

# Greater Wellington Regional Council

## Community Engagement Strategy

April 2007

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### 1. Purpose of this Strategy

The purpose of this strategy is to provide a sensible, agreed framework for Greater Wellington Regional Council's (GW) interactions with its communities and stakeholders.

GW's vision for the region is heavily influenced and informed by community engagement, and it is required to consult and communicate extensively with its constituent communities. Additionally, GW provides a wide range of products and services, most of which involve some sort of engagement with communities.

Such engagement needs to be carefully planned and managed, as it is an essential component of Council processes and services.

### 2. What is community engagement?

"Community engagement" is a generic, inclusive term used to describe the broad range of interactions between people. It can include a variety of approaches, such as one-way communication or information delivery, consultation, involvement and collaboration in decision-making, and empowered action in informal groups or formal partnerships.

This is important because:

- Communities and stakeholders expect us to act in a co-ordinated and consistent way.
- GW can achieve value for money by sharing effort, expertise and results.
- We can avoid consulting the same people on the same issues over and over again.
- We will have a clear picture of what type of involvement takes place, who with and where, and can better monitor and assess the results.

Effective community engagement is GW's lifeblood, and the Council's legitimacy depends on it.

### 3. Community engagement objectives

This strategy aims to ensure that:

- Our communities are better informed
- Greater public understanding, trust and confidence are built in GW and its decision-making.
- Levels of misconception or misinformation are reduced.
- Communities will actively put forward ideas.
- Communities will have a greater commitment to and ownership of GW's programmes.
- GW strengthens and improves the way it interacts with and involves communities in regional decision-making.

- GW will have a better understanding of local needs.
- Issues are identified that may otherwise not have been considered.
- GW establishes and maintains opportunities for Maori to participate in and contribute to its decision-making processes, including considering ways GW may work with Maori to continue enhancing Maori capacity to make this contribution.

#### 4. Principles of community engagement

Greater Wellington's community engagement should be guided by the following five principles:

1. **Communications:** We will keep communities informed of our plans, decisions and actions, and strive to connect with those who are hardest to reach. We will value dialogue and listen hard to what our communities are saying.
2. **Transparency:** We will conduct our dealings openly, honestly and consistently.
3. **Collaboration:** We will work in partnership with communities on matters that are identified as important to their quality of life.
4. **Integrity:** We will promote integrity in the democratic processes of Council.
5. **Inclusiveness:** We will be mindful of the need to incorporate diverse values and interests.

These principles are underpinned by common-sense, good business practice and ethical considerations.

#### 5. Core values of community engagement<sup>1</sup>

1. The public should have a say in decisions about actions that could affect their lives.
2. Community engagement promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
3. Community engagement seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
4. Community engagement seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
5. Community engagement provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
6. Community engagement communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

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<sup>1</sup> Derived from the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2).

## 6. Success measures of effective community engagement

It is important that there are mechanisms to review the effectiveness of any community engagement activities GW undertakes.

Objective	Measured by
Our communities are better informed	Attitudinal surveys and feedback from consultation processes.
Greater public understanding, trust and confidence are built in GW and its decision-making.	Attitudinal surveys and feedback from consultation processes.
Levels of misconception or misinformation are reduced	Feedback from consultation processes, information received from call centres, and analysis of comments published in the media
Communities will actively put forward ideas.	Analysis of quantity and quality of formal submissions and other informal communications received by Council.
Communities will have a greater commitment to and ownership of GW's programmes	Attitudinal surveys and feedback from consultation processes. Participation in social marketing and other behavioural change programmes.
GW strengthens and improves the way it interacts with and involves communities in regional decision-making.	Attitudinal surveys and feedback from consultation processes. Participation in social marketing and other behavioural change programmes.
GW will have a better understanding of local needs	Analysis of feedback and information received from all sources, presented to Councillors and Officers in a timely and effective manner.
Issues are identified that may otherwise not have been considered	Analysis of quantity and quality of formal submissions and other informal communications received by Council.
GW establishes and maintains opportunities for Maori to participate in and contribute to its decision-making processes, including considering ways GW may work with Maori to continue enhancing Maori capacity to make this contribution.	Analysis of feedback and information received by GW from regional iwi.

