as supporting documents to this policy.

Policy	Public commitment	Improvement plan	Engagement guide
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal commitment of the Council to its integrated engagement practice • Reviewed every three years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple public summary of the engagement approach that the public and stakeholders can expect from the Council in future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan to improve engagement practice and build confidence in that practice • Reviewed every year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guide for managers and staff about how to plan for and undertake engagement • Outline of responsibilities

SECTION 2: CONTEXT

2.1 Policy goals

Council managers and staff will be guided by a set of goals when they engage with Wellingtonians. The Council will:

- be in touch with their values, concerns and aspirations
- shape its proposals and decisions based on the involvement of, and feedback from Wellingtonians
- partner with key organisations to advance the city
- empower Wellingtonians to contribute to advancing the city.

2.2 Legal obligations

The Council takes into account many factors in determining its activities and how it involves the community. Factors include legislative requirements, including those in the Local Government Act 2002 and the Resource Management Act 1991, Council bylaws, policies and plans, and the Council's role.

The Council affirms its obligations to the involvement of Māori in decision-making processes as set down in the Local Government Act 2002, which includes recognition of the Treaty of Waitangi, for example: Section 4 – Treaty of Waitangi which says: “In order to recognise and respect the Crown’s responsibility to take appropriate account of the Treaty of Waitangi and to maintain and improve opportunities for Māori to contribute to local government decision-making processes...”.

At different times, the Council can be a decision-maker, regulator, service provider, licensing entity, funder or an enforcement entity. Sometimes the Council can be acting as a community advocate or participating in another organisation’s decision process. Consequently, this policy and accompanying documents take a principle-based approach to the Council’s role. This enables the public to have clear expectations of how the Council will engage despite the varying ways it operates.

Consultation is a subset of engagement. This policy sets out the Council’s aspirations around engagement. It does not mean that the Council will need to consult before every decision.

2.3 Engagement with Māori

The Council will continue to work with the city’s two mana whenua iwi, the Port Nicholson Block Settlement Trust and Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangatira Incorporated, to ensure their contributions are represented and their status is publicly recognised.

The Council acknowledges the unique status of Māori and will continue to utilise a range of different mechanisms to engage with the wider Māori community and ensure their views are appropriately represented in the decision-making process. The Council is committed to providing relevant information to inform Māori contribution and improve their access to the Council’s engagement and decision-making processes.

2.4 Engagement with diverse communities

The Council will engage across Wellington’s diverse communities, including those which may be harder to reach. Appropriate mechanisms and techniques will be chosen to ensure all communities have equal opportunity to have their views represented in the decision making-process.

SECTION 3: ORGANISATIONAL APPROACH

3.1 Informed engagement

The Council has a commitment to engaging with its stakeholders and Wellington's communities. As well as developing and publishing the *Public Commitment*, an *Improvement Plan* and an *Engagement Guide*, it will use the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum and decision-orientation approach as the foundation for its engagement. The spectrum will help the Council to decide what type of engagement is required to enable decisions to be made.

IAP2 five-step spectrum

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Provide balanced and objective information to assist people to understand the issue	Obtain public feedback on analysis, options and/or decisions	Work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are understood and considered	Partner with the public on each aspect of the decision, including the development of options and identification of the preferred solution	Public makes final decisions

3.2 Spheres of engagement and approaches

Engagement the Council initiates will focus on engaging stakeholders. The Council will ensure that when proactive engagement is planned, it will use the following 'spheres of engagement' to help determine the relative priority and resourcing of its work. It will also ensure that clear and consistent messages are given to foreshadow the significance of decisions to be made.

Sphere	Purpose	Description	Approach
A	Critical strategic questions	Each year the Council and its business units will identify the critical few big conversations to advance the city through collaboration and empowering stakeholder and community activity.	Tailored approaches designed for strategically significant deliberation and engagement.
B	Key projects and activities	Each year the Council and its business units will identify the key projects that need stakeholder and community involvement.	Robust standardised and consistent engagement processes.
C	Business as usual and implementation point activities	The Council will use all of its processes to listen, and capture the views, concerns and values of the people, to inform its policies and actions.	Use of efficient and effective tools and points of contact.

