

2. LONG-TERM COUNCIL COMMUNITY PLAN

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The purpose of this report is to brief Board members on the requirements for preparing long-term council community plans proposed by the Local Government Bill now before Parliament, and advise members on the steps that will need to be taken.

BACKGROUND

The Local Government Bill, as introduced into Parliament, proposes significant changes in the way local authorities prepare their annual plans. If the Bill is passed in its present form, councils will have to prepare what is known as a long-term council community plan (LTCCP) once every three years, and a simplified annual plan in the two intervening years. The Bill as presented requires the first LTCCP to be prepared for the year beginning 1 July 2004.

The LTCCP will be a comprehensive statement of council plans and intentions for the subsequent ten years. It must include, among other things:

- A statement of community outcomes and priorities, in terms that can be measured over time
- A statement of the roles the council intends to play in achieving those outcomes
- A statement of how the council will measure the performance of its chosen roles
- A statement of how the council will work with other organisations in achieving those outcomes
- Detailed financial forecasts and projections for the ten years covered by the LTCCP

The annual plan for the two intervening years will be much simpler than the present annual plan. It must include, among other things:

- A budget for the coming year
- An explanation of any changes from the plans published in the current LTCCP.

A key change proposed by the Bill is the requirement to identify community outcomes and priorities. These will replace current strategic objectives. Instead of forming strategic objectives, councils will have to identify a set of community outcomes and priorities. Once this is done, councils will need to decide what their roles will be in furthering those outcomes and priorities. For example, if a council identifies a high standard of public health as a community outcome, a role for itself would be to provide potable drinking water. If it identifies high standards of personal safety as a community outcome, roles it could choose include maintaining a high standard of civil defence preparedness and working with the police to reduce traffic accidents. The final step is to prepare performance measures and budgets for the roles the council intends to pursue.

Although all this may sound rather technical and prosaic, it will have a major impact on the functioning of local government over the longer term. As a briefing paper from Local Government New Zealand puts it:

"This is a big change in thinking. We are being asked to move from being core service providers to being community leaders. We are being asked to look into areas of our community we have never looked at before. We are being asked to work with government and other local agencies in partnership. We are being asked to take the role of leaders in every aspect of our community's lives and to deliver what is best for our community."

"Where does it start and end? Well, that is pretty much up to each council to decide."

The Bill prescribes the process for doing all this in some detail. There will be in effect a five-phase process for preparing a Long-Term Council Community Plan:

1. Identify a set of community outcomes and priorities. This phase must include collaborating with "other bodies capable of influencing either the identification or promotion of community outcomes and priorities"(S73). Examples of "other bodies" include Government departments, private sector organisations such as Federated Farmers, charitable and community organisations, Maori organisations, etc.
2. Provide the public with an opportunity to make submissions on the community outcomes and priorities.

3. Decide on the role(s) the Council will have in furthering the community outcomes and priorities. The set of community outcomes and priorities, and the roles the Council proposes to choose for itself, will subsequently be included in the Long-Term Council Community Plan.
4. Prepare the Long-Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) itself, based on the roles chosen in Phase 3. This phase will not be dissimilar to the way the Annual Plan is currently prepared, including processes for public submissions, although the LTCCP will have to disclose considerably more information than the present Annual Plan.
5. Publish the LTCCP using the special consultative procedure.

