

## **Appendix 1**

### **Report of the Residents' Panel**

## 1. Introduction

This report provides an overview of the Residents' Panel deliberations on the draft Long-term Council Community Plan (LTCCP). The Panel prepared a report that was presented to the Strategy and Policy Committee as part of the LTCCP early engagement programme in March 2009. Since then the Panel has met on two occasions (in April with 23 people and in May with 19 people) to deliberate on the draft LTCCP.

The report is structured around the following seven issues that were identified through a prioritisation process:

- Council decision-making processes that are open and based on transparent criteria
- Cost, value and efficiency of Council administration
- Rating, Rating Differential and Events Levy
- Better communication of Long Term Council Community Plan
- Urban planning, transport, reducing the carbon footprint, building design and standards
- Sustainability – solid waste management, water demand management.
- Safety – feeling safe in the city

Over the two meetings, the Panel broke into small groups to deliberate on each issue and to generate recommendations for the entire Panel to consider. The report has been drafted by a subgroup of six Panel members with the brief to keep within the material and recommendations generated in the two meetings. The report was then circulated to the entire Panel for comment.

The report should not be considered to represent a consensus view of the entire Panel. On some matters there were – as is to be expected – a range of, sometimes conflicting, views. The Report seeks fairly to reflect the views and deliberations of those panellists that attended the meetings in April and May.

### **Issue: Council decision-making processes that are open and based on transparent criteria.**

This issue relates to the Governance activity – delivering trust and confidence in civic decision-making.

The Panel considers that there has sometimes been a lack of transparency and consistency in the Council's decision-making processes. Some of that appears to stem from insufficiently robust and well-structured processes, and some from insufficient communication of the basis on which decisions are made.

#### Developing Proposals:

Panel members report that communities are sometimes at a loss to understand where proposals come from – for example, the proposed new Khandallah Town hall does not appear to be part of a long-term plan for providing community facilities across the city, but rather an ad hoc response to perceived localized needs, the relative merits of which are hard to gauge. Similarly, decisions relating to resourcing

each of the Karori Sanctuary and the Otari Reserve appear to have been taken in isolation. Without proposals being tested against consistent and transparent criteria, and against each other, poorer decisions can result and perceptions can develop of favouritism, or that it is the 'squeaky wheel that gets the oil'.

#### Early Engagement:

There is a concern that significant proposals take on a 'life of their own' too early in the evaluation process – before alternatives, and the trade-offs, have been adequately canvassed. Once that has happened, there may be no way to ensure thorough and unbiased evaluation other than by invoking legal options. Conversely, there have been occasions when projects that enjoy popular support have not been able to get on to the table.

The Panel would like to see consultative processes more along the lines: "here are some options, what do you think of them, and why". That is likely to draw forth more effective input, and scrutiny, than a "we propose to do X, and here are the reasons why it's a good idea, but would like your view before we go ahead". The latter can result in comment/input that becomes polarized, either 'for' or 'agin' what is being proposed, rather than contributing to refining proposals and arriving at the best decision.

The Panel recommends that a mechanism be established that enables early consideration and debate of major issues at a political (Councilor) and community level before options are narrowed down. The Council Committee structure in place up until 2005 enabled this kind of process, at least to some degree. Councilors, and the community, should be able to probe and question analysis provided by Officers sufficiently early in the process that it is not seen as staking out, or seeking to overturn, a political position. As an example, the Panel considers that the move to a (single) Strategy and Policy Committee might have resulted in a less deliberative process.

The Panel is conscious that committee processes can add to the time required to progress initiatives, but considers that the time is worthwhile to achieve better outcomes and, at least in some instances, that they actually can speed up progress. Closing off options too early can result in debate being drawn out, and in decisions being re-litigated. ("More haste, less speed.")

#### Trade-offs:

The information, analysis and advice provided by Council Officers should be impartial and objective, and should lay out the trade-offs involved. This requires that Council management and officers, led by the Chief Executive, maintain a strong culture of impartiality, and of ensuring that Councilors, and the community, hear what they need to hear, not what some necessarily want to hear. The Panel is not sure that culture is as strong as it could be.

