Community Governance & Decision-Making

Activity Management Plan 2021-31

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Document control

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this Community Governance and Decision-Making Activity Management Plan is to provide supporting documentation behind this non-asset activity to ensure a useful planning and risk management tool is in place for all of the Council's operations.

This Plan intends to:
- demonstrate responsible management of the Community Governance and Decision-Making activity
- communicate and justify funding requirements
- comply with statutory requirements
- ensure a sound business continuity plan is in place
- define realistic work programmes and demonstrate practical work flows.

2. Key issues for Democracy

The following issues are relevant and directly impact on the Community Governance and Decision-Making function of Council:

- Reduced numbers of engagement and participation – this is an international trend for local government bodies throughout the developed world. Community apathy remains problematic and requires councils to look at alternative mechanisms for engaging with their communities, which incorporate the trend towards using social media and online polls or petitions to deliver key messages to elected members.

- Increased community expectations for engagement, communications, grant funding and responding to residents' concerns – conversely, despite the decline in participation from the public, the community's expectations for councils to address any gaps in local services increases the more central government reduces its funding or support for these services. With modern technology, public expectations also increase due to their increased levels of awareness of what is possible, and for rural councils this is exacerbated by the desire of the public to have the same levels of service provided in metropolitan areas with a larger rating base.

- Residents getting enough information in a timely, relevant and accurate manner – this is a constant pressure for all public bodies with the increase use of social media and the issues with misinformation undermining democratic processes. This requires Council to adapt to the changing technology in a proactive way by looking at new ways to engage with the public. With over 87% of NZ's total population now online, and 70% who use the internet daily (and almost all of those under 40yrs online), Council needs to rely less upon print media and look to develop further its online services.

- Increased legislation that relegates more responsibility to local government – central government mandates and drivers change regularly, resulting in legislative changes in laws pertaining to local bodies such as the Local Government Act 2002 and Resource Management Act 1991. These legislative changes often require an adaptive response from councils to either change or increase their levels of service, and can heavily influence the decision-making of elected members.

3. Community Governance & Decision-Making

3.1. What we do

Council undertakes a wide range of planning and decision-making processes associated with its local democratic functions. It is important these are undertaken in as open and inclusive ways as possible. Council meetings, public consultations and community engagement provide the community with the opportunity to participate appropriately in Council's decision-making processes.

Council seeks to provide quality planning, consultation and decision-making that promotes good quality local democracy and enables our community to participate appropriately in local government processes.

Key functions of this activity are:

- Council, committee and community board meetings and elected member support
- Representation and election processes
- Elected member capacity development and leadership training
- Provision of advice to elected members and staff on governance matters and understanding the governance and decision-making framework
- Strategic planning including the Long Term Plan, Annual Plan, community outcomes and activity-specific strategic plans
- Council corporate policy and bylaw development and implementation
- Reporting on business performance through the Annual Report, Bi-annual Reports and Annual Residents' Survey
- Monitoring and reporting programmes on key information relevant for the community
- Engaging with communities on Council's planning documents and proposals
- Supporting Reserve Boards
- Provision of information to the public, news media and stakeholders on council activities, including decision-making, public consultation and engagement, changes in council services, management of statutory processes, financial performance, and civil defence and emergency management.
- Designing and leading engagement and consultation activities with Ashburton District residents, including the Long-term Plan and Annual Plan consultations
- Provision of funding and advice for community initiatives and community organisations to enable them to achieve their objectives. Grants are predominately for 'not for profit' community and voluntary groups working for the benefit of Ashburton District communities.

3.2. Why we do it

A core purpose of local government is "to enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities". This purpose implies that local government will be actively involved in building communities and fostering public participation in democratic processes.

Council has an important role in providing leadership for the community and representing the interests of the community at the local, regional, and national levels. In doing this, Council looks to provide quality planning, consultation, and decision-making to enable our community to participate effectively in local government processes. It means this requires support for the elected members and the processes that underpin decision-making to ensure they are effective, open, transparent, and democratically accountable to the community.

