



Friday 11 April
Turua in the future

My vision is a major wharf at Turua. The river will have a boat going up and down for tourists. New shops will be made and Turua will be in big bold letters for every-one to see. There will be more football fields they will bulldoze buildings and schools so we can have more farms and less urban mess and they should make farms not as expensive because lots of people can afford them like Mr. Turua should be like a better connection with the local radio and the local community and this Turua should have parking out in the Wharua so people could have their boats up on the right next to their houses and people can just walk outside and see on their boat and go fishing. Turua should have a rugby stadium with a diving roof of the top right next to the Wharua river should be real cheap to get in since its right next to the wharua people could come in quite late to watch and watch the game.

Nathan Smythe
Age 11, Turua School

Consultation and Decision-making

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COUNCIL'S COMMITMENT TO DIALOGUE

The Local Government Act 2002 establishes principles and procedures that Council must apply when undertaking consultation processes. However, it does not define what consultation is.

Consultation is dialogue that precedes decision-making. Consultation is a genuine exchange of information, points of view and options for decision between affected and interested people and decision-makers before a decision is made.

Consultation is not:

- Solely providing information;
- Always about reaching agreement or consensus;
- Always about negotiation.

The Council has adopted a policy on consultation to provide guidance on future consultation initiatives. This policy identifies:

- Council's commitment to consultation;
- Types of consultation;
- The Special Consultative Procedure;
- Statutory compliance;
- Consultation processes;
- Areas where Council may exercise its discretion.

Council takes pride in the way it communicates with the public. As an organisation responsible to the communities it serves, Hauraki District Council is committed to ongoing and effective consultation and as such Council has a Consultation Policy more extensive than that required under the Local Government Act 2002.

The consultation requirements of the Act do not take anything away from the decision-making roles of elected members. Rather, they foster the opportunity for elected members to make informed decisions on behalf of

their community, and Council welcomes input from the people of Hauraki District so that it can adequately reflect their views in its decision-making.

Council's commitment to consultation demonstrates its wish to provide opportunities for the community and stakeholders to actively participate in deciding the future well-being of the District. The weekly 'HDC News' page in the local paper, the Hauraki Herald, is a good way of regularly keeping the community informed on what is happening within Council. Regular forums on topics of interest are held to inform particular interest groups on 'best practice' methods or recent legislative changes. Council's website www.hauraki-dc.govt.nz is also a good avenue for communication and known to be a simple, effective and informative site.

HOW COUNCIL COMMUNICATES WITH THE COMMUNITY?

Council communicates regularly with its residents, ratepayers and the public in a number of ways. The internet, weekly newspaper publications, and a weekly report to the local radio station by the Mayor are all examples of direct communication that Council offers.

The Hauraki District Council website, www.hauraki-dc.govt.nz, contains regularly updated information on Council's activities such as swimming pool opening hours, plans, policies and strategies, explanations on how to read water meters, situations vacant, upcoming information, and the dates for refuse collection. Generic information is provided on the website, such as key visitor attractions, District statistics, and maps of the District. There is also specific rating information for properties and information regarding library services.

A news page is published weekly in the Hauraki Herald. This page contains public notices, notification of upcoming Council meetings, notification of plans, policies and strategies to be consulted on, articles on current happenings within the District, and discussions and information on events and projects Council is involved with.

The Local Government Act 2002 states that Councils must consult on any decision or other matter that is considered to be significant. A summary of, and a full version of the proposed project or plan must be made available to

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the public and be publicly notified. A minimum of 30 days is to be allowed for submissions to be received on the proposal, and hearings must be set to allow submitters to present their submissions in person.

The Local Government Official Information and Meeting Act 1987 states the basis on which the public can require Council to provide information it holds on any matter. While there are a limited number of restrictions relating to personal privacy, commercial sensitivity, legal privilege and similar matters, generally most information held by the Council is available to the public. Council can recover any cost that occurs when making information available.

Council will also be producing and distributing a newsletter with the first instalment of the rate demands.

Hauraki District Council has published a Local Governance Statement. The Local Governance Statement is a document that is a collection of information about the processes through which Council engages with the community, how Council makes decisions and how the community can influence those processes. A Local Governance Statement supports the purpose of local government by promoting local democracy and by providing the community with information on ways to influence local democratic process and decision-making.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Council will undertake a survey of district residents and ratepayers every three years to assist it in its decision-making processes.

Without limiting the actual contents of any survey the purposes include:

- Identifying satisfaction levels with Community Outcomes;
- Measuring progress towards achievement of Community Outcomes;
- Measuring satisfaction with levels of services provided by the Council;
- Seeking public opinion on future projects or issues.

In a number of cases the same questions will be asked in each survey to enable the measurement of trends over a period of time, particularly in relation to satisfaction levels.

HOW WILL COUNCIL WORK WITH MAORI?

The Local Government Act 2002 places additional responsibilities on Council to consult with Maori and to involve Maori in decision-making processes. It also encourages Council to assist Maori to take part in local government processes.

Council has identified seven Iwi groups as having Tangata Whenua status within the District. It also acknowledges some Maori in the District do not have Tangata Whenua status but as 'visitors' (taurahere) are included in these responsibilities.

Council is actively encouraging the development of additional Memoranda of Partnership with Iwi groups and will, during the course of this Hauraki Community Plan, seek to work with Maori on fostering and developing Maori involvement in local government.

Council will be considering:

- Identifying matters and areas of interest to Hauraki Iwi;
- Consultation;
- Capacity building of Maori to take part in decision-making processes;
- Provision of information;
- Timetable for development of initiatives.

Iwi liaison has been identified as a separate activity on page 90.

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IWI LIAISON FORUM

Council is currently in ongoing dialogue with Tangata Whenua considering the establishment of an Iwi Liaison Forum. All parties are hoping to develop a mechanism where the opportunity for discussion, dialogue and ongoing exchange of views can be fostered and encouraged.

Council acknowledges its responsibility under the Local Government Act 2002 to:

- Have continuing consultation with Tangata Whenua;
- Consider options for capacity building of Tangata Whenua to better enable their participation in decision-making processes.

The Forum is seen as a potentially valuable mechanism for furthering these relationships.

SUMMARY OF DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

Section 14(1)(a)(i) of the Local Government Act 2002 requires local authorities to transparently show the reasoning behind why a decision has been made. There are numerous legislative requirements a local authority must take account of and these include:

- Present and future community interests and needs;
- Community well-being;
- The ability to sustain future development;
- Opportunity for Maori to contribute to decision-making processes.

Hauraki District Council has implemented a decision-making framework to ensure all decisions are made in a democratically accountable manner. This framework guides the extent of consideration a decision requires and is designed to ensure that community, staff and elected members have a consistent and thorough understanding of each stage in the decision making process.

Some decisions as demonstrated by the framework can not be made unless 'explicitly provided for' in the Hauraki Community Plan. These include decisions to significantly alter an intended level of service for a significant activity, and a decision to transfer ownership or control of a strategic asset, or to construct, replace or abandon a strategic asset.

Those decisions that do not fall into the above category, yet are considered by management and Council to require a thorough transparent reporting process but do not trigger the Significance Policy, are subject to an extensive but less rigorous process e.g. if the Special Consultative Procedure is required when new or amended policy is being considered or when capital projects or minor changes in Levels of Service are being considered by Council.

Operational decisions will generally not be subject to these strategic decision-making processes as they are the responsibility of the Chief Executive.

A copy of the complete decision-making framework is available on Council's website www.hauraki-dc.govt.nz and can be obtained by contacting Council on 07 862 8609.