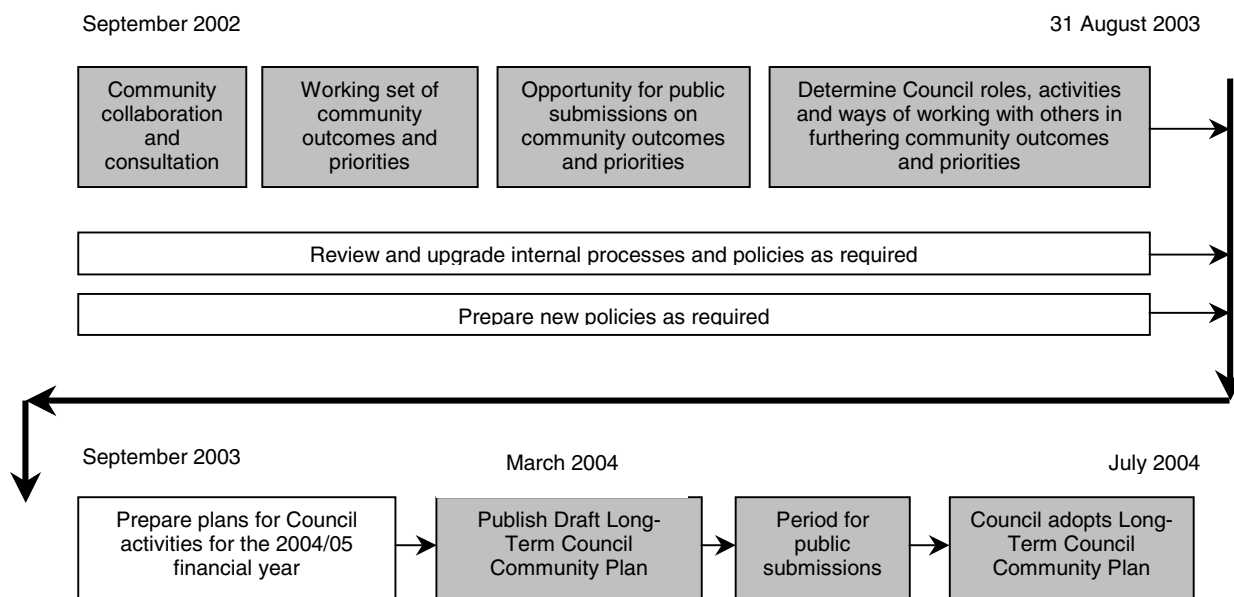
There will be two broad streams of work to prepare the first LTCCP, one largely externally focused, and the other largely internal.

The external stream will be the work required to achieve phases 1-3 above, that is, to work with other agencies to arrive at a set of community outcomes and priorities, to identify the roles the Council wishes to pursue itself, and "how the Council will work with other local and regional organisations, Maori, central government, non-governmental organisations and the private sector to further the outcomes identified". (Sch8,S1)

The internal stream will be the work required to bring our internal processes and procedures up to the standards proposed in the Bill. Fortunately, the current systems and processes already reflect, or are already being upgraded to reflect, the good practices contained in the Bill, so the work in this stream may not be too onerous. Staff have already begun work on this stream.

TIMELINE

The following timeline is based on the present wording of the Bill:



(The shaded boxes refer to the external stream of work identified previously. The unshaded boxes represent the internal work required to bring policies and processes up to standard, and complete the necessary plans and budgets. Elected members will be involved in the development of policies and plans.)

ROLE OF COMMUNITY BOARDS

At its meeting on 16 September, the Strategy and Finance Committee adopted the following recommendation for recommending to the Council:

"That Community Boards be invited to consider ways of collaborating with their respective communities prior to their making their views on community outcomes and priorities known to the Council."

The next step, then, is for the Board to consider who it will need to collaborate with when it comes to considering community outcomes and priorities, and to work out how best to proceed.

Community Boards already have a number of existing processes (such as "Planning Statement-Key Issues", SCAP, and other on-going linkages with the community) which could assist the formulation of thinking on community issues and priorities to feed into the overall development of the LTCCP for the Council. There may also be other techniques which could be used to engage the community and gather input for this exercise.

In broad terms the timing would require input from the Boards to be received by March 2003, with this input being consolidated and considered by the Strategy and Finance Committee in March, leading to a round of public consultation shortly thereafter.

Staff

Recommendation: That the Board take the opportunity to make its views on community outcomes and priorities known to the Council, utilising already existing processes, or any extended collaboration with the community.