

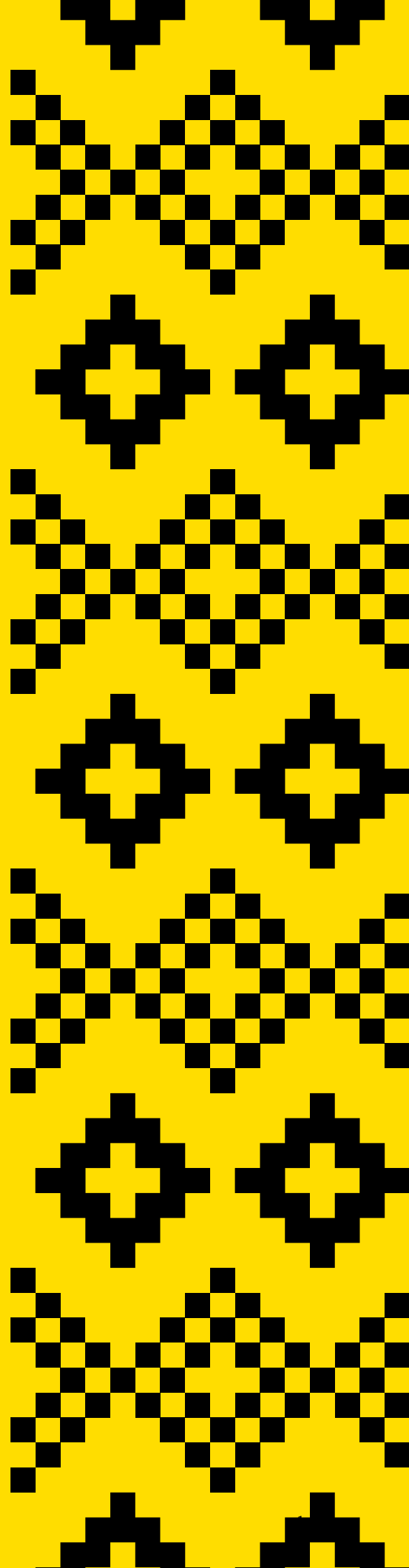
Citizens' Assembly Long-term Plan 2024-34

Advice to Council

October 2023

**Absolutely Positively
Wellington City Council**

Me Heke Ki Pōneke



Background to the Citizens' Assembly

Citizens' assemblies are a form of deliberative democracy – this means they focus on shared discussion and decision-making. Citizens' assemblies are being used successfully around the world and bring together diverse groups who represent the population of a particular area. They provide the opportunity to think about, discuss, and make an informed decision on a complex topic where there is a lot of public interest. The focus is not on finding a perfect solution, but finding a position everyone in the group can broadly agree on or live with.

In September and October 2023, a citizens' assembly of 42 Wellingtonians met to deliberate on the following question and provide their perspectives to feed into Councillor decisions about the Long-term Plan:

We need to find a balance between what WCC could deliver, and what resource it has available, which is fair to everyone. How might we do this?

Sessions were facilitated to ensure all perspectives were heard, and subject matter experts were called upon to answer participants' questions and provide information to support the Assembly in developing its advice. During the final session, the Citizens' Assembly's advice to Council was presented to the Mayor, Councillors and members of the Council's Executive Leadership Team.

This is Wellington City Council's first citizens' assembly. The project will be evaluated as part of broader efforts to improve the Council's engagement processes, participation rates and accessibility.

Key issues

There are some key issues surrounding the creation of the Long-term Plan 2024-34 which have been kept in mind and shaped discussions throughout the Citizens' Assembly:

- Local governments across the country are facing financial constraints. The cost of providing public services and infrastructure is increasing substantially due to inflation, interest rates, and high insurance costs.
- In Wellington we are also faced with key infrastructure challenges.
 - Our water infrastructure has performance issues.
 - Many of our facilities/venues are earthquake prone.
 - We have significant exposure to insurance costs increases and lack of insurance availability.
 - Significant investment is required in our transport network.
 - Wellington's population is forecast to grow by 50,000 – 80,000 over the next 30 years.