SECTION 4: RELATIONSHIP-FOCUSED ENGAGEMENT

This engagement approach emphasises the importance of the Council's network of relationships with key individuals, communities and other stakeholders. ~~and neighbourhood groups~~. These relationships enable the Council to connect with a broad set of perspectives, which reflect the needs and aspirations of different communities of interest.

On a continuing basis, the Council and its business units will identify ~~key~~ partners and relationships needed to advance the development of the city. These relationships will be maintained using a range of agreements, memoranda of understanding, meetings and forums.

One of the key outcomes of this engagement approach is to partner with ~~key~~ organisations as hosts for the key conversations for the city. ~~Critical~~ Partners will include:

- mana whenua, iwi and Māori organisations
- community and business ~~stakeholder~~ organisations
- government and education sectors.

Relationships ~~with key stakeholder, community and neighbourhood groups~~ can occur at different levels within the Council – governance (the Mayor and Councillors), the executive, and at an operational level.

Knowledge gained from the Council's relationships will be effectively co-ordinated and managed internally to enhance the outcomes for Wellington City.

SECTION 5: SERVICE-FOCUSED ENGAGEMENT

5.1 Experience of Council Services

~~People in Wellington~~ People engage with the Council through everyday Council services, Council staff and contractors, and by using Council facilities. Their experience of any or all of these contacts shapes their opinion of the Council and the work it does. For this reason, the Council seeks service-focused engagement that:

- results in a positive experience where possible
- is timely, responsive and accessible
- meets their needs and expectations
- promotes an overall positive image of the Council
- actively looks for improvement.

5.1 Information gained from service-focused engagement

Everyday comments, feedback and communication are received by the Council from its service-focused engagement. These provide a rich source of information for the Council to use not only as part of its engagement processes but also in relation to its business planning and innovation processes. Consequently, at the start of any engagement process, the Council will be able to have more meaningful discussions because it will be better informed by what people have already said about the issue at hand.

It collects information through:

- personal service interactions
- the service and contact centres
- stakeholder meetings
- the media and social media
- public comment.

SECTION 6: DECISION-MAKING FOCUSED ENGAGEMENT

The Council is responsible for making many decisions on behalf of Wellingtonians. As part of decision-making engagement, the Council will engage with interested and/or affected stakeholders to ensure they are able to make their views known and that they are able to inform and influence the decisions. This part of the policy describes how the Council would like to engage in relation to different types of decisions. From time to time the Council needs to make decisions under time constraints or in circumstances which need to be taken into account when the Council is determining how it will engage and/or consult (if at all).

6.1 How will the Council engage?

The Council's decision-making activities will be prioritised as either:

Critical strategic questions – big conversations

The Council will design tailored approaches to specifically guide these strategically significant conversations. Individuals, communities and other stakeholders ~~neighbourhood groups~~ will be part of the conversation. Activities will be tailored to the issue and enable large-scale participation.

Examples of questions within this sphere could be conversations around the long term plan, climate change and sea level rise, and local alcohol management. Activities that could be used include citizen juries, focus groups, surveys, online discussion boards and deliberative budgeting.

Key projects and activities:

The Council will use robust standardised and consistent engagement processes. This may or may not involve the use of a special consultative procedure. Individuals, communities and other stakeholders will be asked to participate.

Examples of key projects or activities include town centre upgrade projects, policy development and park renewal or improvements. Tools and processes could include community meetings, regular project newsletters, submission forms, surveys, and public hearings.

The Council acknowledges that the people of Wellington engage with the Council all the time in different ways. This 'total engagement approach' means that information gained from these engagements will inform the Council's decision-making processes and increase the impact of people in decision-making. In particular, the Council will review available information before determining the issues for the critical strategic questions and key projects and activities.

6.2 Who will the Council engage with?

When the Council decides the critical questions for the big conversations each year, it will identify who is likely to be affected by or have an interest in the decisions. The Council will identify participants from its relationship and service-focused engagement processes. These approaches will also give the Council an indication of what has already been said or conveyed by those identified about the matters at hand.

The Council will ensure, as appropriate and relevant, that representation is obtained from across ~~community~~ the issue and sector groups and that engagement is not dominated by single organisations or sectors of the community. It will also involve participants who can provide information and expertise the Council may not otherwise have access to.

