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Opportunities for dialogue or compliance with legislation? An investigation into representation and satisfaction levels of submitters to the 2009 New Zealand local government LTCCP consultations

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Abstract

This research examines how the 2009 Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) consultation process helped councils fulfill their purpose as outlined in the Local Government Act 2002. The act instructs councils to “enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities”.To identify how councils encouraged participation, ten councils from throughout New Zealand took part through in-depth interviews of council staff. A survey of submitters from participating councils was also used to gauge corresponding consultation effectiveness by revealing who made submissions, what were the barriers and enablers to participation, and what would improve consultation for citizens.

The interviews confirmed councils committed significant resources towards producing a best-effort consultation process with innovative approaches to consultation widely reported. Even so, the findings identified that submitters were not representative of the general population, with the older, the educated, those of European ethnicity, and males dominating submitter ranks. The only finding that deviated from previous research findings was income, which almost mirrored census data by covering all income groups proportionately. However, there was a high proportion of first-time submitters (41.8 percent) and these new submitters were slightly more representative. The first-time submitters identified time constraints and being unsure how to make a submission as the leading barriers to participation for them.

The information and aspects of the LTCCP consultation afforded submitters the most satisfaction. Council/community relationships and decision-making were less satisfying. Many submitters doubted councils listened to submitters, or thought that council decisions did not represent majority opinion.

The research findings have a number of implications for communication specialists and planners. Council consultation practices appear to be improving representation, yet sections of the community remain disengaged. This continuing weakness in the consultation process suggests the tracking of submitter profiles, and the use of an additional and concurrent research-orientated approach (e.g. community panels) to capture representative comment would strengthen the information supporting a council’s final decision.

Innovative, resource-hungry consultation approaches (e.g. road shows, speaker series, expos) undertaken by councils went largely unreported by submitters, but the dissatisfaction over apparent lack of influence and corresponding council decision-making was a key issue. This result demands a rethink of resource allocation and communication emphasis. Published reports and the final feedback letter to submitters would be a prime opportunity for improvement of council consultation processes, allowing submitters to better place themselves in the wider context of submitters' comment and improve understanding of council decisions and priorities.

Acknowledgements

The problem with communication is the *illusion* that it has been accomplished.

George Bernard Shaw

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Finally, thanks and much love to my family. To my long-suffering husband Simon, and kids at home Tom, Josh and Alex, thanks for putting up with a wife and mum sitting for endless hours at the computer. To Mum and Dad, Jeremy, my mighty sisters and friends, thanks for supporting me to complete the project simply because it was something I wanted to do.

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Abbreviations

LGA	Local Government Act
LTCCP	Long Term Council Community Plan
RMA	Resource Management Act 1991
SOLGM	Society of Local Government Managers

CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem Statement

Since the inception of New Zealand local government in 1842, councils have been actively searching for ways to better meet the needs of citizens (Bush, 1980; Cheyne, 1997; Forgie, 2001; Nash, 2007). Councils have had an increasingly pervasive effect on the lives of citizens, by providing a myriad of different services, meeting both infrastructural and socio/cultural needs (Local Government New Zealand, 2006).

Demands for council services continue to become more complex, not just because of the rising volume of services (Local Government New Zealand, 2006), but also because of the increasing diversity of needs in communities (Cheyne, 2002; Drage, 2008). Legislation has evolved to facilitate local government responsiveness to this diversity (Bush, 1980; Forgie, Cheyne, & McDermott, 1999). As a result, public consultation is a mechanism now commonly used to support decision-making on significant issues (Reid, 2005b). Indeed the obligation to consult is now prevalent across most of the legislative parameters local government operates within (The Office of the Auditor-General, 2007).

Although widespread, the requirement to consult is still relatively new, as it only emerged in the New Zealand Local Government Act 1989 (LGA 1989) when annual planning and consultation with citizens on that subject became mandatory for the first time. While the LGA 1989 introduced consultation into council decision-making practices, the subsequent New Zealand Local Government Act 2002 (LGA 2002) was huge leap forward for citizen involvement in decision-making (Forgie et al., 1999). Indeed, the LGA 2002 dedicated nine new sections (i.e. Sections 82 – 90) to council consultation requirements, on an increasingly widening scope of subjects, even developing two levels of consultation complexity.

The philosophy underlying the requirement for public consultation represents a significant shift from the historically representative model of decision-making in local government (which is still in place for many council decisions), to a present-day combination of representative and participative democracy. The current blend of democratic approaches is

clearly signposted in the New Zealand LGA 2002, Part 2: Clause 10, which states the purpose of local government is:

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

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

Specifically, clause (a) refers to a mix of representative and participative democracy when referring to councils' "enabling democratic local decision-making ... by" meaning to take a participative approach and "on behalf of", a representative approach.

The LGA 2002 increased the breadth of council consultations and the requirements of consultation to boost community participation and ownership in significant decisions (The Office of the Auditor-General, 2004). Councils now consult, in a formal two-way communication process, on an increasing number of decisions, plans and strategies. As a result, citizens now have a general expectation of being able to have their say on major council decisions (Department of Internal Affairs, 2006, 2007; Robertson & Rout, 2006). Citizens are also prepared to contest this right. As a result, there have been a number of high profile, and sometimes damaging court cases where councils have faced legal challenges over the transparency or adequacy of their approach to consultation (Hawkes, 2006; Knight, 2007). Mindful of the rising sense of entitlement in the community, with iwi (Hayward, 1999) and stakeholder groups (Barton & Shaw, 2001), many councils now also choose to conduct public consultations on sensitive topics, even when not required to consult by legislation (The Office of the Auditor-General, 2007).

Thus, formal consultation is an increasingly important process for New Zealand councils as a consequence of citizens' rising expectation of participation in council decisions, the contestability of councils' significant decisions, and growing community diversity presenting different needs to satisfy. There are also substantial council resources involved in consultation activity. So, in the present local government environment, consultation has a substantial part to play in local decision-making processes and is critical to achieving the

purpose of local government (Burke, 2004; Drage, 2008; Nash, 2008; Reid, 2002). Given its importance and cost, the effectiveness of consultation is a priority.

Past studies have shown there are many barriers that constrain citizens' participation in consultation, including resources (civic skills, time, education and income), the council/community relationship, and the inclusivity of the consultation process itself (Brachertz, 2007; Cheyne, 1997; Comrie, 1996; Drage, 2004; Forgie, 2001; Lowndes, 2004; Nash, 2008). These barriers mean that many people and groups in the community fail to become engaged in consultation. Yet, while a proportion of citizens remain unengaged, and some may have become disengaged, there are growing numbers participating in local government consultations (Burke, 2004; Department of Internal Affairs, 2010). The rising numbers of submissions provide a challenge for council staff from an administration perspective and ultimately the tension that this expectation of participation creates is summed up by the search for balance in any democratic system (Cheyne, 2002; Forgie et al., 1999; Freeman, 2006; Pallot, n.d.). To consult, or not to consult, is a risk-driven decision in itself, as is the treatment of submitters' comments (Birch, 2002). Yet underlying these challenges is the central aim of consultation—to gather feedback so that a strong decision can be made that best meets community needs and aspirations. Good communication during consultation not only delivers a process that is more likely to satisfy participants, but also delivers it in a way that encourages representative comments from the community so better decisions can be made (Burke, 2004).

In summary, what is known is that councils are consulting on a rising number of issues. Councils are required to do so by legislation, need to do so to respond to an increasingly diverse community, and are expected to do so by the community. However, many citizens remain unengaged, or become disengaged and as a result management and councillors often have a perception that the consultation process is dominated by the vocal minority (Department of Internal Affairs, 2010) and as a process is therefore ineffective at reflecting what the wider community really feels about a proposal.