An obvious way in which to open up decision-making processes is for the early 'options analysis' put before Councilors (as above) to be made publicly available. Similarly, once decisions have been taken, they should be reported in a way that

makes clear the basis for them: what are the expected benefits? who benefits? what will be the costs? how will they be covered? and what trade-offs were involved?

### Grants:

With respect to grants, the Panel considers that a more structured approach should be adopted – for example, a ‘community chest’, involving a single pool of funds from which community grants are made (funded by donors and other existing sources, which would be publicly acknowledged). Disbursements could then be made according to reasonably generic criteria, whereas at present applicants have to try and fit their projects into confined criteria, which can result in some good proposals missing out. Support for community groups could be extended to the provision of free advice on project planning and business planning.

### Panel Recommendations:

- **Proposals must involve processes that are robust, transparent, objective and balanced.**
- **Introduce structures to provide a forum where Councilors, staff and community engage at an early stage to subject proposals to scrutiny**
- **Council should clearly describe the trade-offs made in arriving at decisions.**

### **Issue: Cost, value and efficiency of Council administration**

This issue relates to the desire of Panel members to ensure that council as an organisation will continue to deliver “best value” to ratepayers, residents and visitors in an effective and efficient manner. This was of particular concern because in the context of the current recession, Council had highlighted the need to cut its budget, to consider reducing existing service levels, to modify the future works programme and to actively manage ongoing public expectations.

In these circumstances, the Panel considered that Council should undertake a comprehensive and structured process that looks to ensure that all that Council is doing is well planned (are we doing what we should be doing?) and is being done efficiently and effectively (a “performance audit”).

Panel members also reflected that a “return” need not be solely financially focused when considering the value of community (cultural/social) and environmental benefits and/or impacts council services provide.

Despite the circumstances, Panel members felt it was more important than ever to ensure the organisation operates transparently and be held accountable for provision.

Ultimately, the future activities of the organisation need to ensure they support the overall strategic approach for the city as set down in the Long Term Council Community Plan.

### **Panel Recommendations:**

- **That Council undertake a process whereby it continually reviews its operations in a comprehensive and structured manner to ensure best value and that the process and results are clearly communicated to the public.**

### **Issue: Rating, Rating Differential and Events Levy**

Much of the Panel discussion of rating and levying took the form of questions to Council officers present, suggesting both that the LTCCP does not make the city's rating policy as understandable as it could be, and that there is low resident engagement in this issue relative to their obvious interest.

While there was no Panel consensus on an appropriate level for rates, or for a rate increase cap, it was generally believed that better communication, transparency and simplification of the rating system would make any increases more palatable, and allow for greater rating movement.

#### **Rating:**

The Panel recommends that Council consider more extensive use of targeted rates and levies, particularly where benefits of Council activities, such as events, can be clearly seen to be exclusive to a particular sector, e.g. the benefits of major sporting events to the hospitality and accommodation sectors.

However, it is recognised both that identification of appropriate target sectors will incur additional transaction costs, and that exemptions will increase the burden on non-exempt sectors, perhaps outweighing any benefits.

There is Panel support for the notion that businesses in the central business district be targeted as a special category for rating purposes.

The Panel is unable to reach agreement on an appropriate overall rate level, or on an appropriate level of rate increase, as there is the feeling that it depends entirely on the value of service provision.

#### **Rating Differential:**

The Panel believes that the LTCCP draft document fails to effectively communicate the real effects that changes to the rating differential will have on actual residential and commercial rates. The document states a rates increase of 2.38% in 2009/2010, while the actual average rate increase for households is nearer to 4.5%. It is recommended that these effects be made explicit in the final document.

There is also concern among Panel members that the rate increase would be difficult for households to cope with, and it was noted that businesses have better capacity to pass on rates increases through pricing, for example.

There is broad support among Panel members for a slowing of the rating differential shift between residential and commercial rates, and for the notion that residential and commercial rates should always be differentiated.

### Events:

The Panel recommends that Council continue to support successful events through the events levy, and to increase the events levy slightly where there is confidence that significant benefits to the city will be achieved.

It is also recommended that the calculations used to determine event costs and benefits be made more transparent, both to ratepayers and event organisers.