Where groups claim to represent a community or sector, the Council will encourage them to provide:

- evidence of the authority to represent the community or sector, including a summary of the people and organisations they represent
- information on how they formed their position on the issue concerned.

There may be situations where the Council may want a specific group to be involved, but finds the group does not have the capacity or skills needed to engage to an appropriate level. In this case, the Council will consider providing opportunities or support that will enable the group to enhance its ability to be involved.

Wellington City stakeholders and community groups ~~and neighbourhood groups~~ have their own relationship with communities and individuals. From time to time, the Council may ask for assistance and support to reach these communities and individuals to ensure that their views are represented in the decision-making.

The Council recognises that decision-making engagement can facilitate improved mutual understanding between groups with different aspirations and perspectives.

SECTION 7 – POLICY TERM AND REVIEW

The Council will review the Engagement Policy and Public Commitment every three years. These will be amended and confirmed through public consultation as part of the Long-Term Plan.

PUBLIC COMMITMENT TO HOW WE ENGAGE

Wellington City Council is committed to working towards effective engagement in partnership with Wellingtonians. This will help us deliver on our commitments to: 'position Wellington as an affordable, internationally competitive city' and 'deliver what's right'.

1. Te Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi

We will continue to engage with the Māori community and ensure their views are appropriately represented in our decision-making.

2. Listen first and seek to understand

We will collect and reflect on what we hear from Wellingtonians before we develop and engage on any proposal.

3. Engage early

We will engage when proposals are still at a high level and there is flexibility to address any issues raised.

4. Seek diverse perspectives

We will seek and use the rich diversity of insights from Wellingtonians to enable good problem-solving, policy development and decision-making.

5. Build commitment and contributions to advance Wellington City

~~We will engage in a way that gives Wellingtonians opportunities to contribute to the growth of the city.~~ We will engage in ways that give Wellingtonians opportunities to not only contribute their ideas and views, but also partner with us to advance the city

6. Give and earn respect

We will give respect to everyone we engage with and work to earn the respect of the people who engage with us.

7. Trust

We will work to build trust and credibility for engagement with Wellingtonians and act with integrity when we analyse and present the results.

8. Transparency

We will provide all relevant information to help people understand a proposal and their implications, and be open and clear about the engagement at each stage of the process.

9. Report back

We will feedback on who we have engaged with and how their contribution has influenced the decision.

10. Monitor and evaluate

We will monitor and evaluate how we engage with the public.

Appendix two - Summary of Submissions

28 submissions were received on the Draft Engagement Policy.

23 submissions were sent by email and 4 were sent on hard copy. 12 submissions were sent by individuals and 16 were sent by organisations.

Theme	Main issues raised	Response
Strategic importance	The Engagement Policy is important because it shows the Council's commitment to democratic process, commits the incoming Council to strengthening engagement and provides a starting point for future policies should there be amalgamation. Engagement should be a key part of the city's identify as a Connected City	Noted in report back on consultation. No changes to the policy.
Issues with the discussion document	The discussion document should have summarised how the draft Policy was developed and included summaries of who had been involved, what information had been collected and been more explicit about the problems or opportunities the Policy is aimed at. The discussion document should also have made clear what the next stages in the development process are and what opportunities there will be for public input. Some submitters thought that there had been good early engagement.	These points were covered in the officer's paper that the Strategy and Policy Committee considered and should have also be provided in the discussion document.
What is engagement?	The schematic showing how the new engagement approach will work with decision processes needs to include the role of Councillors, Council officers and the public; feedback loops, especially after the 'make decision' and 'getting on with it' steps. The 'gather internal information' step cannot take place before the problem definition step because it is impossible to know what information is relevant with a sense of the problem.	This feedback is valuable and we have decided to exclude the schematic from the policy at this time. Feedback will be strengthened in the list of Public Commitments. The schematic shows an ideal process. In reality, problem definition and the gathering of information is an iterative process.