To date research on the subject has not provided a good picture of what consultation is actually delivering in today's local government environment. There is little information available on who is currently participating in council consultations, what their agendas are,

and how satisfied those who make submission are with their experiences of local government consultation? Also, what role does the communication practices of local government play in consultation outcomes? Only by gaining this information will this research project be able to describe and analyse the current community response to consultation in New Zealand, and the effectiveness of that consultation process in supporting democratic decision-making at local level.

1.2 Aim

The aim of this study can be stated as:

> To explore the outcome of legislative change, where amendments in the LGA 2002 introduced more extensive public consultation requirements in council decision-making practices.

1.2.1 Research Questions

A single overarching question falls from the research aim:

How successful were councils in the 2009 Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) consultation process in enabling democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, their communities?

To do this the views of staff and submitters need to be gathered as data for the research.

> 1. From the perspective of council staff, how did councils encourage participation in the 2009 LTCCP consultation?
>
> 2. Who were the submitters in the 2009 council LTCCP consultation and what were the submissions about?
>
> 3. What are the barriers and enablers to participation in the LTCCP consultation as perceived by submitters?

4. From the perspective of submitters, what would make consultation better for citizens?

1.3 Delimitations and Significance of Study

This research investigates local government public consultation practices during the 2009/2019 LTCCP process. The LTCCP consultation process was chosen because councils were likely to be put their best effort into the consultation activity due to the scope and the significance of the plan. The findings were expected to represent the optimum scenario for consultation effectiveness at that point in time. Even so, there are three main delimitations to the research.

There will only be one 2009 LTCCP consultation. Another round of LTCCP consultations will take place in 2012. However, communities, submitter expectations, and council/community relationships would be expected to change in the interim. Despite this limitation, the research will present a valuable benchmark, both for later comparison and to use in plans for future improvement.

The second limitation is as a result of the research scope, which has confined survey comment to that of LTCCP submitters only. By necessity, this approach was taken to keep the project to a manageable size. It needs to be acknowledged that citizens who did not take part in the consultation may have different perceptions of consultation to participants. Even so, some of this information is gathered in the questions asked of first-time submitters (please see Chapter Three – Research Design for a further description of the design approach).

The third limitation lies in the characteristics of the councils that volunteered for the research. Ten councils took part in the research representing a good spread of city, territorial and regional authorities, but no major metropolitan centres chose to join the project. As a result, the perceptions of council staff and submitters in New Zealand's three largest cities, Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch are not represented in the data.

While the limitations to this project are acknowledged, this thesis remains an important stepping-stone towards an improved understanding of participative decision-making in New Zealand today. It is significant because research on New Zealand councils' consultation practices revealed a lack of information on the impact the LGA 2002 legislation has had on this activity. This is particularly the case when trying to capture the perspective of submitters in the present environment of dialogue.

The subject of participative decision-making is well covered internationally, but the research conducted in New Zealand over the last decade examining consultation participation and expectations has examined only limited samples, or focussed on the perceptions of managers and politicians. Additionally, given the evolutionary path of consultation in New Zealand councils' planning processes over the last two decades, only current research can adequately reflect the change. There has been little research conducted on a wider scale to examine the more typical characteristics of participation in local government decision-making, in New Zealand, in the current cultural and legislative context.

Therefore, this study will be of particular interest to council communication specialists, strategic planners and policy writers who work with the consultation process, or with the community/council feedback from consultations. The information will identify and quantify consultation problems and opportunities present in the current legislative and cultural context. The research findings will highlight consultation issues and activities that could be more effectively prioritised. Additionally, councillors will find the results useful as a measure of the strengths and weaknesses of current consultation practices, a reflection of how representative comment is likely to be so that they can have more confidence in their decisions.

1.4 Structure and Format of the Thesis

The chapters in this thesis link together in a stepped progression starting with the research aim and problem statement in this introduction chapter. Chapter Two provides a background to local government in New Zealand with specific reference to legislative reform in the latter part of the 20th and early 21st century. Devolution of powers from central to local level, and the rising prevalence of consultation as a legislatively-required mechanism for improving the

responsiveness of local government decision-making contextualise the significance of the research question. A profile of the demographic characteristics and trends of the New Zealand population is included to provide perspective to the issue of increasing diversity.

Chapter Three has three sections and begins with a brief discussion on democratic theory to provide a better understanding of the intent of recent legislation. Staying with a focus on theory and concepts, the chapter then discusses communication theories and models that are relevant to local government consultation practice. Consultation is a planned communication process; therefore the clarity and relevance of transmission/process models and public relations theories are the primary focus of discussion. A review of New Zealand and international consultation guidelines completes the section.

The final section of the literature review examines empirical research on the consultation process in New Zealand. It also discusses findings on citizens' perceptions and attitudes towards local government, the barriers and enablers to participation, and the subsequent satisfaction levels citizens report as a result of participation.

Chapter Four sets out the methodology used for the survey and interviews. The chapter also describes the research design, implementation and analysis stages. Ethical considerations are also touched on.

Chapter Five presents the subsequent research findings. This chapter has two sections, with the first analysing the qualitative comment gathered through depth interviews with staff in each of the participating councils. The second section details the rich survey data gathered in the submitter survey.

Chapter Six discusses the findings of the submitter survey and interviews, comparing the results with the earlier discussed literature discoveries. It also argues the relevance of findings and sets the stage for the conclusions that can be drawn from the research project.

In making the final conclusions on the project findings, Chapter Seven explains how the research has realised project aims. Starting with a brief review of the limitations of the project, the conclusion then makes an assessment of how well democratic processes are

working at local government level, in the present legislative and cultural context. Then, recommendations are made as to how councils might improve consultation practice. These take a practical approach to incremental improvements in the consultation approach as well as challenging the adequacy of participative decision-making as a method to facilitate representative comment. Finally, opportunities for future research are noted and concluding comments draw the report to a close.

CHAPTER TWO – THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a background understanding to the context and effectiveness of council consultation practices in the 2009 LTCCP consultation process. The review starts by discussing the history of local government in New Zealand to gain an understanding of changes to local government purpose and decision-making practices. Working through that history to the present day, the current legal requirements for consultation are then examined to set the scene for an analysis of the underlying communication principles. Changes to the legal requirements of council consultation reveal a significant shift in approach to local decision-making, which has been propelled by the changing profile of the New Zealand population (Cheyne, 2002; Drage, 2008; Pallot, n.d.; Reid, 2005b) the subject of the final section in the chapter.

2.2 The History of Local Government in New Zealand

Local government in New Zealand has pursued a vigorous legislative and structural transformation to better meet the changing needs of citizens since its inception in 1842 (Bush, 1980; Cheyne, 1997; Drage, 2008; Nash, 2008). During the first 60 years of local authorities from 1842-1900, provincialism expanded and contracted in response to the centralisation tendencies of government. Nevertheless, the role of local government continued to grow. Early local government decision-making focused largely on the pressing issues of settlement activities, lands wars and colonial office constraints. It was only in the later part of the century that peace and rising settler numbers required councils to move their attention towards the need for infrastructure (Bush, 1980). More decision-making was required with this widening of council focus, although the community remained relatively homogenous (Forgie et al., 1999).

In the first quarter of the twentieth century, the county structures of council gradually decentralised into collections of boroughs, counties, and districts. This proliferation of council units was to continue over the next 50 years with the period being characterised by

recurring reviews. By the time the Local Government Act 1974 (LGA 1974) came into being there were 669 local authorities (Bush, 1980). The 1974 legislation required a new overlay of regional government in New Zealand, with the 22 new regional councils given the responsibilities of town planning and civil defence (Cheyne, 2002). These structural changes were in response to a rising community expectation for better decision-making (Bush, 1980). However, local authorities and some special purpose authorities (e.g. water catchment boards) remained. Despite the legislative changes, later commentators have been unified in their conclusion that the wide array of local government bodies in commission after the LGA 1974 enactment, still ultimately failed to yield the desired improvements (Bush, 1980; Cheyne, 2002; Forgie et al., 1999; Reid, 2001). Local government at that time had a particularly high representational ratio (Cheyne, 2002) and with a population of three million, there were 991 local authorities at the time (Scott, 1979). Nevertheless, leading writers were generally to label the first 130 years of local government performance as typically weak and fragmented (Bush, 1980; Scott, 1979). The limitations of representative decision-making, particularly its ability to respond to increasing community diversity, were a leading issue (Forgie et al., 1999; Hirst, 1990). A more in-depth discussion on contemporary democratic theory is included early in Chapter Three.

