



How can I influence council decisions?

All councils are required by law to consult with their communities – ie. to give people an opportunity to have their views considered before important decisions are made.

Councils manage day-to-day local services such as providing water supply, rubbish collection, street lighting, car parking, libraries, parks, local roads and footpaths.

Other important roles include working with local people on setting and supporting the:

- achievement of community outcomes. These are things the community thinks are important for it's overall well-being such as things like being 'safe and healthy
- writing and managing plans for your area's development, including management of the natural and urban environment

- making bylaws (local laws) and enforcing them
- participating in community partnerships and initiatives to reduce crime or increasing jobs
- managing civil defence planning and emergency preparedness

Regional councils are mainly responsible for environmental and resource management issues, while district and city councils (and community boards) are concerned with providing local road and rail network, setting rules and laws as well providing services for their residents and communities.

How can I make sure my views are heard?

There are many ways to get involved with your local councils activities, keep up-to-date with what your councils are doing, and to have your views considered.

You can do this by:

- making submissions on long-term plans and activities outlined in the council's annual plan and Long-Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP)

- attending and speaking at meetings about specific issues
- attending local council, council committee and community board meetings and providing feedback to the council.

How are decisions made?

All councils are all required to publish a **Long-Term Council Community Plan (LTCCPs)** once every three years - covering 10 years into the future.

The LTCCP describes the long-term council's activities, priorities and work programmes. It is a key planning tool which outlines everything a council does, how it fits together and what it will cost.

Councils are required to widely distribute a summary draft of their LTCCP so that people in the community find out and have an opportunity to make submissions on their plans for the next 10 years.

Full LTCCP drafts may be viewed on your council's website or by contacting them for a copy. Making a submission provides your council with important feedback, and plans are often altered on the basis of submissions.

Final LTCCPs are adopted by the full council at the start of the local government financial year beginning in July.

All councils are also required to consult on and publish an **annual plan** in each of the two years when an LTCCP is not produced. This highlights any changes or variations from the LTCCP for the coming year. A council may also decide to produce an LTCCP of this time if they are planning a major change from those outlined in the existing LTCCP.

You can make a submission on your council's annual plan in the same way as the LTCCP.

Councils are required publish an **annual report** each year telling the community whether they have done what the LTCCP said they intended to do.

The annual report also details what has been spent, and may include what progress has been made, toward achieving community outcomes. Annual reports must be adopted by October each year, and must be audited before they are finalised.

What are community outcomes?

Councils are required to include community outcomes in their LTCCP. These are things the community thinks are important for its economic, environmental, social and cultural well-being, such as 'promoting a safe and healthy community'.

Achieving community outcomes involves input from both the community and the council. For example, to contribute to 'promoting a safe and healthy community', a council might decide to install security cameras in its town centre,

manage dog control or maintain a particular local road. There is also an expectation that the community itself should also play a role in ensuring that the outcomes are achieved.

Councils have to monitor community outcomes and report on them every three years.

The Department of Internal Affairs provides support to and facilitates contact between local authorities and government agencies involved.

Who makes decisions?

Elected councillors make policy decisions for their area and employ a chief executive to make day-to-day decisions to manage the council's operations.

Elected council members:

- hold full council meetings monthly where all the elected members make decisions by majority vote
- hold monthly committee meetings to discuss issues and make recommendations in particular areas of interest to the council
- seek the views of local residents on specific issues – usually through public consultation meetings, written submissions, surveys and personal contact

- work with council staff to investigate and report on issues.

An important part of the decision-making process is consulting with local communities. The Local Government Act 2002 requires councils to ensure local people have a range of opportunities to engage with their council.

The Act also requires councils to identify and assess all practical options when making decisions. They have to consider costs and benefits, impact on their council, and any other relevant matters. The views and preferences of those likely to be affected by a decision, or who may have an interest in a decision must also be considered. Māori must be given opportunities to contribute to the decision-making process.

What are council committees?

Councils can set up committees – as well as sub-committees and other decision-making bodies.

Council committees are often set up on the basis of the primary functions of the council. For instance these committees may consider environmental planning and regulatory services, finance, expenditure and audit as well as works and services and community facilities.

Membership of these committees varies, although there are requirements about the

number of councillors required for certain types of committees. A council can also appoint people who are not elected members to a committee or sub-committee if they have special skills or knowledge.

Council committees usually take recommendations to the full council for approval, though sometimes councils give their committees the power to make decisions. This is sometimes referred to as council 'delegations' (because decision-making is delegated).

Can I attend and speak at meetings?