It is acknowledged that there are a limited number of high-yield events available in New Zealand and that there is also a limit to the number of events that Wellington has the capacity to host before economic effects begin to diminish.

There is a general belief that events should be evaluated against criteria which seek a 'reasonable return' for the city. This 'return' need not necessarily be financial. Many events have intangible benefits but may not provide a \$20 return for every dollar invested. However, there is a view that the *\$1:\$20 ratio* is useful as a guiding principle.

### Panel Recommendations:

- **That Council find more effective ways to communicate the rating system to rate payers, and that the LTCCP make changes to rates and the rating system explicit.**
- **That Council consider the use of fair targeted rates and levies, where the costs of identifying and targeting ratepayers is not restrictive.**
- **That Council always maintain some differential between residential and commercial rates, and that the phasing of the rating differential shift should be slowed.**
- **That Council continue to support events, and consider increasing events funding where there is confidence in a high return on that investment.**

### **Issue: Better communication of Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP)**

The Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) process is complex and the finished documents large and cumbersome.

The key issue for Panel members is that the existing publications have not assisted Wellington's diverse communities understand the LTCCP planning process and the outcomes it seeks to achieve. The Panel considered that the LTCCP process could be more effective if the link to the Council's regular (one/three year) planning and decision-making processes was spelled out more clearly, and if the information contained in the LTCCP document was more tightly tied, and tailored, to what Council sees as the key issues it is facing .

The design and quality of publication was commended as were the array of collateral and channels utilised. There was some question as to whether these were targeted or just simplified versions of the larger documents.

A secondary issue relates to engagement and the perceived lack of it. Whilst there is “communication”, the necessary framework to engage various communities and keep them involved has been lacking. This was seen as being just as vital to any communications that were subsequently produced. The setting up of the Residents’ Panel demonstrates that council is keen to engage authentically and with an earlier start for next time, the forum will assist direct council to achieve its community outcomes.

### **Panel Recommendations:**

- **That council revamp the way it undertakes the engagement and communication of the Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) with:**
  - **Future LTCCPs needing to clearly communicate the full cycle and how each plan inter-relates: 10 year - 3 year - 1 year.**
  - **Key historical and current information being included to give context.**
  - **Need for simplicity; communications being tailored for different audiences.**
  - **The big issues need to be clearly highlighted.**
  - **Start the communication process early; select what needs to be communicated and to who, then identify what are ongoing discussions.**
  - **Much more face-to-face engagement required – bringing stakeholders together with the appropriate council officer to lead and facilitate.**

### **Issue: Urban planning, transport, reducing the carbon footprint, building design and standards**

Panel members agreed that they enjoyed living in the Wellington city. It has many of the attributes of a larger metropolitan centre but still retains its accessibility.

Urban planning has a direct effect – for better or for worse – on the city and on how people use and feel about it. Urban design policies can ease or exacerbate the impacts of population growth, traffic congestion and access to amenities throughout the city. People also mentioned we live in an interesting vibrant city.

The fact that we are so compact gives us the opportunity to live work and play within a very small area. We need to build on this unique feature of Wellington.

### **Urban Planning Approach:**

The Council needs to be forward thinking and provide leadership to facilitate the best urban outcomes. High quality urban settings that help sustain Wellington’s reputation as an interesting city will encourage people and businesses to stay or be attracted to Wellington. Maintaining vibrancy through preserving and enhancing employment opportunities is an important objective to ensure Wellington has a future.

The Council should provide an educational role. For example, keeping people aware of our “sense of place” and of Wellington’s built and natural environments provides us with pride and ownership of our city.

The Council should encourage and generate ideas. This should be carried out through processes that the WCC employ such as the District Plan. In that regard, some Panelists were of the view that Council needs to place more emphasis on promoting, and on making known what the Plan allows, not what it does not allow. It was thought that Council needs to play a larger facilitative role eg by working with the Property Council. Also the WCC needs to be mindful that these processes do not get overly bureaucratic and costly and stifle good ideas, energy and investment as has been noted by some Panel members.

The Council should act as an intelligence gatherer. For example, help Wellington market itself as an environmentally aware city, by providing research for marketing strategies or providing research on how other cities deal with issues the city faces.