The Community Governance and Decision-Making activity helps promote the wellbeing of our community so that our communities:

- are informed about Council's activities and have the opportunity to express their views on Council's proposals. Effective community engagement builds trust and understanding in the Council's decision making, while also increasing the Council's awareness of issues in the community; and
- receive funding and advice to assist and support the development of communities and the work not-for-profit organisations undertake within our communities.

4. Goal for Community Governance & Decision-Making

Council's main goal is to ensure residents are included and have a voice. Relevant strategic objectives are to work with the community, engage in meaningful conversations, and to lead the community with clear and rational decision-making that is based on robust monitoring, research and analysis.

In order to improve and increase citizens' understanding and participation in Council decision-making processes, there is an ongoing and increasing need for the community and media to have access to all relevant information and materials at all stages of decision-making. This means Council needs to make all its processes accessible using the advances of technology such as live-streaming meetings, advance the progress of online voting, and incorporate options provided for in the Local Government Amendment Act 2014 for remote participation in decision-making and hearings proceedings.

Our principles

These are the guiding principles for how we will function and deliver activities and services to the community.

- Plan and provide fit for purpose services.

- Work with the community and engage in meaningful conversations.

- Lead the community with clear and rational decision-making.

- Represent the district on regional / national issues and partner with others when needed.

Contributions to Community Outcomes

Community Governance & Decision-Making contributes to the following Community Outcomes as shown below:

	Residents are included and have a voice	A district of great spaces and places	A prosperous economy based on innovation and opportunity	A balanced and sustainable environment
Democracy	✓			
Community Grants & Funding	✓	✓	✓	✓

5. *Levels of service and performance measures for Community Governance & Decision-Making*

5.1.   What are we trying to achieve

Council's levels of service in Community Governance & Decision-Making are:

- for the community to be informed of, and involved in, local decision making;

- to ensure the community's views are taken fully into account for effective governance by elected members; and,

- community-led projects are well supported to enhance community development and wellbeing.

5.2. How will we know if we are achieving it

What we're aiming for: To engage in meaningful conversations and lead the community with clear and rational decision-making that is based on robust monitoring research and analysis.

WHAT WE'RE WORKING TOWARDS (Levels of service)	HOW WE'LL MEASURE PROGRESS (Performance measures)	HOW WE'RE PERFORMING NOW (2019/20 results)	WHAT WE'RE AIMING FOR			
			2021/21	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25 – 2030/31
The community to be informed of, and involved in, local decision making	Residents are satisfied that the Council provides opportunities to have their say.	86%	80%	80%	80%	80%
	Residents are satisfied with the quality of information about Council activities and events.	92%	90%	90%	90%	90%
The community's views are taken fully into account for effective governance by elected members	Residents are satisfied with the performance of the Mayor and councillors.	78%	80%	80%	80%	80%

What we're aiming for: To support other organisations in the community in areas that are far better serviced by these groups than what we could do.

WHAT WE'RE WORKING TOWARDS *(Levels of service)*	HOW WE'LL MEASURE PROGRESS (Performance measures)	HOW WE'RE PERFORMING NOW (2019/20 results)	WHAT WE'RE AIMING FOR			
			2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25 – 2030/31
Community-led projects are well supported to enhance community development and wellbeing	Residents are satisfied that the Council provides opportunities for grants and funding to support community-led projects.	96%	90%	90%	90%	90%

6. *Changes made for Community Governance & Decision-Making*

No significant change has been made to the core function of Community Governance & Decision-Making.

7. *Key projects for Community Governance & Decision-Making*

The Representation Review is a legislative requirement that occurs every six years and is scheduled to happen in 2024 and 2030. There will also be the triennial local body elections held in 2022, 2025, 2028 and 2031.

The new library and administration building, set to open in 2022, will herald a new era for governance in the district. While Council adopted the livestreaming of Council and standing committee meetings and hearings in 2019, the new building will allow for increased participatory processes. With advances in technology, this will also require the consideration of incorporating different options to enable remote participation in meetings and hearings by elected members and citizens alike.