Participant selection

During July 2023, letters inviting people to express an interest in being part of the Citizens' Assembly were sent to 10,000 randomly selected postal addresses. Participation was open to New Zealand citizens and residents, as long as they lived in Wellington City. People who expressed an interest in joining the Citizens' Assembly were asked to complete two short surveys.

From these, roughly 50 people were selected who represent and closely match Wellington's population in terms of age (16+), gender, ethnicity, education, whether they have dependent children, experience of disability, sexual orientation and home ownership. The final number of participants who confirmed their attendance was 42. Although participants were not chosen on this basis, it is interesting to note that Assembly members also closely matched the make-up of Wellington City in terms of languages spoken, employment/occupation status and whether they were born in Aotearoa New Zealand or overseas.

The expressions of interest, survey and selection processes were managed by independent agency Global Research.

Creating this report

The advice to Council (pages 4-14) was written by the Citizens' Assembly. The information in this introduction section (pages 2-3) was provided by Wellington City Council.

Prior to the Assembly starting, participants were given information about Council services and their costs (see pages 10-25 of the Citizens' Assembly participant handbook at wcc.nz/citizens-assembly) and had the option of attending an online 'meet and greet' session. During the Assembly, participants met in person over four consecutive Saturdays, plus one online session. Over this period, they built their understanding of the financial context of the Long-term Plan and the breadth of services Council offers, hearing from and asking questions of subject matter experts, and developing the advice in this report. More information about the structure of these hui is on page 8 of the Citizens' Assembly participant handbook.



More information on Wellington City Council's website here:

wcc.nz/citizens-assembly

Summary of Citizens' Assembly advice to Council

1. We advise that the Council:

- needs to increase diversity of revenue streams - current and new - with the end goal of reducing the percentage of funding from rates
- advocates to Central Government for changes to legislation to enable the Council to access alternative revenue streams
- considers investments and partnerships so as to best use resources to supplement rates revenue.

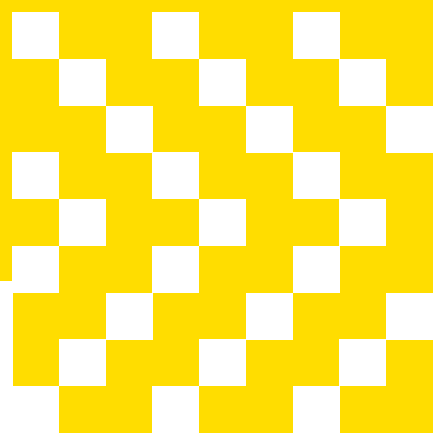
2. We advise that the Council review its capital expenditure programme by prioritising spend and spreading capital expenditure over a longer period based on availability of funds.

3. We advise that, within funding constraints, the Council prioritises:

- looking after the assets we've got before building or acquiring new
- the most cost-effective way to look after their existing assets.

4. We advise that when the Council is repurposing Council buildings and land in urban areas that they prioritise green space where suitable and practical. (Consider underutilisation and long-term disuse, high insurance and high depreciation, high refurbishment cost.)

5. We advise that the Council use community-based help to maintain and utilise Council-owned open spaces and when creating and improving existing open spaces (road reserves, parks, walkways etc.). Increase tree coverage and biodiversity (indigenous and foreign species).



6. We advise that the Council re-evaluate the criteria for heritage buildings and spaces to prioritise sustainability, safety, and population growth as well as buildability and utility.

7. We advise that the Council prioritise and advocate for infrastructure development that supports medium to high density housing.

8. We advise that the Council:

- has closer relationships with groups receiving funding, enabling Council to better allocate funding, and increase funding in areas needed
- advocates for increases of funding/ changes that need to happen at a Central Government level
- puts resources towards information brokering between community groups applying for same/similar output and those groups working together
- publicises community services more, particularly those funded by the Council.

9. We advise that the Council continue to support and maintain grant funding in line with the cost of living/inflation for community groups and ensure that as part of the decision-making process Tākai Here partners (mana whenua) are part of the committee to ensure it delivers a bi-cultural aspect to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

10. We advise that the Council develop a more deliberate process which effectively engages, includes and inspires and reduces the costs of poor planning and re-work.