<p>Policy Purpose</p>	<p>Council should invest in high quality public engagement and decision making as this is critical to a strong and vibrant city. The total engagement approach is supported. The Policy should include a focus on transparency about the results of implementation as this contributes to building trust. Queries were raised about the definition of terms such as people, stakeholders, residents, communities and sector groups.</p>	<p>The Policy and Public Commitment is being modified to put more emphasis on feedback about implementation. The policy does aim to improve quality. The main mechanism for doing this is the Improvement Plan. The language in the Policy used to describe communities has been made clearer.</p>
<p>Policy overview</p>	<p>The production of the Policy, Public Commitment, Improvement Plan and Engagement Guide is supported. The Policy should apply to the Council's agents (e.g. contractors). A query was raised about how the Policy would apply to Council Controlled Organisations.</p>	<p>No change to Policy. The Policy will apply to Council agents. Council Controlled Organisations will be considered in the development of the Improvement Plan</p>
<p>Policy Goals</p>	<p>The goal of 'advancing the city' was seen by several submitters as too development or growth focused. The Policy should recognise engagement as a democratic right. 'Facilitating improved mutual understanding between groups with different aspirations and perspectives' was suggested as an additional Policy goal.</p>	<p>The goal of 'advancing the city' is intended as a general term rather than a signal that more Council engagement will be focused on development. No change is recommended. A new section 1.3 recognises engagement as a democratic right. Mutual understanding is added to Section 6.2</p>
<p>Engagement with Maori</p>	<p>Submitters on the Policy's Engagement with Māori section took different positions. Some supported the intention to maintain and strengthen the Council's relationship with mana whenua iwi, and to generally improve engagement with Māori. Others believed that the Council should not privilege any one identity or that privileging Māori could unintentionally create division with non-Māori. A query was raised about why special provisions are necessary or desirable, and what mechanisms would be used. A number of submitters made suggestions for how to improve engagement with Māori.</p>	<p>The Council is legally obliged to engage with Māori. A new section 2.4 has been added to the Policy about engaging with other communities. Suggestions to improve engagement with Māori will be considered during the development of the Improvement plan and Engagement Guide.</p>

<p>Spheres of engagement and approaches</p>	<p>The 'Spheres of engagement and approaches' section was supported. Issues were raised about whether type A issues would be too development focused, and whether the Council would be able to identify the big issues in advance and what factors it would consider in deciding these. Concerns were raised about standardised approaches encouraging a 'tick-the-box' approach. A query was raised about whether legislative change would be needed to reduce the amount of consultation the Council does.</p>	<p>No changes to the Policy are proposed. The issue of being too development focused is addressed above. Monitoring of the policy, which will be developed as part of the Implementation Plan, will assess many of the issues raised. The Policy should help the Council better use the discretion legislation currently gives it to consult. Legislative reforms to streamline engagement are currently before Parliament</p>
<p>Relationship engagement</p>	<p>Relationship-focused engagement was supported. Issues were raised about who key stakeholders and partners, and critical partners were. It was suggested that small business should be listed as a separate relationship category and that the Council should have relationships with individuals as well as groups. There was a concern that independent groups who accept funding from Council may be forced to engage on the Council's behalf. 'Squeaky wheels' should be listened to because they often raise real issues. Information should be tailored to the needs of specific groups</p>	<p>The Policy is being changed to include individuals in relationship-focused engagement. As above, terms have been simplified and the word 'key' deleted as the Council needs to identify stakeholders for particular issues and decisions. Independent organisations will not be forced to assist the Council. Information about identify stakeholders and providing information will be provided in the Engagement Guide</p>
<p>Service engagement</p>	<p>Service-focused engagement was supported. The section should include Council engaging with affected parties when it is about to cause disruption to inform and look for ways to mitigate impacts, and to provide progress updates. Some community groups are willing to inform their members on behalf of the Council. Front-line officers' day-to-day interactions with businesses, such as the issuing of consents, must be streamlined and business-like with minimal compliance costs. The Council should monitor social media and use research to help identify issues.</p>	<p>The Policy is being modified to include 'good service provisions. The Council's 'Open for Business' work aims to improve service. The Council uses social media and research to flag potential issues. The Improvement Plan will aim to improve service engagement</p>
<p>How will the Council engage?</p>	<p>While the intent of the 'How will the Council engage?' section was supported, some submitters wanted more detail about what "tailored approaches" and "robust standardised and consistent engagement processes for key projects and activities" would mean in practice, and examples of topics in the 'Critical questions' and 'Key projects' sections. One submitter flagged that multi-</p>	<p>Examples will be added to illustrate the issues raised. Further detail will be provided in the Engagement Guide. Te Mahana, the homelessness strategy, is an example of Council using a multi-stakeholder process.</p>