## **7. Components of Greater Wellington's Community Engagement Strategy**

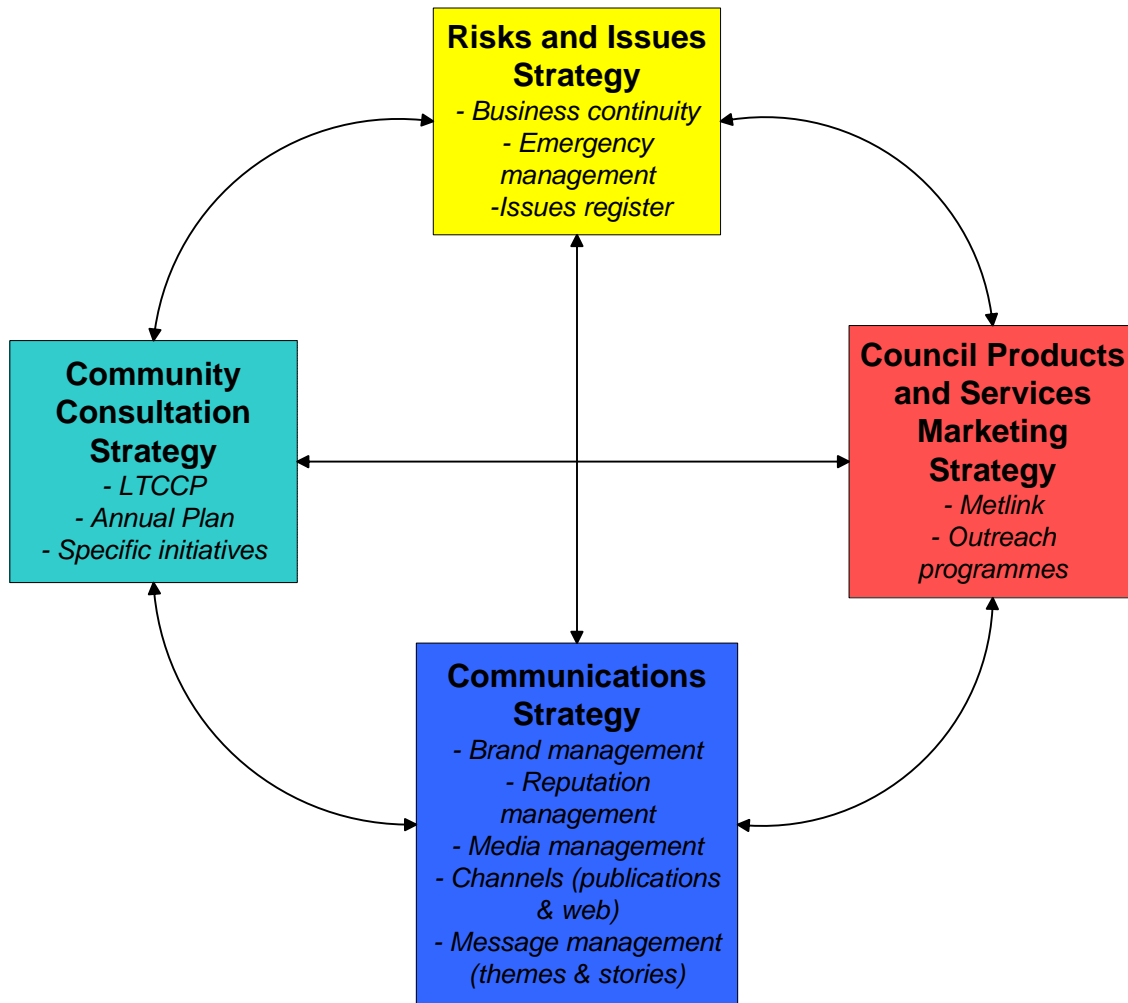
This strategy endeavours to integrate all of GW's relationship building strategies and activities into a consistent framework. It recognises the considerable interaction that exists between the various strands of engagement.