The subsequent Local Government Act of 1988 (LGA 1988) and the LGA 1989 were to require significant changes to councils' then purely representative approach to decision-making (Pallot, n.d). The LGA 1988 focused on efficiency, economies of scale, transparency and accountability (Local Government New Zealand, 2006). The requirements on transparency and accountability were clear indicators of the rising need for improved council communication with communities over decision-making practices (Reid, 2005). However, the most radical changes in local government since the abolition of provinces in 1876 occurred with the LGA 1989 (Pallot, n.d). The purpose and number of councils underwent massive reform–shrinking from over 700 entities to 72 territorial and 13 regional authorities. Decision-making styles also underwent significant change, with the early representative style of democracy shifting to an approach that straddled representative and participative democratic ideology (Bush, 1980; Cheyne, 2002; Pallot, n.d.). Leading academic, June Pallot (n.d.) made an interesting comment on the acceptability of the sheer size of local government change, saying that it was bundled up into the sweeping reformist programme adopted by central government. The reform had been characterised by rapid change since 1984.

The LGA 1989 went so far as to re-define local government with a section on the purpose of local government in the LGA 1989, which was added to the LGA 1974 as Section 37k (i).

The purposes of local government are to provide at the appropriate level;

(a) Recognition of the existence of different communities in New Zealand
(b) Recognition of the identities and values of those communities
(c) Definition and enforcement of appropriate rights within those communities
(d) Scope for communities to make choices between different kinds of local public facilities and services
(e) For the operation of trading undertakings of local authorities on a competitively neutral basis
(f) For the delivery of appropriate facilities and services on behalf of central government
(g) Recognition of communities of interest
(h) For the efficient and effective exercise of the functions, duties and powers of the components of local government
(i) For the effective participation of local persons in local government

For this research project, the re-purposing is particularly relevant as it recognised, and prioritised the rising heterogeneity in New Zealand communities, and that those different communities had different identities, values and needs. A new mechanism for participation in decision-making was required and the legislation required councils to encourage locals to participate in the annual planning process. This contribution to proposed plans and strategies was enabled through a formal consultation process, a two-way communication system that ensured communities had the chance to contribute to all significant local government decisions (The Office of the Auditor-General, 2004). Forgie (2001, p.10) summarised the democratic shift succinctly when writing "Section 37k (i) extends the scope for citizen input in local government affairs beyond the triennial vote for councillors".

While a changing community profile and burgeoning council portfolio had some influence on legislative change, many researchers have noted the influence of political trends in the British system. Pallot (n.d) noted that New Zealand has long followed the unitary government models of the British system. Similarly, Bush (1980) identified that the United Kingdom local government reform had a significant influence on the early legislative shape of New Zealand. In the United Kingdom democratisation continues to develop with an emphasis on

the empowerment of local communities and activity, rather than the "passive notions of consumer choice" (Chandler, 2001, p. 4).

Australia is also following the participative trend in local and government decision-making (Reddell & Woolcock, 2004) and the notion of the active citizen is interpreted by many academics as a response to the lack of social cohesion attributed to increasing diversity, as seen in advanced countries (Lowndes & Sullivan, 2008; Nash, 2007). This is discussed in more detail in the following chapter in the section on contemporary democratic theory.

The Local Government Act 1996 (LGA 1996) continued the drive towards planning transparency and accountability by requiring councils to develop long-term financial plans in consultation with citizens (Pallot, n.d). Progressive change characterised the following six years leading up to the LGA 2002. It was under the 2002 legislation that the 2009 LTCCP consultation was undertaken by councils and the following section opens with a review of the specific requirements of this legislation.

2.3 Current Consultation Requirements in Legislation

This section outlines the current legislative context pertinent to the 2009 LTCCP consultation, the LGA 2002. The following sections describe the prevalence of consultation requirements in other local government legislation and the legal challenges local government decision-making has faced as a result.

2.3.1 The Local Government Act 2002

The LGA 2002 expanded local government responsibilities reflecting a new wider remit, and cultural shifts in an increasingly diverse society (Local Government New Zealand, 2006). Reference to the changing profile of New Zealand communities was simplified, but remained in the purpose description for local government. The LGA 2002 Part 1.Clause 3. determines the purpose of local government is to provide "democratic and effective local government that recognises the diversity of New Zealand communities".

How local government might respond to the diversity of communities and widening purpose of local government is described in Part 2 of the Act, in a broad statement that includes both the mechanisms of decision-making and the focus.

> The purpose of local government is –
>
> > (a) To enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities; and
> >
> > (b) to promote the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of communities, in the present and for the future (LGA 2002 Part 2: Clause 10).

Referring to the process of making decisions, point (a) describes two distinct democratic approaches through which to make those decisions. "To enable local decision-making and action by" involves participative communication processes, and "on behalf of" representative processes. The description encapsulates a challenging shift from a pre-1989 legislative reliance on representative democracy, to a system that combines both representative and participative democratic processes (Pallot, n.d.) and gives increasing emphasis to the latter (Reid, 2002).

The wider implications of the 2002 Act have been debated by academics and local government agencies because the amendment represented a considerable shift from previously more prescriptive legislative requirements. Local Government New Zealand (2006, p. 5) released a statement that the amendment "removed many of the barriers that previously prevented councils responding to community demands", although there were still checks and balances including strengthening accountability, reporting and planning requirements (Reid, 2005b). Burke (2004, p. 5) also picked up on this new responsiveness, saying the latest local government legislative context was "broader, deeper and opens the way for innovation".

Local Government New Zealand (2006, p. 5) described the legislative intention slightly differently, noting that the thrust of the LGA 2002 had "given communities greater opportunity to influence the spending priorities of their councils".

The LGA 2002 Part 6, Clause 91(2) (a) signals an increasingly communicative, collaborative relationship with the community, requiring councils to "provide opportunities for communities to discuss their desired outcomes in terms of the present and future social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of the community".

Part 6 of LGA 2002 provides guidelines for consultation, requiring information to be available, and for transparency and accountability in planning processes. The legislation also defines the minimum requirements for the public's ability to participate in significant decisions.

The consideration of community views is mandatory in specific decisions, and special consultative processes are explicit. Section 82(1) Principles of consultation determines information on the issue being discussed should be available and accessible during consultation, specifically that "persons who will or may be affected by, or have an interest in, the decision or matter should be provided by the local authority with reasonable access to information".

In additional to information being accessible, Section 82 also requires information on the consultation decision to be clear and transparent, and that potential submitters receive a reasonable opportunity and time to present their thoughts.

As identified in the earlier discussion on consultation requirements, the LGA 2002 is specific about the decisions that require consultation, often calling for special consultative procedures for these decisions. Special consultative procedures are defined in Section 84 of the LGA 2002 in relation to the major planning requirements (the Annual Plan, the Long-Term Council Community Plan, the adoption or review of bylaws and other decisions according to the council's significance policy), but there are also general instructions for other consultations are covered in Section 82.

The general consultation principles in Section 82, reflect that the LGA 2002 leaves the opportunity to consult open, with the general statement requiring a council to go through a process of at least considering a consultation where people may be affected by, or have an interest in, the decision. Section 90 requires councils to develop a significance policy to

determine consultation activity in areas other than where the legislation expressly requires consultation.