If the national rollout of e-voting occurs in the future, Council will engage in the planning and implementation of the electronic voting system, as appropriate for local body elections.

8. *Management of activity for Community Governance & Decision-Making*

8.1.   Programmed actions years 1-3

2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Annual Residents' Survey	Annual Residents' Survey	Triennial elections
Long-Term Plan 2021-31	Annual Plan	Annual Residents' Survey
Annual Report	Annual Report	Annual Plan
Bylaw, policy & strategy reviews	Bylaw, policy & strategy reviews	Annual Report
		Bylaw, policy & strategy reviews

8.2.   Future directions for years 4 – 10

2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31
Annual Residents' Survey Long-Term Plan 2024-34 Annual Plan Annual Report Bylaw, policy & strategy reviews	Representation Review Annual Residents' Survey Annual Plan Annual Report Bylaw, policy & strategy reviews	Triennial elections Annual Residents' Survey Annual Plan Annual Report Bylaw, policy & strategy reviews	Annual Residents' Survey Long-Term Plan 2027-37 Annual Plan Annual Report Bylaw, policy & strategy reviews	Annual Residents' Survey Annual Plan Annual Report Bylaw, policy & strategy reviews	Triennial elections Annual Residents' Survey Annual Plan Annual Report Bylaw, policy & strategy reviews	Annual Residents' Survey Long-Term Plan 2030-40 Annual Report Bylaw, policy & strategy reviews	Representation Review Annual Residents' Survey Annual Plan Annual Report Bylaw, policy & strategy reviews

9. Costs for Community Governance & Decision-Making

For Community Governance & Decision-Making

	Annual Plan 2020/21 $000	Year 1 2021/22 $000	Year 2 2022/23 $000	Year 3 2023/24 $000	Year 4 2024/25 $000	Year 5 2025/26 $000	Year 6 2026/27 $000	Year 7 2027/28 $000	Year 8 2028/29 $000	Year 9 2029/30 $000	Year 10 2030/31 $000
Operating Funding											
Sources of operating funding											
General rate, UAGC*, rates penalties	4,231	4,135	4,382	4,673	4,911	5,115	5,270	5,386	5,575	5,755	5,889
Targeted rates	98	89	146	150	152	156	160	164	169	174	179
Subsidies and grants for operating purposes	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fees and charges	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Internal charges and overheads recovered	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Local authorities fuel tax, fines, infringement fees and other receipts	8	21	73	23	23	79	24	25	85	26	27
Total sources of operating funding	4,360	4,245	4,601	4,846	5,085	5,350	5,454	5,575	5,829	5,955	6,095
Applications of operating funding											
Payments to staff and suppliers	2,238	2,531	2,730	2,575	2,633	2,827	2,758	2,827	2,985	2,917	2,994
Finance costs	85	59	57	54	51	49	46	44	41	38	36
Internal charges and overheads	1,888	2,432	2,669	2,834	2,842	2,929	3,089	3,117	3,209	3,376	3,424
Other operating funding applications	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total applications of operating funding	4,211	5,022	5,455	5,464	5,526	5,805	5,893	5,988	6,235	6,331	6,453
Surplus/(deficit) of operating funding	149	(777)	(854)	(618)	(441)	(455)	(439)	(413)	(405)	(377)	(358)

