

Information About City Councils

When addressing your local City Council, be clear and concise.

Don't clutter your request with information that is not essential to your main message.

- (1) describes the situation,
 - (2) suggests what is needed, and
 - (3) explains why it is need
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How Decisions are Made; The Council Planning and Consultation Processes

- + Local Authority Planning Cycle
- + Community Outcomes Process
- + Long Term Council Community Plans
- + Annual Plan
- + Consultation On Policies
- + Annual Report

The Local Government Act 2002 gives councils wider powers than previous local government laws. These powers are limited by –

- + The purpose of local government.
- + Transparency and accountability requirements.
- + Other specific provisions in the Local Government Act – including requirements to listen to the concerns and suggestions of community members.
- + Provisions in other Acts.

Local authority planning cycle

There is a robust planning process demanded by the Local Government Act 2002 (part 6). This starts with community consultation to determine the community's needs and wants (called community outcomes).

Councils then develop a plan showing which outcomes it can work with and how it will do so. Councils are not obliged to take up everything raised but must address the most important issues and aspirations.

Under the Local Government Act 2002 councils must prepare Long Term Council Community Plans every three years, and annual plans in the other two years. A key input into the 2006/07 LTCCPs is the community outcomes process.

Community outcomes process

Community outcomes are the particular future or state of affairs valued by each community.

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Councils facilitate the identification of these outcomes, which guide council planning and inform central government and others about community needs. Councils are not bound by community outcomes, but must report on whether they are contributing to the achievement of community outcomes, and how.

A key concept in this process of understanding communities and setting goals for achieving community outcomes is 'well-being'. The way well-being is defined locally depends on factors such as personal values, culture, societal norms and world view, but it generally encompasses secure livelihood, health, safety, happiness and fulfilment.

Councils also have to report on the community outcomes in the LTCCP and monitor them on a regular three yearly-cycle.

Accountability & How City Councils Operate; Long Term Council Community Plans

The LTCCP is the key long term planning tool for councils.

Its purpose is to –

- Describe the council's activities and how they will achieve community outcomes.

- Provide integrated decision-making and co-ordination of the resources, as set out in section 93 (6)(c) of the Act.

- Provide a long-term focus.

- Show accountability to the community.

- Provide an opportunity for participation by the public in council decision-making processes.

LTCCPs must –

- Describe the community outcomes and how they were identified.

- Outline how the council intends to contribute to the outcomes.

- Describe how the community outcomes relate to other strategic planning documents.

- Describe how the council will work with other organisations to further the community outcomes.

- State what measures will be used to assess and monitor progress.

The LTCCP must also include information on activities, goods or services provided by a council, and specific funding and financial management policies and information.

LTCCPs outline all things a council does and how they fit together. They show what will be done over the plan's 10 year period, why the council is doing things, and their costs.

People can express their views on the LTCCPs when they are reviewed every three years. In addition as part of their LTCCP development process, councils may talk with other parties about how they can help promote identified local outcomes in which those parties have an interest.

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The first LTCCPs under the Local Government Act 2002 were due to be complete by July 2006.

Annual Plan

The annual plan process focuses on year-to-year budgets. Councils prepare an annual plan in each of the two years between LTCCP reviews, and set out in them what the council plans to do in the next 12 months to move towards achieving its goals. These plans are adopted before the start of the financial year in July, following a submission process.

Consultation on policies

Councils are required to establish consultative processes around their policy-making activities which reflect the intent of the Local Government Act 2002 and are in line with goals for community well-being.

Annual Report

The annual report tells the community whether the council has done what the LTCCP said the council intended to do. The report also details what has been spent and what progress toward achieving community outcomes. Annual reports must be adopted by 31 October each year.