In addition to expanding consultation requirements and expectations, the LGA 2002 also recognised the importance of community organisations in community stewardship. Section 91 of the LGA 2002 (since repealed) required the inclusion of other community stakeholders in decision-making and opened up council responsibilities up for reconsideration (Reid, 2002). The reasoning behind the legislated communication relationships with stakeholders lay with the role changes local government had already experienced as central government decentralised in a sustained period of downsizing and a corresponding devolution of power to local government, prior to the LGA 2002 (Local Government New Zealand, 2006). Some of this devolution was formal (e.g. the changes to regulatory and inspection services, the integration of the planning and environmental legislation in the Resource Management Act 1991. However, some devolution was informal or unintended. For example, local government became involved in economic development initiatives, and the role of library services changed in response to shifts in national schools library services (Reid, 2005b).

While the devolution brought additional costs, it also ushered in the expectation of improving performance levels and a more consultative approach was required to access government funding for activities (Burke, 2004). The additional responsibility should therefore elevate the importance of local government in the community, if for no other reason than the impact increasing rates has on households (Local Government New Zealand, 2006).

2.3.2 The Prevalence of Consultation in Legislation and Its Implications

A consultative approach to local government decision-making is now prevalent throughout sector legislation (Reid, 2005b; Richardson & Winefield, 2007). The Auditor-General (2007) released a general guide to public consultation and decision-making in Local Government. He noted the following acts as major examples of the legislative requirements for councils to conduct special consultative processes:

Local Government Act 2002

Biosecurity Act 1993

Building Act 1991

Energy Companies Act 1992

Food Act 1981

Resource Management Act 1991

Dog Control Act 1996

Rating Powers Act 1988

A general duty to consult is also specified in:

Local Government Act 2002

Biosecurity Act 1993

Higher Salaries Commission Amendment Act 1989

Land Transport Act 1993

Resource Management Act 1991

Land drainage Act 1908

Land Drainage Amendment Act 1920

Litter Act 1979

Local Government Act 2002

Meat Act 1981

Public Bodies leases Act 1969

Rating Powers Act 1988

Resource Management Act 1991

With the prevalence of consultation as a mechanism for participative decision-making confirmed, it is useful to take a brief look at the legal challenges councils have faced as a result of consultations undertaken.

The impact of a failed consultation has far-reaching effects on the relationship between a council and the community, and on a council's profile (Cook, 2006; Knight, 2007). Historically, the requirements of consultation have been tested in a number of high court cases and the Controller and Auditor-General (1998) has noted a trend of large ratepayers challenging democratic rate setting decisions through the courts.

Examples of early cases that have tested the general requirements of consultation include Wellington City Council v Woolworths New Zealand Limited in 1996; and Waitakere City Council V Lovelock in 1997. Special consultative procedures have been tested in other cases.

For instance, Yovich V Whangarei District Council in the High Court in Whangarei in 1998; and Urlich V Wellington City Council, in the Wellington High Court in 1996.

The Auditor-General (1998) commented on the legal implications of the above cases and others, noting the weaknesses in consultation practices at that time were in five main areas: final judgement needed to be reserved; sufficient time was required for those with an interest, or affected by the consultation to respond; the consultation information needed to be clearer and easily accessed (particularly with regard to culturally and socially objectionable matters); those with an interest should be targeted to ensure representation (tangata whenua were specifically identified as having special expectations); and that the final decision should be transparent.

The weaknesses in consultation revealed in the legal challenges, are subsequently reflected in the Auditor-General's guidelines for local government consultation, discussed in Section 3.3.1.

2.4 Community Diversity – Demographic Trends in New Zealand

As discussed in Section 2.2, local government in New Zealand has consistently changed to better meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population. This section provides further background to the changing profile of New Zealand communities. It follows that if consultation is to represent the community, it is useful to understand the evolving demographic characteristics and the significance of this data (Bell & Newby, 1971; Zwart, Brackertz, & Meredyth, 2005). The following is a brief summary of the 2009 national demographic trends as annually reported by Statistics New Zealand (2010).

Local government makes decisions on present and future needs, with and on behalf of citizens. Meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse community is a major challenge. Therefore recognising the broad trends in community characteristics is important (Richardson & Winefield, 2007). Researchers use demographic information to better understand community characteristics and needs, as do planners and strategists in councils considering the potential impact on council services and subsequent decision-making (Barton & Shaw, 2001). Some of the issues are clear, for example the impact an aging population will have on

facility requirements and affordability (Statistics New Zealand, 2000). Some are not so obvious, for example the impact that gentrification will have on planning and land use, or housing needs (Freeman & Cheyne, 2008) or communication channels (Bachman, Kaufhold, Lewis, & Zuniger, 2010). However, given that the information is anticipating what the community might look like in two decades, the projected population characteristics should be considered in council long term planning exercises, both to cater for change and to consider the likely influence planning might have on demographic characteristics (Barton & Shaw, 2001; Statistics New Zealand, 2000). The argument clearly indicates the effect demographic trends will have on agenda setting, not only for current considerations but also for future needs.

Statistics New Zealand (2010) confirmed New Zealand's population is likely to continue to grow, although there will be a steady slowing in that growth due the narrowing gap between the numbers of births and deaths. Population aging will continue, with the pace projected to increase after 2011, as a result of the baby boom generation entering the over 65 year age group. Statistics New Zealand also predicts that between 2011 and 2021 the elderly population will grow by around 200,000 and in the following ten years by 230,000. The New Zealand labour force will continue to age.

In the next 15 years Asian, Pacific, and Māori ethnic populations are projected to grow faster than the New Zealand population overall. This means as a nation New Zealand will continue to become more culturally diverse, and this projection by Statistics New Zealand has implications with language and communication, particularly in relation to Asian and Pacific peoples. In families and households, the trend towards smaller average household size will continue, and single person households will increase. The latter will likely have a significant influence on ratepayer priorities because single person households (particularly those more elderly) may struggle to afford rates. Couples without children will continue to grow proportionately larger in numbers than families with children. The gender proportions in New Zealand are predicted to remain stable, with females making up slightly over 50 percent. Education levels will continue to rise, and Statistics New Zealand projects that income levels will become increasingly disparate with the rich getting richer and the poor poorer.

Geographically, the New Zealand population will continue to centralise around the large cities with growth likely in only a few other localities. This trend will have a strong influence on council agendas as towns grow smaller and potentially stagnate. In smaller authorities, the economies of scale of a smaller rating base and less critical claims on central government resources will make rates allocation an increasingly challenged process. In growth areas, the competition for resources will continue (Statistics New Zealand, 2010).

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a setting on which to launch an investigation into democratic and communications theory relevant to the practice of consultation. The evolution of local government in New Zealand towards a more consultative and participative approach to decision-making is well documented. Central government agencies tasked with regulating and monitoring council performance including Local Government New Zealand, The Local Government Commission, the Office of the Auditor-General, and Audit New Zealand and researchers have maintained a steady stream of commentary on the implications of legislative change and the related performance of councils.

Local government reform and increasing community diversity are without doubt connected. However, apart from voting in triennial elections, it has only been since 1989 that formalised public participation in local government decision-making has been a requirement of legislation. The practice of public consultation is therefore a relatively new approach, yet the wide array of legislation evidenced shows public consultation as a process to facilitate participative decision-making is now a pervasive requirement in local government practice.

Local government legislation continues to evolve to hand local government in New Zealand an increasingly influential part in the lives and futures of citizens. Government decentralisation also contributes to local government's increasing responsibilities. The expanding role of local government facilitates and encourages councils to be more responsive to their communities' increasingly diverse needs and as a method to assist this responsiveness, participative decision-making and closer relationships with key community agencies and groups are emphasised.

Throughout this chapter there were many references to the changing profile of communities, and an investigation of main demographic trends identified by Statistics New Zealand, reveals the nation is aging, becoming more educated, more ethnically diverse, with increasingly disparate income levels and gradual urbanisation.