Advice to Wellington City Council

The Citizens' Assembly has deliberated and decided to provide advice to Wellington City Council on its 2024-34 Long-term Plan in the following areas:

Investigating alternative revenue streams	8
Capital expenditure	9
Open space	11
Housing	12
Community funding	13
Process	14



Investigating alternate revenue streams

1. We advise that the Council:

- Needs to increase diversity of revenue streams - current and new - with the end goal of reducing the percentage of funding from rates.
- Advocates to Central Government for changes to legislation to enable the Council to access alternative revenue streams.
- Considers investments and partnerships so as to best use resources to supplement rates revenue.

Considerations

In forming this advice, we considered the following:

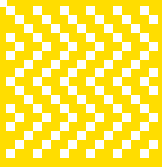
- Forward thinking, taking account of the future generations
- Affordable for residents and Council
- Immoral for Central Government not to pay rates
- Diversification of revenue sources

How?

This advice could be implemented through the following ideas:

- Legislative changes empowering Council to raise revenue
- Revenue drawn from non-Wellington City residents such as port and airport fee (tourist tax)
- Diversify risk by investing outside the Wellington region
- Optimise utilisation of Council assets on a business model.





Capital expenditure

2: We advise that the Council review its capital expenditure programme by prioritising spend and spreading capital expenditure over a longer period based on availability of funds.

Considerations

In forming this advice, we considered the following:

- Create a capital expenditure programme for a 10-year period
 - What is committed to continue e.g. Town Hall
 - Prioritised based on utility (usage/volume of people), safety, access
 - Cost/benefits realisation
 - Looking at existing assets and reallocating across the asset portfolio

How?

This advice could be implemented through the following ideas:

- Identify assets which can be excluded from the 10-year plan
- Identify assets that have similar use and prioritise one and defer others

3: We advise that, within funding constraints, the Council prioritises:

- Looking after the assets we've got before building or acquiring new
- The most cost-effective way to look after their existing assets

Considerations

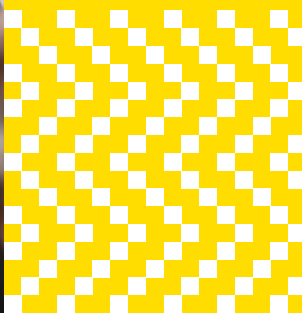
In forming this advice, we considered the following:

- Look after what we've currently got, and look at the total value over the life of the asset, to do what is best
- Safety and accessibility are paramount
- Multifunctional sites should be prioritised over single use sites
- Exceptions can be made to incorporate pragmatic approach to population growth e.g. water pipes
- The lowest whole-of-life cost and desired broader outcome should take precedence e.g. chip seal over asphalt for roads, result is the same
- Incorporating Māori and mana whenua view when looking after assets
- This is intended to exclude investment assets

How?

This advice could be implemented through the following ideas:

- Capital expenditure programme will identify major spends then prioritise the existing projects e.g. roads
- Continuing fully funding depreciation to renew assets





Open space

4: We advise that when the Council is repurposing Council buildings and land in urban areas that they prioritise green space where suitable and practical.

- Consider underutilisation and long-term disuse, high insurance and high depreciation, high refurbishment cost.

Considerations

In forming this advice, we considered the following:

- Council-owned site when they decide a building needs work or is unused to prioritise adding green spaces.
- Health and climate change benefits
- Higher density of micro green spaces
- Following proper processes of review and engagement

How?

This advice could be implemented through the following ideas:

- A single tree
- Green roofs
- Knocking down a whole building and putting in multipurpose open space
- Squares of bushes and trees
- Depending on space, considerations will be needed for what is possible
- Prioritising nature in Council building developments
- Where: small pockets of unused land, berms

5: We advise that the Council use community-based help to maintain and utilise Council-owned open spaces and when creating and improving existing open spaces (road reserves, parks, walkways etc.). Increase tree coverage and biodiversity (indigenous and foreign species).

Considerations

In forming this advice, we considered the following:

- Extend Council use of volunteers to other areas
- Bringing community together to help with gardening, planting, cleaning, general upkeep
- Local residents being able to make decisions about their parks and green spaces, giving local ownership
- Extends the service provision, without increasing labour costs, but not replacing council jobs
- Providing work experience
- Health and safety

How?