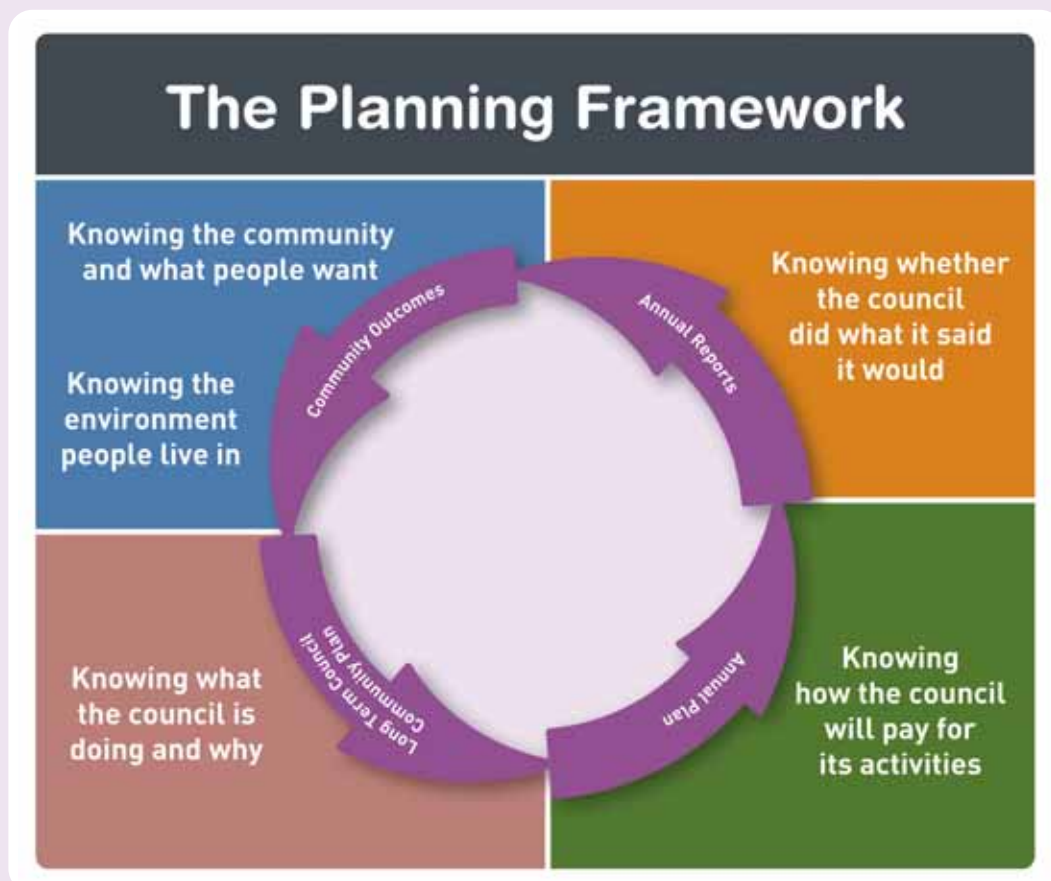
All formal council, council committee and community board meetings are publicly advertised, and people are encouraged to attend. Meetings may be closed, if commercially sensitive or personal issues are to be discussed.

You can obtain information about meeting dates and agendas from your councils' website or by contacting them directly. If you wish to speak at a meeting, you should inform the council before hand.

Full council meetings often involve the councillors voting to approve the quickly on recommendations made by council committees. Attending council committee and community board meetings can be easier to follow, and are where much of the discussion about issues and policies occurs.

Council committee and community board meetings may also allow people to hear more indepth discussions about issues and policies.

How does consultation, planning and decision-making link together?



The chart illustrates how the different steps of consultation, planning and decision-making link together.

What does the law say about how councils should consult their communities?

The Local Government Act 2002 emphasises the importance of consultation and sets out six guiding principles:

- councils must provide anyone who will or may be affected by a decision, or anyone who has an interest in a decision, with reasonable access to relevant information
- these people should also be encouraged to express their views to the council
- people who are invited to present their views to the council should be given clear information about the purpose of the consultation and the scope of the decisions being made
- people who wish to present their views must be given reasonable opportunity to do so
- councils should receive these views with an open mind and give them due consideration when making a decision
- councils should provide people presenting their views with information about the reasons for the final decisions made by the council.

How can I find out about particular council services or policies?

The councils' websites are useful for finding out about council services and facilities, their plans and policies as well as contact email addresses. Otherwise, call your local council.

Is there a code of conduct for councillors?

All councillors must abide by a code of conduct. Codes usually include the need for members to serve in the people's interest, to act with honesty and integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, respect for others and to show leadership. Codes also cover legal requirements, particularly relating to corruption.

Community boards usually adopt a code of conduct based on their city or district council's code.



What legislation governs councils?

There are three key pieces of legislation that govern and guide councils:

- Local Electoral Act 2001 – sets out the processes for the conduct of council elections
- Local Government Act 2002 – sets out the general powers of councils, the community outcomes process, and planning and accountability requirements
- Local Government (Rating) Act 2002 – sets out the powers councils have to raise revenue by rates

Other key acts for councils are:

- Resource Management Act (RMA) 1991 – requires local councils to ensure that effects on the environment are managed in a sustainable way
- Building Act 2004 – controls the building of new houses and alterations to existing ones
- Health Act 1956 – relates to intervention in the cases of certain infectious diseases (this Act is under review)
- Transport Act 1962 – entitles councils to make bylaws regulating traffic and parking
- Reserves Act 1977 – provides for the acquisition of land for reserves, and the classification and management of reserves as well as setting out the aims for the setting aside of reserves
- Dog Control Act 1996 – sets out the powers councils have relating to unregistered dogs, roaming dogs and irresponsible owners.



More information:

See the other info sheets in this series.

Visit the following websites:

Local Councils:

www.localcouncils.govt.nz

The Department of Internal Affairs:

www.dia.govt.nz

Community Outcomes Processes
Information:

www.localcentral.govt.nz

Government Online:

www.newzealand.govt.nz

Local Government New Zealand:

www.lgnz.co.nz

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