The on-going changes in communities evidenced in the census demographics provide further clarity to the reasoning behind the changing purpose of local government specifically where directed in legislation to recognise different communities, communities of interest, and different community needs. As Pallot (n.d.) and Drage (2008) observe, as the complexity of community needs increases, a more participative approach is required because many of the most pressing problems facing communities can only be solved collectively. However, while increasing diversification points to participation as a decision-making method that better reflects changing communities, any governance choice must come with an acknowledgement that there are gains and sacrifices with each paradigm of government (Peters, 1996, as cited in Pallot, n.d.).

With the historic, legislative and demographic context of consultation in local government discussed, the following Chapter Three will look at the democratic theory and concepts, and also investigate the communication theory relevant to the consultation practice. It will conclude by discussing empirical findings on participative decision-making both nationally and internationally.

CHAPTER THREE – LITERATURE REVIEW

The history of local government in New Zealand, New Zealand's population profile, and the current legislation requiring consultation was important to create context for the following literature review. The investigation into council consultation processes now turns to look at democratic theory. The first two sections of this literature review focus largely on conceptual and theoretical writers to provide a broad understanding of the evolution towards participative decision-making in Western nations, and the communications theory that underpin the consultation activity. The third section then focuses on the empirical research conducted on citizens' attitudes towards local government and the influences on participation, it then takes in various perspectives on the experience of making a submission.

3.1 Contemporary Democratic Theory

Grey (1997) described democracy as one of the vaguest political terms in modern day. However, Beitz (1999) observed the debate in democratic theory in recent years has focused on social justice being underpinned by the concept of equality and how that concept might apply to democratic participation. The meaning of democracy becomes clearer when prefixed with other descriptors such as representative, participative or deliberative. The discussion in Chapter Two introduced the first two of these descriptors, and established that local government's ability to be responsive to the changing, diverse needs of the community has been central to its evolution (Bush, 1980; Cheyne, 2002; Drage, 2008; Forgie et al., 1999). Most recently, local government legislation has adopted participative decision-making processes as a leading strategy to improve responsiveness (Cheyne, 2002; Reid, 2005b). Yet representative democracy, in the form of liberalism, has been the dominant paradigm in New Zealand local government history (Bush, 1980), and is still used in most decision-making (Cheyne, 1997).

This section therefore investigates contemporary democratic theory to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each approach, and considers other options that might further contribute to this need to be more responsive to changing communities.

3.1.1 Representative Democracy

Hirst (1990) noted that political styles are a reflection of culture and in turn shape culture. In New Zealand, the prevalent style of government at both central and local level is modern liberal democracy (Forgie et al., 1999). Liberalism relies heavily on representation, which is the most common form of democracy (Beitz, 1999). At the same time, cultural change is occurring as communities diversify.

Nash (2007) explains that liberalism centres on the rights of an individual. Citizens participate by exercising the power to elect and decision-making is left to elected members to represent the community. Forgie et al. (1999) say this approach to decision-making is predominantly taken because most citizens lack the time, motivation, or skills to participate more fully as a direct democratic approach would require. Representative democracy is therefore more efficient in terms of citizens' time (Cheyne, 2002; Pallot, n.d.).

Thus, as Nash (2007) points out, communities that were historically defined by location, kin, and friendship now operate under community groupings based on interest. In liberalism, individuals are free to choose to belong to none or many communities of interest. However, Nash notes an irony in the trend towards individual participation, saying it encourages expectation in individuals, as individuals, not as communities as reflected in legislation.

In representative democracy, the roles and associated expectations of participants in the process are clear. Nevertheless, Beitz (1999) says to be effective, representative democracy relies on specialised decision-making skills. The elected members need to be able to translate the community's needs and desires into robust decisions, as communities continue to diversify, that translation becomes more difficult. In practice, representatives also use personal judgement and preferences, often taking on a political orientation, picking up the desires of an interest group, or using a mixture of these approaches (Cheyne, 2002; Drage, 2008; Forgie, 2001).

Hirst (1990) acknowledges that representative democracy is the most prevalent political approach in the western world, but he asserts it has two major weaknesses. It delivers low levels of accountability and allows similarly low levels of public influence when making decisions. As a result, modern representative democracy is often perceived as legitimising

government power, as opposed to delivering accountability and a way for citizens to influence decisions.

Norris (2011) also reflects on the weaknesses of representative democracy. She points to a 'democratic deficit', saying that the actual performance of democracy has become uncoupled from public expectation, and that democracies are suffering from a legitimacy crisis. Norris notes the reasons for the failure of representative democracy are threefold; supply (the structure and performance of democracies), information (the negative impact new media has on the public's perception of democracies), and demand (the rising expectation for participative opportunities). Yet for all the apparent demand for participation, Norris (2011, p. 220) observes widespread concern for the "tidal wave of public withdrawal from the traditional channels of conventional political activism". De Bussy and Kelly (2010) concur, asserting that the contemporary aspiration of a self-governing community is increasingly becoming a dream.

Drage (2008) and Hirst (1990) reason that with citizens' agendas becoming progressively more diverse, the likelihood of satisfying community needs through representative democracy is becoming increasingly difficult. Representative democracy seldom uses any type of participative practice—other than the triennial elections in the case of councils—to support decision-making, and so struggles to represent diversity. Hirst suggests that it is the community's recognition of the weaknesses in representative democracy that influences a growing desire for more direct participation. The New Republican movement (now strong in the United States and United Kingdom, and a major influence on local government reform in New Zealand) has risen as a result. It advocates public participation with a central theme of citizenship.

MacIntosh argues (2002) that technology is also empowering communities to take a more direct role, and that there is now specialist knowledge in most communities. Decision-making is no longer the domain of governing bodies alone. Many theorists (Birch, 2002; Drydyk, 2005; Gramberge, 2001; Lowndes & Sullivan, 2008; Sullivan, 2004) argue there are more effective and efficient approaches to make decisions. Lowndes, Pratchett, and Stoker (2006) insist that a more participative approach would establish a civil society that moderates government, with the ability to act at a local level as a substitute for government. However,

whatever the decision, Richardson and Winefield (2007) observe that only some of the community needs will ever be successfully met. Others will go unsatisfied.

3.1.2 Participative Democracy

As communities of interest grow more numerous and complex, a higher level of community involvement is both desired (Department of Internal Affairs, 2006) and desirable (Cheyne, 1997; Comrie, 1998; Drydyk, 2005; Lowndes & Sullivan, 2004). However, a community's desire for involvement is not necessarily the same thing as what council politicians and systems allow, or are capable of. Forgie et al. (1999, p. 6) comment:

> The question of who should be entitled to make decisions underlies the contested nature of democracy. How can the many voices of the public be melded into a system of government that is stable, efficient and fair? These questions have not been resolved, despite the lengthy evolution of democracy.

Forgie's comment highlights the weaknesses of participative democracy and representative democracy, and the struggles of a hybrid system of both approaches. Yet this is what the LGA 2002 requires. The purpose of local government is, therefore, a difficult balance of participative and representative approaches, and Birch (2002) observes that the rising expectation of participation that results from this combination of democratic approaches creates tension that is natural, and significant.

Contrasting with a representative approach, participative democracy seeks to include citizens more closely in decision-making. Participative democracy provides citizens with a chance to influence decisions and in doing so the act of participation also empowers democracy and encourages trust to build. Participation in local government decision-making is primarily designed to facilitate responsiveness to community needs, but it also encourages community cohesion (reflecting issues of common interest) and improves the perceptions of citizens who are frustrated with bureaucracy (Forgie et al., 1999; Lowndes, 2004; Ministry of Social Development, 2008). Cheyne (1997) and Drydyk (2005) say by involving citizens, the participative approach provides a mechanism to find balance between a citizen's individual rights and the equivalent rights of the community.