This advice could be implemented through the following ideas:

- Use various avenues already in use in the town belt to build up community networks in other areas:
 - To connect with community around suburban parks and areas
 - To enhance maintain and develop in a manner that meets community needs

(Open spaces: Road reserves, parks, walkways, recreation areas, berms)



Housing

6: We advise that the Council re-evaluate the criteria for heritage buildings and spaces to prioritise sustainability, safety, and population growth as well as buildability and utility.

Considerations

In forming this advice, we considered the following:

- To recognise Wellington's unique cultural identity
- To make the most of our limited space
- Buildings like Gordon Wilson Flats (leaking and not sustainable) currently act as a barrier to housing
- Start with areas close to good transport and infrastructure and in the longer term, work in areas with lower levels of public infrastructure

How?

This advice could be implemented through the following ideas:

- Prioritise the review of character areas e.g. buildings that are protected based on how they look
- Review sites, buildings and spaces as a priority as part of Resource Management reforms
- Consider climate change and earthquake resilience when evaluating whether to keep heritage sites

7: We advise that the Council prioritise and advocate for infrastructure development that supports medium to high density housing.

Considerations

In forming this advice, we considered the following:

- Some areas are already set up for higher density living, others are not.
- Council needs to prioritise immediate support for the areas that are already well set up e.g. turning empty office spaces into residential apartments

How?

This advice could be implemented through the following ideas:

- Re-purpose empty / under-utilised offices and other buildings
- WCC to advocate to Central Government for funding to go towards housing
- Start with areas close to good transport and infrastructure and in the longer term, work in areas with lower levels of public infrastructure



Community funding and services

8: We advise that the Council:

- Has closer relationships with groups receiving funding, enabling Council to better allocate funding, and increase funding in areas needed
- Advocates for increases of funding/ changes that need to happen at a Central Government level.
- Puts resources towards information brokering between community groups applying for same/similar output and those groups working together
- Publicises community services more, particularly those funded by the Council

Considerations

In forming this advice, we considered the following:

- Encourage partnership between groups receiving funding and Council
- Efficient use of funds for good outcomes
- Accessible to a wider range of people
- Helping communication between groups to serve the communities better
- Not doubling up when funding could be better spent supporting more people
- Raising awareness to increase benefit to the community and avoid double up of services

How?

This advice could be implemented through the following ideas:

- Spending a bit on staff liaising with groups receiving funding. However, ideally, saving by funding being spent in the best places
- A feedback round when applications are submitted. This could be when working together is recommended

9: We advise that the Council continue to support and maintain grant funding in line with the cost of living/ inflation for community groups and ensure that as part of the decision-making process Tā kai Here partners (mana whenua) are part of the committee to ensure it delivers a bi-cultural aspect to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Considerations

In forming this advice, we considered the following:

- Alternative funding sources
- Donations
- Equity for all
- Increased community need
- Accountability and performance following the receipt of the grant
- Alignment to Council strategies and priorities



Process

10: We advise that the Council develop a more deliberate process which effectively engages, includes and inspires and reduces the costs of poor planning and re-work.

Considerations

In forming this advice, we considered the following:

- Community engagement
- Financial gains by avoiding reworks
- Our current ways are not achieving enough community engagement

How?

This advice could be implemented through the following ideas:

- Community Assembly
- Continue to support Council's Advisory Groups
- Kaitiaki from Citizens' Assembly to advocate for recommendations for the LTP
- Slow it down



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Information on Positively Pōneke pattern design

Our Positively Pōneke design work includes pattern design by Kohe Webster (Ngāti Toarangatira, Ngāti Raukawa Te Au ki te Tonga). A brief description of the pattern meaning is below.

Kaokao

This pattern represents protection. It is the shape of the arm/armpit when you embrace someone. It is the shape of ribs which protect vital organs. They are often placed at four corners of a house representing protection of all within the house.

Pātiki

This pattern is based on the diamond shape of the flounder fish. Its significance relates to being able to provide for everyone.

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