	Annual Plan 2020/21 $000	Year 1 2021/22 $000	Year 2 2022/23 $000	Year 3 2023/24 $000	Year 4 2024/25 $000	Year 5 2025/26 $000	Year 6 2026/27 $000	Year 7 2027/28 $000	Year 8 2028/29 $000	Year 9 2029/30 $000	Year 10 2030/31 $000
Capital Funding											
Sources of capital funding											
Subsidies and grants for capital expenditure	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Development and financial contributions	490	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Increase/(decrease) in debt	(149)	(117)	(117)	(117)	(117)	(117)	(117)	(117)	(117)	(117)	(117)
Gross proceeds from sale of assets	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lump sum contributions	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other dedicated capital funding	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total sources of capital funding	341	(117)	(117)	(117)	(117)	(117)	(117)	(117)	(117)	(117)	(117)
Application of capital funding											
Capital expenditure											
- to meet additional demand	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
- to improve the level of service	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
- to replace existing assets	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Increase/(decrease) in reserves	490	(894)	(971)	(735)	(558)	(572)	(556)	(530)	(522)	(494)	(475)
Increase/(decrease) in investments	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total applications of capital funding	490	(894)	(971)	(735)	(558)	(572)	(556)	(530)	(522)	(494)	(475)
Surplus/(deficit) of capital funding	(149)	777	854	618	441	455	439	413	405	377	358
Funding Balance	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Expenditure by activity

	Annual Plan 2020/21 $000	Year 1 2021/22 $000	Year 2 2022/23 $000	Year 3 2023/24 $000	Year 4 2024/25 $000	Year 5 2025/26 $000	Year 6 2026/27 $000	Year 7 2027/28 $000	Year 8 2028/29 $000	Year 9 2029/30 $000	Year 10 2030/31 $000
Democracy	2,651	3,106	3,468	3,516	3,539	3,771	3,808	3,854	4,107	4,146	4,215
Community Grants and Funding	1,455	1,678	1,742	1,785	1,822	1,865	1,911	1,956	2,006	2,060	2,110
Water Zone Committee	196	238	245	163	166	169	174	177	122	125	128
Total operating expenditure	4,211	5,022	5,455	5,464	5,526	5,805	5,893	5,988	6,235	6,331	6,453
less depreciation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total applications of operating funding	4,211	5,022	5,455	5,464	5,526	5,805	5,893	5,988	6,235	6,331	6,453

10. Key legislation / industry standards and relationship with other planning / policy documents for Community Governance & Decision-Making

10.1. Legislation impacting on Community Governance & Decision-Making

- **Local Government Act 2002** defines the purpose of local government as being:

  (a) to enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities; and

  (b) to meet the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of communities in the present and for the future

- **Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987** defines the purposes of the Act are:

  (a) To increase progressively the availability to the public of official information held by local authorities, and to promote the open and public transaction of business at meetings of local authorities, in order –

    i. To enable more effective participation by the public in the actions and decisions of local authorities; and

    ii. To promote the accountability of local authority members and officials, -

  and thereby to enhance respect for the law and to promote good local government in NZ

  (b) To provide for proper access by each person to official information relating to that person; and

  (c) To protect official information and the deliberations of local authorities to the extent consistent with the public interest and the preservation of personal privacy.

- **Reserves Act 1977** allows the Minister to delegate the responsibility for the control and management of reserves to a local authority or board as appointed.

- Local Electoral Act 2001
- Privacy Act 1993
- Resource Management Act 1991
- Building Act 2004
- Public Bodies Contracts Act 1959
- Public Bodies Leases Act 1969
- Local Government (Rating) Act 2002

10.2. Council's strategic planning documents and policies linked to Community Governance & Decision-Making

Activity Management Plans have strong links with many of the Council's other policies, strategies and plans, especially the Long-Term Plan which, in turn, is linked with the Council's Annual Plan and Annual Report.