However, as argued by many writers including Lowndes et al. (2006), Cheyne (2002), Pratchett (2004) and Sullivan (2004), participative democracy can only be effective if the processes used to facilitate involvement achieve representative feedback. The participation must connect and speak for all affected or interested communities.

In general, the discussion on representative democracy identified many of the limitations that contributed to the rise of participative democracy. Participative democracy also has acknowledged weaknesses, particularly in the numerous barriers that limit participation. But early writers were more concerned with the value of the ordinary citizen's contribution on the basis of their perceived low skill levels and capability (Crozier, Huntington, & Watanuki, 1975; Sharpe, 1970). While those ideas find little favour in contemporary writing, Lowndes et al. (2006) do identify civic skills as one of the three main areas influencing participation. They list lack of resources (e.g. education, civic skills, and time), regulations (the accessibility of consultation processes) and council/community relationships as the primary blocks to citizen involvement.

Forgie (2001) further suggests that there are levels of competency associated with civic skills, and that people may not participate because they doubt their expertise to make a valuable or valued contribution, and question that their comments will have an influence. Forgie also observed that many citizens may lack the incentive to participate because they are satisfied with council performance, or they are not interested in council activities. Burns, Hambleton and Hoggett (1994) contend that awareness and interest levels are also often the result of councils making inadequate information available, and therefore failing to encourage participation.

Drydyk (2005) suggests that expectations also impact on participation, stating that the interpretation of participation itself is elastic and strongly debated because of the varying outcomes being pursued. This is a useful point to discuss further as citizens' perceptions of participation as part of the decision-making process can vary, causing dissatisfaction and disappointment (Cook, 2006; De Bussy & Kelly, 2010; Goldman, 2004). Explaining the variation in expectation Bruning and Ledingham (1999) state that participation covers a wide spectrum of active relationships, from the provision of information through to specific consultation, partnerships and even community decision-making. The amount of citizen control over decisions determines the placement of a system on this continuum.

Theorists such as Arnstein (1969) and Drydyk (2005) focus on citizen control, arguing that involvement can only be true participation if it entails influencing results and being directly involved. Arnstein's writing on citizen participation acknowledges that community involvement can take many forms. Her ladder of participation stretches from simple information sharing through to the most expansive empowered public involvement. Under Arnstein's description of participation options, local government's consultation is placed a step below placation and partnership, and is labelled as tokenism. Drydyk reinforces this negative assessment asserting that satisfaction with participation can only come from control over one's environment. Similarly, Moloney (2006) contends that for citizens to have a chance to influence an outcome, there must be communication equality in democracy.

Taking a slightly different view, Burns et al. (1994) modified Arnstein's ladder, breaking down participation into three essential levels. At the highest level, citizen control has control being interdependent, entrusted or delegated but firmly with the citizen. Citizen participation, which includes partnerships, some decentralised decision-making, advisory boards, good consultation and high quality information combined with decision responsibility. At the lowest level of participation, citizen non-participation is simply a representative type of customer care, characterised by poor information, poor consultation and public relations spin.

Arnstein's early ideas endure and New Zealand agencies have used them as a basis for developing models on strengthening relationships. A Ministry of Social Development (2008) think-tank summarised participation as a relatively simple four-stage spectrum that focuses on the type of communication relationship. Figure 1 reveals a hierarchy of communication relationships moving from one-way communication moving through to two-way communication, and then community empowerment.

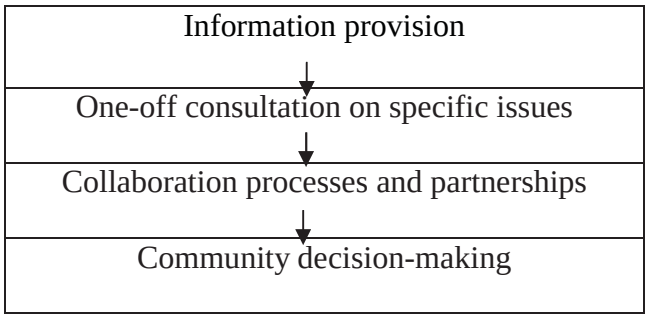


Figure 1: Active relationships

Source: Adapted from www.goodpracticeparticipate.govt.nz

Lowndes and Sullivan (2008) advance the discussion on participation by emphasising the size of geographical areas that might successfully support participation in decision-making by citizens. They propose the neighbourhood unit as ideal and add another overlay of consideration, analysing structures according to the civic, social, political and economic benefits. The neighbourhood concept is an interesting one and has commonalities with the early search for responsiveness in New Zealand (discussed in Chapter Two) that led to the proliferation of local bodies in the last century. It also moves away from the liberalist approach encouraged by present legislation and so prevalent in New Zealand today, and goes back to geographically defined community groupings. Lowndes and Sullivan advocate that a civic approach can build cohesive communities with active empowered citizens through participative democracy. Table 1 takes up these structures and further describes the ideal state of neighbourhood empowerment as participatory democracy.

Table 1: Ideal types of neighbourhood governance

	Neighbourhood empowerment	**Neighbourhood partnership**	**Neighbourhood government**	**Neighbourhood management**
Primary rationale	Civic	Social	Political	Economic
Key objectives	Active citizens and cohesive communities	Citizen well-being and regeneration	Responsive and accountable decision-making	More effective local service delivery
Democratic device	Participatory democracy	Stakeholder democracy	Representative democracy	Market democracy
Citizen role	Citizen voice	Partner loyalty	Elector vote	Consumer choice
Institutional forms	Forums, co-production	Service board, mini internal service provider	Town councils, area boards and committees	Contracts, charters

Source: Adapted from Lowndes, V and Sullivan H, *Public Administration*, Vol 86, No. 1, 2008, (53 – 74).

Small units are associated with responsiveness and high levels of participation and commitment (Pratchett, 2004) as opposed to large-scale government, which exchanges these for scales of economy, equity and efficiency (Lowndes & Sullivan, 2008). However, while the neighbourhood theories seem to be reinforced by higher levels of participation reported in rural and smaller areas here in New Zealand (Cheyne, 2002; Drage, 2008), the idea does not

adequately reflect the LGA 2002 legislative requirement to recognise communities of interest (e.g. new migrants, or mountain-bikers). These groups of interest would not necessarily cluster in geographical neighbourhood unit, but more likely be joined by common behaviours or needs.

Interestingly, critics of the participative decision-making process do identify that it has more chance of success at local rather than national level, citing size as influencing potential success (Stewart, 1996). Early commentators like Schumpeter (1979) and cast doubt on the value of consultation saying submitters did not have the skill or commitment to master most political problems. However, Nash (2007), Cheyne (2002), and Drage (2008) counter this argument by noting that the rising education levels, knowledge and skills now in communities can add significant value to the final decision. Additionally, participation achieves outcomes outside the actual decision made, including liberty (Sharpe, 1970) and increased feelings of citizenship and community identity (Cheyne, 1997; Comrie, 1998; Drydyk, 2005; Forgie, 2001; Lowndes, 2004; Lowndes & Sullivan, 2008; Moloney, 2006).

Indeed 'community' is a central theme in participative democracy, as it is in present local government legislation, yet it is an elusive descriptor. The meaning of the term community appears fundamental to understanding inclusivity and effective consultation by councils, and must be reflected in the targeting activities of consultation planning. Barnett and Crowther (1998) cite some 94 studies on the definition of community, finding that the only common component is people. In a much earlier work on the sociology of community, Bell and Newby (1971, p. 16) state "beneath the surface of many community studies lurk value judgements of varying degrees or explicitness about what constitutes the good life". Community is typically removed from normative understandings in political and public policy discussion, being used as a description for ideological engagement, and in this respect the interpretative meaning of community has become tacit, linked to ideals or to a future to aspire to (Lowndes & Sullivan, 2008).

