

WELLINGTON CITY COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT POLICY

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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
- 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 informed by the involvement of, and feedback from Wellingtonians
- partner with organisations to advance the city
- empower Wellingtonians to contribute to advancing the city
- work to ensure its decision-making processes are accessible to all.

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 individuals, communities and other stakeholders. 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 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 organisations as hosts for the key conversations for the city. Partners will include:

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

Relationships 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 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 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 the issue 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 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 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.