The following diagram illustrates the relationship that Activity Management Plans have with other policies, strategies, and plans. The relationship is not to be confused with the hierarchy that exists with statutory obligations and other plans.
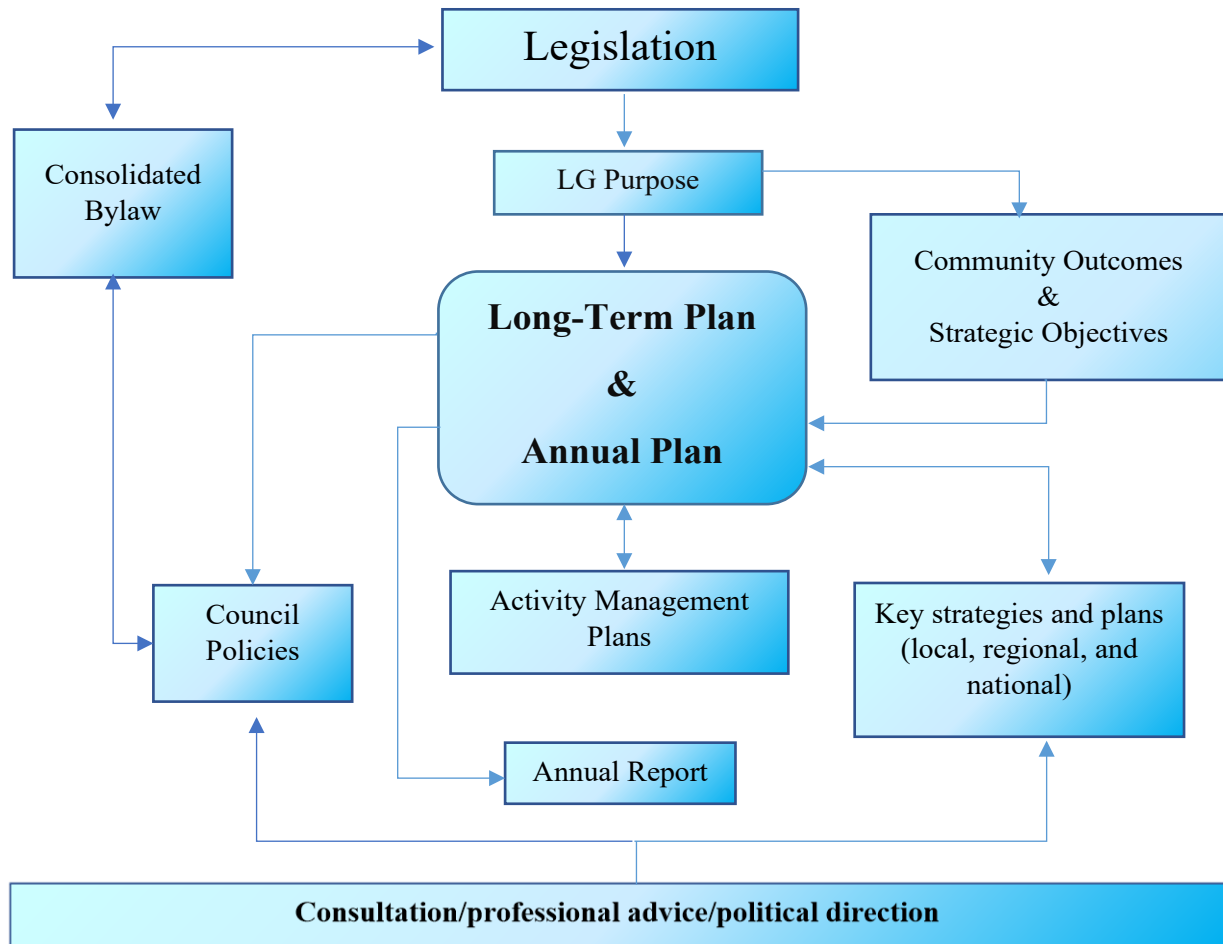
11. Risk management for Community Governance & Decision-Making

The following key risks and mitigation measures are identified:

Risk	Mitigation measure
Recommendations in strategies, policies or plans may have cost implications beyond business as usual	Capital and operational costs that arise are considered as part of Council's long-term planning and annual plan budget prioritisation process
Misalignment with other strategic partners' policies and plans (including iwi)	Communicate regularly and work closely with strategic partners to ensure policies and plans are aligned; ensure strategic partners have the opportunity to give their views to Council either through submissions or deputations
Public condemnation of strategies, policies and plans	Ongoing public engagement and consultation throughout the development of all strategies, policies and plans
Government legislative changes put	Monitoring the political environment to ensure adequate lead-in time