Beauchamp and Bowie (1997) say that philosophers like Plato, Rousseau, Hegel and Weber have described community in philosophy as an entity within a territorially defined geography (although a boundary varies in size). There is a sense of emotional ties for those within, and from, the community, but there is no one interpretation of common good. Philosophically, if modern world is characterised by organisation and loss of the sense of belonging, community

is therefore an ideal that seeks to reunite and to "bind man socially while allowing him to be physically free" (Scherer, 1972, p. 13).

Jacobs (1994, as cited in Lowndes & Sullivan, 2008) observes that there is general acceptance that communities are a social construct, typically a built environment with some geographical borders, although the understanding of these parameters vary amongst inhabitants. However, Jacobs emphasises that a community is only a community when the inhabitants see it as one – then it forms a basis for interaction, attachment, and as channels for self-expression.

3.1.3 Alternative Democratic Approaches

The discussion in the prior section leads into a discussion on localism. In the United Kingdom, while councils remain at the heart of local decision-making, processes are being put in place to encourage a more vibrant democracy and give control of local decision to a larger group of active citizens. Devolution to neighbourhood governance is being pursued for civic, social, economic and political reasons (Office of Public Sector Information, 2008) Neighbourhoods are seen as an ideal unit through which to promote citizen engagement and better accountability (Lowndes et al., 2006; Pratchett, 2004). The idea of using neighbourhoods is based on several propositions. From a civic perspective, neighbourhoods give citizens a better opportunity to participate effectively in decisions. From a social perspective, the neighbourhood is the ideal unit for a citizen-based approach to governance, and at this level governance is more meaningful to a participant (Lowndes & Sullivan, 2008). Interestingly, neighbourhoods are also held as being ideal for growing stakeholder and associative democracy (as required in the LGA 2002 for developing outcomes).

Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley (2004) join Lowndes and Sullivan (2008) to note that at a political level, governance in the form of neighbourhoods is more accessible for local citizens and neighbourhood leaders are more likely to be aware of issues first hand and so be more responsive. These reflections are similar to Drage's (2008) findings on participation in the New Zealand context. The consequence to improved transparency is that citizens of smaller or neighbourhood units can better hold leaders accountable for their decisions. Additionally, Lowndes and Sullivan (2008) point out that localisation has economic advantages because it

can also encourage superior use of resources because waste is easier to identify and needs are easier to recognise.

While neighbourhood governance has some clear strengths, it also has significant weaknesses, particularly in terms of communities of interest other than those that are geographically defined, or where citizens do not have the resources to participate. Thus many researchers (Brackertz, 2007; Carson, 2008; Cheyne, 1997; Nash, 2007; Sharp & Anderson, 2010) have suggested an alternative or additional approach to democratic decision-making in New Zealand's present context – that of deliberative democracy.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the clear intent of present local government legislation is to increase the responsiveness of local government to changing community needs. Participative decision-making is the mechanism now required by legislation to enable the involvement of the community in decision-making. Nevertheless, one of the problems with participative democracy is that it cannot involve all the people it affects (Parkinson, 2004), and there remains the possibility that increasing participation opportunities may in reality only increase the power for those that already have it (Zwart et al., 2005). Hence, there appears to be a need for aggressive targeting of audiences, or the consideration of a deliberative approach to democracy (Sharp & Anderson, 2010).

Where participative decision-making is described as a bottom-up process, Carson (2008) describes deliberative decision-making as a top down approach. Giving a more specific description of the process in a more recent paper, Carson (2011, p. 40) draws on historic democratic theory to explain the top down approach.

> Two things are essential for this deliberative democracy to work well. Firstly, deliberative processes need to involve what is known as a 'mini-public'. According to John Adams, the second President of the United States, a legislature should be 'in miniature an exact portrait of the people at large'. A mini-public can create an almost exact miniature of an entire population, using random selection and transparent procedures to match population demographics for gender, age, education and race. Matching the population in order to create a microcosm helps build confidence among citizens that the mini-public consists of 'people like me' and that the decision-making is in good hands, beyond vested interests and political ambition.

Deliberative approaches involve participative interaction and decision-making, together with an inclusive selection approach for the participating groups to ensure representation across all community factions (Zwart et al., 2005). In a practical example, where a community has a large proportion of Pacific Islanders who remain silent during consultation then there would be active recruitment of this ethnic group in the deliberative approach to ensure representation. Carson (2007, p. 1) makes further comparison with participative democracy.

> Deliberative democracy is different from the traditional form of consultation, like a non-interactive public meeting or a permanent advisory committee or an opinion poll or a call for written submissions or even a design workshop with invited participants. These traditional methods are consultative but fall short of the ideals of a DDP (deliberative democracy) which is both deliberative, i.e. involving interaction between participants and choice making as a group, and inclusive, i.e. involving people selected in a way to ensure they are a microcosm of the community.

Deliberative democratic processes are not a traditional form of consultation, but a recognition that traditional consultation struggles to gather a representative response. Yet the proponents of deliberative democracy do not advocate the replacement of participative approaches to decision-making with deliberative practices. However, the addition of a top down approach, as advocated by Carson (2007, 2008, 2011), does provide a practical solution to the acknowledged difficulties of gathering representative comment through participative processes.

3.1.4 Conclusion

Theory and research on the respective characteristics and value of representative versus participative democracy from political, philosophical and communication viewpoints is wide ranging. In contemporary writing there is a groundswell of support for the ideal of an approach to decision-making that enables citizen participation. Yet the weaknesses of participative democracy are significant enough to prompt further investigation. Smaller neighbourhood units are suggested as one way to remove barriers to participation, and enhance community/submitter satisfaction. Another is the top down approach of deliberative democracy where communities that may be interested or affected by a decision are targeted to

gather feedback relevant to the needs of that community of place, interest, or need. The pragmatic efficiency arguments of representative democracy are countered by the value-added approach of participation.

Local government has a leading role in determining how representative and participative processes can be complementary, and there is value in each approach. Social changes in expectations of local government and the changing economy mean that leadership and visioning responsibilities are now emerging as more important (Sullivan, 2004), yet these must be shaped by, and represent community aspirations (Cheyne, 1997).

Providing philosophical and academic arguments on the search for responsiveness and indeed better decisions goes some way towards providing the theoretical background for the changes in local government legislation that now require consultation in support of community participation in decision-making. British academics and democratic systems are further advanced in their discussion than is New Zealand. It seems though, that the solution of neighbourhood empowerment is incongruent with New Zealand's present liberalist approach to politics, and current local government legislation which is aimed at reducing the number of local government identities, not further subdivide decision-making responsibilities. Notwithstanding the many positive outcomes gained through a participative approach to democracy, deliberative democracy appears an effective and pragmatic solution to the rising issue of democratic deficit and the need to be responsive to an increasingly diverse community.

3.2 Communication Theory

This thesis investigates the implementation of participative democratic theory in a local government context. To do that a broad theoretical and conceptual understanding of consultation as communication is required. This section covers three schools of communication theory. Transmission theories and process derivatives introduce the discussion, and were selected because of the emphasis legislation places on the consultation/communication process, as evidenced in the Chapter Two. Public relations theory, particularly the rich area of excellence theories of symmetrical communication,

relationship communication and stakeholder theories are then covered. The section concludes with a look at social theories of influence, power and the perceptions of fairness.

3.2.1 Transmission Theories – The Communication Process

Transmission models of communication concentrate on the communication process and the paths that information, understanding and thoughts travel along (Lewis & Slade, 1994). Transmission models stem from early mechanical theories of communication and use a generally linear structure to explain the communication process. Early transmission models broke the communication process onto five simple components: sender, message, medium, receiver, and function (Dance, 1970). Many writers criticise transmission or process theories for oversimplifying communication, and lacking in the appreciation of the richness and dynamics of the process (Covey, 1992; Craig, 2000; Grunig & Hunt, 1984). However, transmission theories remain appropriate for communication planners to consider when looking at how consultation information moves out into the community. Lewis and Slade (1994, p. 11) defend traditional transmission theories saying "the clarity and power of the transmission model has meant that it has dominated the way that communication–communications–are conceptualised by government, media and communicators".