The Council should maintain a regional perspective. It should ensure that any decisions on Wellington take into account our regional position. For example, where the WCC has to deal with Transport New Zealand on the city roading network. The area around the bypass remains an urban planning disappointment where buildings are empty and the edges to the carriageway are left as residual spaces. What is Transport NZ now proposing for Wellington and can we get the best urban design outcome for people not another traffic engineered solution for cars. How is the public involved in this process?

It is important that high quality urban planning and design outcomes are encouraged with the council as a facilitator for this, for example

- Ensuring the public transport system remains viable, affordable and convenient
- Providing a good pedestrian environment that encourages people to walk, throughout the city. (good for health and safety as well)
- Providing the mechanisms to encourage a built environment where quality buildings are encouraged along with good urban design outcomes.
- Giving pedestrians priority in traffic engineering
- Keeping our natural environment (South Coast, Wellington waterfront, Zealandia, Otari, Cook Strait etc) accessible and well used.
- Looking at regional solutions when dealing with regional or national agencies. (e.g. Police and Transport NZ)

#### **Panel Recommendations:**

- **The Council should facilitate good urban planning with a role to:**
  - a. **Be forward thinking - provide leadership.**
  - b. **Provide an educational role.**
  - c. **Be an enabler (as opposed to ‘can’t do)**
  - d. **Encourage and generate ideas.**
  - e. **Be an intelligence gatherer**
  - f. **Maintain a regional perspective.**



- **Fulfilling these roles the city should set goals that people understand (such as reducing our carbon footprint by 10% through increasing our CBD (central business district) population by 10% within a set time frame)**
- **The Panel would like to see the following goals and having set them reflect them in the city's vision statement, so that the city is described as:**
  - a. **Energetic /vibrant**
  - b. **Carbon neutral**
  - c. **Walkable and accessible**
  - d. **Natural environment /Seascape**

## **Issue: Sustainability – solid waste management, water demand management.**

The Panel in general agreed with the environmental challenges the city faces as laid out in the draft LTCCP, including the efficient use of resources such as water; the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and reducing the amount of solid waste the city produces.

After careful consideration and much discussion, consensus was reached around four recommendations dealing with aspects of sustainability.

### Solid waste:

The Panel suggests that the concept of zero-waste should be a goal to aspire to along the life of the LTCCP.

Any proposed changes to the city's waste collection service or recycling service should be consulted upon at an early stage. All options should be explored in a balanced manner, with costings, and brought to the community for consideration/dialogue. Any identified trade-off's should be communicated. By engaging residents and business owners, Council will gain insight into whether community members are willing to meet the cost, or change their behaviour, or agree with the effort. They will find out what balance the community is comfortable with.

The Panel believes the city's kerbside recycling programme should not be terminated. The Panel recognises that recycling may never be a money-making enterprise; it may need to be subsidised for the near future. Money could be used from the yellow rubbish bag charges.

### Water:

The Panel recommends that Council place high priority on water conservation, and encourages Council to be leaders, thinking outside the square for innovative forward planning. Incentives to property owners to install collection tanks, metering, and recycling of greywater/stormwater should be considered.

The draft LTCCP proposes a delay in investing in potentially environmentally harmful new storage capacity; the Panel supports this strategy.

While Panel members were generally in agreement that metering would lead to better water management, some members did not believe individual households should pay for usage via metering. In addition, there was concern that lower income households would be unfairly 'penalised'.

The Panel recognises that water is a fundamental need and must be available to Wellingtonians at all times. There are a range of approaches to ensure a continued supply of water, in these times of climate change and population growth.

The Panel recommends that Council produce a comprehensive water demand strategy, with consideration of the issues:

- Education - Communicate how we can better reduce our water use
- Conservation – Implement water restrictions if necessary, and consult with the community to identify water conservation opportunities
- Incentives – Consider implementing rebates for tanks, or other type of incentive as appropriate
- Security of supply – Ensure continued high water quality. All parts of the network maintained to a high standard. Council should prioritise this
- More data on usage – will facilitate understanding of who is using water, and how much. There was a feeling that Council didn't possess accurate data (e.g. water lost due to leaks was included in usage per person in LTCCP)
- Leaks - Understand amount of water lost to leaks and ramp up detection and repair
- How to use stormwater and greywater – Council should explore innovative ways of re-using stormwater/greywater in the city. Could include re-use through irrigation of plants, etc.