	stakeholder processes could be used for some strategic issues facing Wellington.	
Who the Council will engage with	A number of submitters were concerned about groups being made to provide details of their membership and how their position has been determined. The need to protect decision process from capture by interest groups was noted. Some community groups would be prepared to convey Council information in their publications.	No change to the Policy. The requirement to provide information about the representativeness of submissions is not mandatory and is carried over from the 2006 Policy. Section 6.2 covers 'capture' and more information will be provided in the Engagement Guide.
Policy Term and Review	There was support for the Policy Term and Review section, which needs to include the monitoring of outcomes and assessment and evaluation of engagement processes.	No change to Policy. Monitoring and evaluation will be covered in the Improvement Plan.
Implementation and ensuring the policy outcomes are achieved	Many submitters thought that the Policy is sound and that the challenge will be implementing it. The Improvement Plan needs to include short- and long-term goals and objectives, and milestones. Areas for it to address include monitoring Policy outcomes; Council culture, buy-in and staff competencies; the application of the Policy to the Council's agents and to Council Control Organisation; providing the right information, in the right format to the right people; and developing tools to support quality engagement. Some submitters thought that the implementation of Policy should be overseen by a representative citizen body or by independent reviewers.	These issues will mainly be addressed through the Improvement Plan and the Engagement Guide.
Groups need sufficient time and advanced notification to respond to Council	A large number of submitters raised long standing issues that groups face when engaging with the Council including consultation fatigue, and being provided with sufficient advanced notification and information to provide considered advice. The Council is not the only body that consults Wellington-based groups.	These issues will mainly be addressed through the Improvement Plan and the Engagement Guide
Need to ensure diverse perspectives are heard	The commitment to ensure diverse perspectives are heard was supported. The Policy needs to have specific sections to ensure that Pacific peoples and other minorities are included.	A new section 2.4 is proposed to ensure diverse communities are included. The Improvement Plan and Engagement Guide will provide more detail.

<p>Accessible information and communications</p>	<p>Submitters believed that Council engagement processes need to be made more accessible, and that the need will increase over time as the population ages and cognitive impairments become more prevalent. Accessibility standards for meetings and information were provided. Submitters believe that internal Council processes need to be developed to ensure the production of accessible information. The Council needs to stay current with new communications technologies so its communications are accessible to all Wellingtonians.</p>	<p>No change to Policy. Issues will be addressed through the Improvement Plan, Engagement Guide and the Accessible Wellington Action Plan.</p>
<p>Dissatisfaction with Council decision processes and practices</p>	<p>A very large proportion of submitters expressed long-running dissatisfaction with the Council engagement, decision processes and practices. Issues included talking at members of the public and not listening, not treating members of the public with respect, consulting when decisions were already made, inconsistent feedback, undue officer influence, and biasing processes towards Council ends.</p>	<p>Improving the Council's engagement will require some organisational behaviour change. The Improvement Plan will include short and long term goals and the monitoring of implementation, which will improve engagement practices over time.</p>
<p>The Policy needs to explicitly set out how issues related to transparency will be dealt with</p>	<p>The commitment to transparency is supported. However, increased transparency may compromise privacy of submitters. Queries were raised about how submissions, which may include personal and confidential information, will be managed. Will submissions be made public? Are they subject to the Local Government Official Information and Meeting Act? How will complaints be managed?</p>	<p>The proposed Policy should have no impact on privacy issues or the complaints process however this will be reviewed as part of the Improvement Plan.</p>