Community engagement at GW comprises the following four major components, each requiring not only its own strategy but also interaction with the other major components:

- **Communications:**
- **Community Consultation:**
- **Risks and Issues:**
- **Marketing Council Products and Services:**

These components are described in more detail below.

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## 7.1 Communications Strategy

GW's reputation and brand are amongst the organisation's most valuable assets. There needs to be a range of policies and procedures developed to ensure that these assets are effectively managed and manager training provided to ensure that these tools are understood and used. This strategy will also outline the communications channels that need to be owned and managed by GW to ensure regular interactive communication with communities and stakeholders (e.g. publications and the Internet).

**This strategy will include:**

- A brand management strategy & policy. Branded identity is an important part of how an organisation manages its reputation and this needs to be scrupulously managed, e.g. brand standards.
- A media management strategy & policy. This will describe processes to be followed when dealing with media, e.g. determining media spokespeople.
- A communications channel management strategy & policy. Communications "channels" include all publications and Internet sites that are owned or published by GW. The purpose of each needs to be clearly described and its strategic purpose understood, e.g. *Elements*.
- Agreed GW themes and stories. These form the basis of the editorial content for flagship publications and also the nature of conversations GW needs to have with its communities and stakeholders, e.g. sustainability.

## 7.2 Community Consultation Strategy

This will include policies and procedures that shape GW's interactions with communities and stakeholders through formal consultation processes. This includes LTCCP and Annual Plan consultation, together with specific ad hoc initiatives or occurrences where formal consultation is required.

**This strategy will include:** Principles, policies and procedures outlining how GW will undertake formal consultation.

## 7.3 Risks and Issues Strategy

Major events that can be anticipated (e.g. catastrophic water supply outage, floods or commuter rail failure) should have management strategies that include public communication plans. Other issues, such as 1080 poison-based pest eradication programmes, should also have communications strategies framed in this context.

**This strategy will include:**

- A reputation risk management strategy & policy. An organisation's reputation can be put at risk by things both foreseeable and unforeseeable. It is important that organisations endeavour to plan in advance for such eventualities.

- Reviewing all current disaster, contingency and business continuity plans for events that may have a public impact. An outcome of this exercise should be to develop a consistency of approach and standard operating procedures.
- Standard strategies and templates.

#### **7.4 Council Products and Service Marketing Strategy**

Greater Wellington residents engage with GW through the everyday Council services and facilities they use. This form of engagement is often at the forefront of what a resident will remember about GW. For this reason, GW seeks service-focused engagement that:

- Results in a positive experience, where excellent service is provided to the resident or visitor.
- Is timely, responsive and accessible to the resident or visitor, ensuring the service meets their needs and expectations.
- Promotes an overall positive image of GW.
- Actively looks for improvement, and is measured against best practice.

GW makes a considerable investment on marketing activities, largely designed to either communicate information or change behaviours. Examples include the Metlink commuter network, and a variety of “outreach” initiatives aimed at groups such as businesses, farmers, teachers and students, trampers and walkers, harbour users, and households. While most of these programmes each has a strategy, there is little integration.

##### **This strategy will include:**

- A strategic overview and integration framework. This should be based on an ideal customer experience and focused on core elements that all GW’s marketing strategies should have in common.
- An advertising and promotion policy and strategy. GW is required to make wise use of public money. This purpose of this strategy is to optimise spending through greater coordination and integration of marketing programmes.
- Integrated communications channels. Many marketing programmes have similar customer groups or target audiences who can be reached through the same channel, which may be a shared one.

## 8. Timeframes

Completion of this strategy requires the development of its four component strategies. These will be completed over the balance of calendar 2007 as follows:

- **Communications Strategy:** By the end of June 2007.
- **Community Consultation Strategy:** By the end of July 2007.
- **Risks and Issues Strategy:** By the end of December 2007.
- **Marketing Council Products and Services Strategy:** By the end of December 2007.