Risk	Mitigation measure
additional pressure on Council's ability to deliver services	for any proposed legislation changes; take part in all Parliamentary submission processes where appropriate
Increased demand for Council funding for community projects and within the voluntary sector due to reductions in central government funding	Increase the community's understanding of the link between levels of service (i.e. funding) and rates affordability through communication; CRT provides advice and direction to applicants and actively supports applications to other funding sources for community projects
Lack of reliable information leading to the inability to produce accurate policy, plans or advice	Careful monitoring and analysis of the numerous sources of data to ensure accuracy and validity of sources; work closely with other organisations to get reliable information
Policy and planning advice – resources only allow the for the levels of service outlined with limited capacity for new work that may arise	Assess requests or demands for new work against Council's strategic objectives and legislative priorities; present options to senior management and Council to take direction or seek additional resources through annual plan budget prioritisation process
Civil defence emergency requires prolonged or significant resource for the operation of the recovery office	Business as usual can be scaled down or suspended to apply the necessary resources to recovery activities
Lack of information or opportunity for the public to feel informed about Council activities and decisions	Communication and engagement plans are completed for all major projects and decisions, with a wider range of options being deployed to improve the quality and reach of Council's engagement with the community
Consultation fatigue – members of the community feel over-consulted and cynical about Council decision-making processes	LGA 2014 amendments give the Council greater opportunity to rationalise the number of SCPs and formal consultations it needs to take; process improvements and adopting new technology (such as the Antenno app) may provide better mechanisms to engage with people who aren't normally communicating with Council
Increased demands on resources due to the high levels of social media discussion that can undermine democratic processes	Monitoring of social media channels to anticipate potential issues that can impact on Democracy (such as the complaints against Council decisions etc.); investigate the process of receiving submissions through social media

12. *Stakeholders and consultation for Community Governance & Decision-Making*

There are a number of key stakeholders relevant to the activity. These have been identified below:

- Elected Members
- Management team
- Council staff
- residents and ratepayers
- the community
- neighbouring territorial authorities
- community groups
- local agencies and support groups
- government agencies
- iwi
- Environment Canterbury
- industry groups
- sector groups
- Canterbury Mayoral Forum

After each Council election cycle, all councils in the Canterbury Region must enter into an agreement (the Triennial Agreement) containing the protocols for communication and co-ordination between them for the next three years. In particular all the councils must include a statement identifying the process for consultation on proposals for new Regional Council activities.

The Canterbury Mayoral Forum is a forum that has arisen out of the triennial agreement. The Forum provides a venue for collective discussion on how to maximise the well-being of the regional community through taking a "One Canterbury Voice" approach, where appropriate; through developing a vision for Canterbury; through acting as a collective voice where appropriate; through engaging with Central Government, iwi and key stakeholders and through seeking efficiencies in the provision of local government services..

13. Improvement programme for Community Governance & Decision-Making

13.1. Process overview

There are no assets associated with the activity; however, if the rollout of e-voting occurs, then there will need to be resource dedicated to the implementation of that within the Ashburton District.

Community engagement through social media will be an area of focus for improving Council's public participation results; this may include also investigating better tools for online submissions for Special Consultative Procedures and other consultation/submission processes across Council.

13.2. Training

There is a training budget allocated for elected representatives for all topics associated with local government and good governance. It is anticipated this training may escalate whenever there is a significant number of newly elected members due to the loss of institutional knowledge when senior councillors retire.

There will be the need to upskill officers and elected members in the various social media options and technology advancements should remote accessibility become a feature of Council meetings.

13.3. Improvement actions

There are no improvement actions planned for core Community Governance & Decision-Making activities outside of any possible legislative or process changes to the electoral system on a national basis, or if technological advancements or enhancements are considered for meeting processes with the new building.

Business performance monitoring will be enhanced to improve the organisation's reporting on its performance measures.