<p>Commitment</p>	<p>The proposed 'commitment to how we engage' was supported although one submitter suggested that the commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi should be deleted or put 'down the list'. The following new commitments were recommended: * to ensuring people have their say in decisions that affect them * provide all relevant information, including about likely costs and savings, to help people understand proposals and their implications * to keep you informed about progress and results * to use accessible, inclusive engagement processes</p> <p>One submitter recommended changing commitment 5 by deleting 'to the growth of the city' and adding 'their ideas, views and insights'.</p>	<p>Each of the commitments is as important as the others, so moving a commitment 'down the list' would have no effect.</p> <p>The Council is statutory obliged to engage with Māori.</p> <p>Submitters clearly believe that better feedback is required post decision and about implementation. It is proposed to create a new commitment to provide feedback by separating feedback component from transparency (commitment 8)</p> <p>Officers consider that the other suggestions are adequately covered by the proposed commitments and in the Policy</p>
<p>Role of Councillors</p>	<p>A small proportion of submitters noted that the draft Policy did not mention the role of councillors or provide specific guidance them. One submitter thought that Councillors should have individual offices so that they are more accessible to the public</p>	<p>The Policy is for the whole of Council, that is, City Councillors and officers.</p> <p>The provision of individual offices is outside the current scope of the Engagement Policy.</p>
<p>Proposals for improving Council engagement</p>	<p>Council policies and procedures should require documents for major consultations to include a section on 'what this change will mean for me and the community'</p> <p>Council policies and procedures should void decision processes for which the consultation can be shown to be sub-standard. Officers leading such processes should be disciplined.</p> <p>Council policies and procedures should require proposals that are changed significantly in response to consultation to be re-consulted before the Council makes a final decision.</p> <p>WCC policies and procedures should be amended so that decisions are not made when there is overwhelming public opposition.</p> <p>Council needs to ensure public participation personnel are used in engagement processes, not sidelined.</p>	<p>Some Council documents provide this information. The Improvement Plan will look at making this happen more consistently.</p> <p>Local Government in New Zealand operates within a representative democracy model.</p> <p>Public participation personnel will be used involved in developing the Improvement Plan and Engagement Guide.</p>

Appendix Three: Wellington City Council Engagement Improvement Plan – Positioning for the Future

Introduction:

Consultation and Engagement is central to Council's decision making processes. Residents look to Council for leadership, to provide public services, and manage and maintain the city's assets. Council is tasked with the responsibility of ensuring these decisions are in the best interests of the city as a whole within competing fiscal restraints; and also provide the scope and opportunities for all residents to participate, inform, and contribute. Within this Council is also required to reconcile competing interests.

Purpose:

The purpose of this plan is to provide Council, Council's Executive Leadership team, and business units with a clear understanding of the improvements required to effectively improve our engagement practice and ensure it is relevant, well-coordinated and sustainable. The Improvement Plan is intended as a 'finite' exercise over 3 years to 2016; it demonstrates Council's commitment to embed effective engagement and consultation practice into all areas of Council business; including the way we manage our service delivery, relationships with stakeholders, and undertake decision making activities.

Objectives:

- Map existing community engagement mechanisms
- Highlight the main areas and steps for improvement
- Identify good practice – acknowledge and share what we do well
- Build on existing resources, knowledge, and skills – work smarter with what we have
- Identify opportunities for innovation (i.e. Digital media, interactive engagement activity in partnership with the community, business sector, special interest groups)

Methodology:

Scoping commenced in July 2013 as the first phase to support the development of a structured, coordinated and sustainable Improvement Plan. Findings of research alongside feedback from residents, community stakeholders, and Council units highlight the need to initiate *an action oriented approach* to consultation and engagement with the intent *to identify, review, and improve our existing mechanisms*. Council is faced with potentially big decisions and wants to have robust conversations with residents and stakeholder groups to better understand their aims and aspirations in this process. Therefore, it is timely to review our current practice to ensure our communities have every opportunity to participate in these conversations.

Rationale:

Committing the time and resources for robust research, planning and development at the outset of this plan will identify and mitigate risk. The consequence of not researching and carefully planning for improvements is that it may waste resources on engagement activities that are not sustainable and further undermine Council's credibility and intent to facilitate effective engagement practice in partnership with the city's residents and stakeholders.

