

Future for Local Government roadshow: what we heard

Summary of feedback from the Taituarā Future for Local Government
roadshow 16 February to 1 March 2022

June 2022



Introduction

Taituarā — Local Government Professionals has been listening to the voices of local government professionals across Aotearoa New Zealand in anticipation of the Future for Local Government Review Panel's consultation with the local government sector in late 2022.

One of the ways we have done this is through our Future of Local Government Roadshow which took place from 16 February to 1 March 2022. This document summarises what we heard from council kaimahi.

Our discussion examined participants' views on future Council roles and functions via these question prompts:

- What could Councils of the future look like?
- What is in place that can be built on?
- What are the biggest barriers and solutions?
- What might we stop doing?

The ideas participants explored are summarised in the following pages in these key areas:

- Local government can inspire communities and be a meaningful part of their lives – and already are
- Iwi and Māori
- Local government collaborating with communities in diverse ways
- Central/local government working together
- Funding and financing
- Data
- Legislation
- Representation, participation, and elected members

Local government can inspire communities and be a meaningful part of their lives – and already are

The question that needs asking is “what’s important to our communities and who is best placed to deliver it to them”. Local voice is paramount, and councils of the future will.

- make sure the framework/scaffolding is there to enable community leadership and delivery
- support and enable communities – hand up, not hand out
- do with, not to, or get out of the way - communities be able to do it for themselves
- lift up community leaders - leadership comes from within – and tautoko them, involving them up front in wider community decision-making and as part of wider local and national governance system
- share kāwana space with the community – grass roots involvement is vital

Iwi and Māori

Councils of the future will be natural partners with Iwi and Māori and this special local relationship is acknowledged in legislation. There are several legislative mechanisms and local governance approaches already working across the motu – local co-governance is not starting at zero.

Councils of the future:

- Have a mutually respectful and equitable Te Tiriti partnership with Iwi and Māori first - go to our communities together
- Have a legislative foundation that includes the Te Tiriti relationship with Iwi and Māori. It must be obvious that local governance has a separate but complementary role to central government
- Use existing and develop new co-governance arrangements – there are already multiple examples e.g. Taupō, Whanganui, Whakatāne, Far North
- Use tikanga for hui with Iwi and Māori and for engagement
- Accept co-governance committee decisions without further debate
- Use a Te Ao Māori framing of process, lifting organisational cultural competence and performance
- Work harder to get messaging right – narratives/stories reflect kaupapa and are managed by Iwi and Māori on behalf of the whole community.

Local government collaborating with communities in diverse ways (functions/roles)

Councils of the future are brokers, bridge builders, and connectors between communities and government, aligning community needs with resources and services. Councils bring people and information together – making sure that everyone understands the issues, can have their say where and when they want to, and that a wide range of community voices are heard.

Councils of the future:

- Reflect on the many examples of partnerships that are focused on improving specific local community issues and are working well across Aotearoa and use these as guidance on how to approach local arrangements. This mahi informs the development of new systems and devolution of decision-making.
- Have a different workforce, culture, and outcomes and a joined-up workforce development approach with other Councils
- Focus on increasing connectivity in their communities and supporting community cohesion
- Can reach into council's civic leadership role, local knowledge, and relationships to bring together all actors that play roles in the services required to contribute to the delivery of community mandated outcomes.
- Are not dealing with issues where they have no influence on outcomes. These are scaled to regional or national e.g. waste, building, public health or, if mandated, come with the funding required to deliver without negatively impacting resources. Consistent processes are favored and used to increase efficiency and enable the use of technology.
- Has the autonomy to decide, with its community and other local governance organisations, what is needed, how it should be designed and delivered, and how roles and services will be resourced.

Central/local government working together

Councils of the future have a clear place in Aotearoa's governance system. They are allocated, and in turn can allocate or delegate, functions, and roles at the most appropriate scale, whether that is community, rohe, town or city, sub-national, or national levels. There is a mutually respectful relationship with central government, and an integrated governance system that provides flexibility and supports collaboration in pursuit of shared interests and outcomes.

Councils of the future:

- Have an authentic partnership with central government where the rules of engagement are clear and not subject to change by successive governments
- Together with central government, use a community interest plus mutual outcomes lens. This approach should be at the heart of the relationship.
- Have the time and resources to listen to their communities, removing formality and hierarchy, and encouraging more citizen's to actively participate in community decision-making
- Separate the process of developing a Community Wellbeing Plan from the business-as-usual aspects of current LTP planning
- Are trusted to invest resources currently lost to the processes of complex contestable funding approaches directly into local services reflecting community needs and preferences.

Funding and financing

Councils of the future have sufficient capability and financial capacity to carry out the roles and functions allocated to them. There are wider choices in funding models, and a range of funding tools and solutions are utilised between central and local government, Iwi and Māori and communities.

Councils of the future:

- Have clarity and additional Funding and Financing tools increasing choice and flexibility enabling local communities to build on opportunities that would otherwise be missed
- Receive the funding needed to implement central government mandates
- Can contribute added value as they are able to invest in opportunities as they arise without the constraint of contract based, transactional approaches to service delivery (i.e. focus on outcomes not inputs).

Data

Councils and central government agencies of the future share access to a centralised and integrated information clearing house for local data that enables evaluation of locally designed and delivered projects and the contribution of local governance to wellbeing outcomes at community, rohe, regional, sub-national and national level.

Councils of the future can:

- Share information across the governance system to measure and report on progress towards achieving improved wellbeing through central/local joined up service delivery.

- Access a joint wellbeing framework supported by joined up databases and information sharing to inform community planning
- Give community access to local information they can use to inform local design and delivery
- Value lived experience alongside other forms of data and evidence.

Legislation

Councils of the future have a clear understanding of their role in the governance system and the constitutional status of local governance is protected in legislation. The legislation is principles based with Councils of the future playing a key role in achieving improvements across the four wellbeings through: recognising diversity; enabling collective decision-making; giving effect to co-governance; enabling place-based responses; and utilising their convening capacity to support local delivery of local public services.

Councils of the future can:

- Focus on outcomes and the bigger picture with enabling legislation, putting community wellbeing at the heart of decision-making
- Together with Mana Whenua and Iwi and Māori, work with their communities to identify key local aspirations, opportunities, and outcomes, and partnering to achieve them
- Work more closely with partner agencies sharing ideas and information, and bringing them to the planning and funding conversation
- Promote a process of decision-making that both manages risk and promotes community decision-making and control
- Move emphasis from power and control to active partnering and collaboration.

Representation, participation, and elected members

Councils of the future have Elected Members that effectively reflect all communities and their interests and work in active partnership with Iwi and Māori. Together they provide the necessary scaffolding to enable wide community participation in identifying community aspirations, opportunities, and challenges, and make decisions together about resourcing and delivery of any services.

Councils of the future:

- Can use participatory democracy approaches that meet their community needs and encourage the sharing of diverse voices and expertise as part of the decision-making process.

- Include local tikanga in their day-to-day operations and evolve their governance approaches to recognise hui customs and practices of diverse community groups
- Have a strong focus on increasing participation in civic life and community decision-making.



Professional excellence in local government

Taituarā — Local Government Professionals Aotearoa

Level 9, 85 The Terrace, Wellington
PO Box 10373, Wellington 6143

T 04 978 1280

E info@taituara.org.nz

W taituara.org.nz