#### **Panel Recommendations:**

- **In moving toward zero-waste there needs to be an ongoing conversation with the community about the long-term future of solid waste which includes bringing costed options to the table.**
- **The issue with respect to water is primarily about doing more with less - it is preferable to find better ways of using the current supply than to build a new dam. We are looking to the Council to be imaginative**
- **Household and commercial metering will be a useful tool for better water management but there is division on how & whether to associate payment for usage**
- **When considering the sustainable supply of water the Panel recommends Council considers:**
  - **Education**
  - **Conservation**
  - **Incentives**
  - **Security of supply**
  - **More data on usage is a good thing towards understanding this**

- **Leaks (in respect to conservation and sustainability)**
- **How to use stormwater and greywater**

## **Issue: Safety – feeling safe in the city**

The perception of safety has widespread implications, not only for city residents, but also for visitors and the tourism industry. Wellingtonians want to feel safe in the city and recognize that safety should be a high priority.

The Panel acknowledged that there are differences between personal and community safety and accepted the inherent difficulty in demonstrating tangible safety improvements. Community level safety issues (e.g. buildings, urban design and emergency management) are addressed over longer periods of time and the benefits to individuals are less concrete. The Panel agreed that addressing personal level safety issues, however, can have more of an immediate impact.

### Personal and Community Safety:

The Panel expressed a need to ensure that both personal and community safety are incorporated into the wider activities of the Council. With this in mind, several proposals were suggested by the Panel to improve safety in the city, including:

- Graffiti should be removed promptly as it can negatively impact on peoples' perception of safety. This can be achieved through increased support for the graffiti flying squad or the use of people serving community service.
- The benefits of increased CCTV coverage were discussed. The Panel acknowledged that CCTV effectively supports criminal prosecutions rather than acting as a crime deterrent. There was a general consensus amongst the panel that more priority should be placed on preventing crime through alternative means.
- The Council and government agencies, especially the police, should collaborate more effectively to improve surveillance. The Walkwise initiative, which has successfully created a safer community environment could be expanded. An increase in more visible policing will also improve perceived safety in the city.

### Making Public Space Safe:

The Panel acknowledged that improving the city's 'walkability' increases surveillance, thereby enhancing safety in public spaces. The Panel does, however, recognize that any developments to enhance the city's 'walkability' may impact on existing and future plans for urban design and transport. Some proposals arising from the Panel's discussion include:

- Public spaces and transportation systems should be designed with an emphasis on pedestrians rather than motorists. Changes in traffic flows on Queen St (Auckland) for example have given priority to pedestrian access and movement.
- The safety of pedestrian routes can be improved with well maintained street lighting and walkways and more equitable signal phasing. Pedestrian safety can also be promoted by encouraging cyclists to use roads.

- Residential environments should be designed to employ passive surveillance processes e.g. through increasing residential outlook over public spaces and by mixing residential and commercial zoning.

#### Community Safety:

The Panel acknowledged that particular safety issues relate to specific community groups. A safe environment needs to be ensured so that seniors feel safe coming into the city. Central government support must be obtained to enable programmes to develop and continue at community centres. These programmes can promote, for example, community work targeting at-risk youth and alcohol-related crime.

Emergency management in the community was also identified by the Panel as an important safety consideration. Suggestions raised by the Panel included:

- Civil defense awareness and household preparedness must be improved. Information regarding risk assessment and management should be more accessible and more effectively communicated to the community.
- Building regulations should incorporate emergency management principles. Earthquakes pose a significant risk for Wellingtonians and should be taken into account when designing new infrastructure.

#### Panel Recommendations:

**The Panel recommends that the Council:**

- **build safety considerations into all of its current and future activities**
- **place greater emphasis on both actual and perceived safety**
- **place greater emphasis on ‘walkability’ and making the public space safe.**