APPENDIX 2

Risks	Mitigating approach
Saturation – Engagement fatigue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and coordinate engagement activity to avoid duplication • Draw from existing knowledge and community feedback • Utilise a range of engagement mechanisms that is responsive to diverse groups and communities
Community expectations and competing interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify and publish the roles and responsibilities of Council • Develop and publish consultation and engagement plans early. A ‘no surprises approach’ including the purpose, scope, and range of mechanisms. Include timeframes and feedback action • Ensure information is easily accessible utilising a range of communication tools
Resources – robust engagement is time, skill and resource intensive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tightly align engagement practice to planning objectives (i.e. don’t overcomplicate the process) • Assess and secure resources at outset of project
Resident frustration, and discontent regarding engagement process and outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure information and engagement mechanisms are accessible and responsive • Training and skill development for Council and council staff to understand the value of and need for robust and responsive engagement practice • Tailor engagement activities to reflect the diverse needs and characteristics of Wellington’s communities (this is a fundamental principle in engagement practice)
Time constraints and competing priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focussed engagement - ensure engagement activities are well planned, coordinated and resourced
Inconsistent engagement practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the range of activities utilised across Council • Establish a consistent ‘engagement framework/guide’ • Publish engagement guide and Council processes (ensure these are accessible)
Inconsistent interaction experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify engagement and interpersonal competencies required dependant on role, function • Support the development of a capacity building training and development programme

Assets and Opportunities:

Wellington City is New Zealand's capital city. It is home to diverse communities, a range of central government organisations, and a robust business sector, not for profit groups, academic institutions, and diverse special interest groups and communities. Council therefore, has access to a wealth of expertise, skill, knowledge, and support to collectively progress the city's vision *Wellington Towards 2040: Smart Capital* in partnership with all residents and stakeholders.

Council's current ways of engaging

- City Councillors
- Customer service and call centre: community feedback reinforces the benefits and quality of interaction and engagement received from customer service and call centre staff
- City Housing (Case Study – City Housing has developed engagement mechanisms and frameworks to support good engagement practice)
- Our Capital Voice (community panel) and Our Capital Views (research panel)
- Our Wellington Page
- Website
- Established working relationships with Mana Whenua
- Advisory and Reference Groups (Environment Reference Group, Pacific Advisory Group, Accessibility Advisory Group, Youth Council)
- Mayoral Forums (Accessibility Forum, Pacific Forum, Ethnic Forum)
- Professional expertise and skilled staff (i.e. administrative, engagement, customer service, library, community development, urban heritage and design, planning, research and evaluation)

Milestones and Timeframes

Phase One: Improvement Plan (July 2013 – November 2013)

- Review Engagement Policy to reflect 3 levels of Engagement Activity (service, relationship, and decision-making)
- Familiarise/socialise internal business units of the Engagement Policy, its purpose, scope, and benefits
- Evaluation of recent engagement practice (Alcohol Management Strategy and 2013/14 Annual Plan oral submission process)
- Literature review 'good practice engagement' with Māori
- Internal Mapping – fact finding. What we do, how we do it, highlight areas for improvement
- Identify examples of good practice and then support and encourage Council, council staff and stakeholders to model and share these for ongoing improvements i.e. City Housing
- Identify training and development programmes available in local and broader community
- Review of Council reference groups to identify areas for improvement to maximise effectiveness and alignment with Council priorities
- Review of Mayoral Forums to identify areas for improvements
- Development of an Engagement Framework/Guide

Phase Two: Planning for Improvement (December 2013– January 2014)

- Collate, critique and analysis of information from phase one to identify areas for improvement
- Gap and Needs analysis
- Establish organisation standards for good practice (aligned to national and international standards)
- Determine and recommend coordinated improvement activities in partnership with business units
- Determine and recommend training and development, capacity building opportunities
- Identify areas where technology solutions could transform effectiveness and experience of engagement

Phase Three: Improvement Plan (February 2014 - July 2016)

- Development and implementation of engagement plans in partnership with business units (tailored to business unit needs, services, resources)
- Build staff competencies through training and development programmes
- Support for and delivery of innovative engagement practice (testing innovation)
- Development and implementation of resources and mechanisms to ensure Council's engagement practice is culturally responsive to the diverse communities in Wellington
- Support the development, implementation and review of technology solutions
- Review of the Public Commitment
- Support a culture of ongoing review and improvement of engagement practice

Definitions

Community: a group of people sharing common place, a common interest, a common identity.

Stakeholder: Those most affected, impacted, or with a vested interest

Residents: For the purposes of this plan this is all who reside in Wellington and also commute to work in the city from other Local Authorities i.e. Hutt City