O'Hair, Freidrich, and Dixon (2008) agree, noting that the complexity and influence of each step in the transmission model reveals its relevancy. For example, a review of channels or media used to convey messages and the selection of channels have an important influence on the communication and the perceptions of a receiver. Channels can be lean or rich, formal or informal, permanent or transient, one, two way or multidirectional, synchronous or asynchronous, traditional or new. Each channel characteristic can influence the receiver's perception, and media is never neutral as messages are transformed by the delivery channel.

Network theory is a transmission theory that recognises social influences in the communication process, and reflects the complexity and dynamics of communication in a community context (Windahl, Signitzer, & Olson, 1992). Rogers (1983) describes a communication network as individuals who are interconnected by flows of patterned communication. From the perspective of a communication planner, the presence of networks is pervasive with all citizens being part of one or several networks. However, the network theories do not dwell solely on transmission, but extend into social considerations of

exchange and normative networks (Schenk, 1985, cited by Windahl et al., 1992) which are discussed further in Section 3.2.3. Further, network theory has had an influence in theories on social capital and communications climate (Lowndes & Sullivan, 2004).

One of the most enduring transmission theories and a paradigm of mass communication, the two-step model of communication describes how people gain their information through the mass media and/or opinion leaders (Foulger, 2011; Gitlin, 1978, as cited by Windahl et al., 1992). The two-step model also describes different outcomes at each step of the communication process. It posits that communication through mass media generally results in the transfer of information, whereas the communication between opinion leader and individual is more likely to include the transfer of influences (Rogers, 1983). Matei (2011) observes the two-step model is particularly relevant to the consideration of the flows of communication in social media.

Windahl et al. (1992) say that the two-step flow model and networking theories point to the strength of personal communications over mass communication channels. Rogers and Bhowmik (1970) made an early contribution to network theory with the principle of homophily, which suggested that people are more likely to be influenced by someone who is similar to them. Nevertheless, Chaffee and Metzger (2001) disagree. They take direction from situational theory to suggest that different scenarios dictate different levels of influence, e.g. newspapers may be seen as more credible than interpersonal channels in some scenarios. Windahl et al. (1992) point out that there are weaknesses with the two-step model approach, specifically being able to control opinion leaders' contributions. The usefulness of the model also hinges on the ability to identify and communicate with opinion leaders.

Himstreet and Baty's (1984) simple hierarchy of communication levels supports the contention that interpersonal communication is more influential than mediated communication. Using a transmission approach to communication, Himstreet and Baty observe the most effective communication is two-way, face-to-face interaction with verbal, nonverbal communication and symbols, and language that is clear to participants. The second most effective level is interactive two-way communication that is not face-to face. The lowest level of communication in terms of effectiveness, and one common in council

communication, relies on written messages (e.g. letters and reports) without the assistance of instant feedback or nonverbal cues.

Windahl et al. believe that the two-step flow model makes one other important assumption that more than one channel is necessary in planned communication. Windahl et al. (1992, p. 53) argue that communication effectiveness often requires many steps and that "the implication for the communication planners is to look outside routine mass communication boundaries for communication solutions."

Chaffee and Metzger (2001) question the future of mass communication in the new media environment. The very role and definition of mass communications is under threat as information technologies confuse the theoretical boundaries. The defining features of mass communication: mass production, lack of individual control, and finite in available channels, are not true today. Contemporary media (e.g. cell phones, the internet) has essentially 'de-massified' mass communications.

Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory

Another transmission or process theory of importance for communication planners because it replicates a communications campaign is Rogers' (1983) Diffusion of Innovations Theory. Rogers' five-step model is orientated toward supporting an outcome of change and combines the mechanistic views of communication with information gaps, with theories of influence on attitudinal change, the two-step information flow and networking, to investigate how change in behaviour and attitude can be influenced (Windahl et al., 1992).

The first in the five-phase process is knowledge. Rogers' (1983) says there are three types of knowledge: how-to knowledge (e.g. how to go about making a submission, how to speak at hearings); software knowledge (e.g. awareness and explanation of the consultation issue); and principles-based knowledge (e.g. the general democratic approach to consultation). Windahl et al. (1992) note that how-to knowledge is often overlooked by communication planners in their attempts to focus on awareness and explanation. Persuasion is the second step in the Rogers' model, where the individual forms an opinion, for instance about consultation.

According to Windahl et al. (1992), the effort in communication campaigns is often aimed at the first two stages of the process. However, the later stages are vitally important. In the decision stage, an individual may either adopts or reject the innovation (in the context of this, to make a submission). According to Rogers' (1983) providing practical assistance is useful in this stage. The implementation stage is where the new action or product is attempted, and all systems that support the process must be in place to enable it. For submitters a case in point would be difficulty with an online from when making a submission, or promised submission forms not being available at libraries as promised.

In the final confirmation stage, people will look for confirmation or reinforcement of their effort. For the submitter, this stage would include the feedback letters from council post submission, and the decision made by council itself.

Importantly the diffusion of innovations theory identifies the roles of different types of information in the communication process. Windahl et al. (1992) say information and knowledge is typically conveyed by mass media at the start of the communication process, whereas the subsequent decision to take action is influenced more strongly by interpersonal communication.

Rogers (1983) also defined categories of people in respect of their likelihood to adopt a new 'innovation'. He placed them in a bell curve to identify the relative size of each adoption segment as a targeting option, as below.

Innovators >> Early adopters>> Early majority >> Late majority >> Laggards

The relevance of this model to the process of consultation lies in the ability for communication efforts to influence the laggards and late majority to participate. These two groups typically make up around half the community and are characterised by a reluctance to change, being sceptical or suspicious of new things (Rogers, 1987, as cited in Windahl et al., 1992). Importantly, Chaffee (1986) notes that late adopters may rely more on interpersonally transmitted information and different types of messages and arguments work with different groups of innovators. There are strong links between Rogers' (1983) model and those of the public relations theorists (to be discussed in Section 3.2.2).

Technology in process theory

The de-massifying of mass communication was touched on earlier in the discussion. Other theorists have identified the evolving influence of technology when identifying barriers and breakdowns in the communication process (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000; Littlejohn, 2002). Foley and Duck (2006) draw attention to the Lievrouw and Finn systems model of communication to reflect on the contribution of technology in the communication process, recognising that communication is not confined to person-to-person flows.

Using a three dimensional matrix, Lievrouw and Finn identify that all communication is in some way mediated, through technological means or in the case of face-to-face communication mediated through the five senses. The Lievrouw and Finn model analyses the characteristics of various communication channels according to the strength of involvement between participants, specifically the physical and psychological distance both between sender and receiver, the control of the message and temporality of presentation (Eunson, 2008). This model also attests to the interactivity of communication and is particularly pertinent when considering council communication because of the requirements of the LGA 2002 legislation (see Chapter Two) demands at least summaries, advertising and hearings.

Davis Foulger's (2004) ecological model, like Lievrouw and Finn's matrix, also seeks to bridge the early mechanistic models with the theories of interpersonal, organisational, and mass media perspectives. The Foulger model, shown in Figure 2 takes a social constructionist approach and adds the layers of language and media, in the context of evolving relationships and perception. It very clearly points to the dynamism of the communication and perception context showing that communication is proactive, not passive.

Chaffee (1986) comments that, as organisations communicate, a system of pathways is developed through which messages flow within and between the organisation and its publics. Those pathways and the content of the messages develop into a profile of organisational communication. However, this is an oversimplification and Chaffee and Metzger (2001) and Eunson (2008) point out many later studies showed the context, type and gravity of the story to have a major effect on influence.

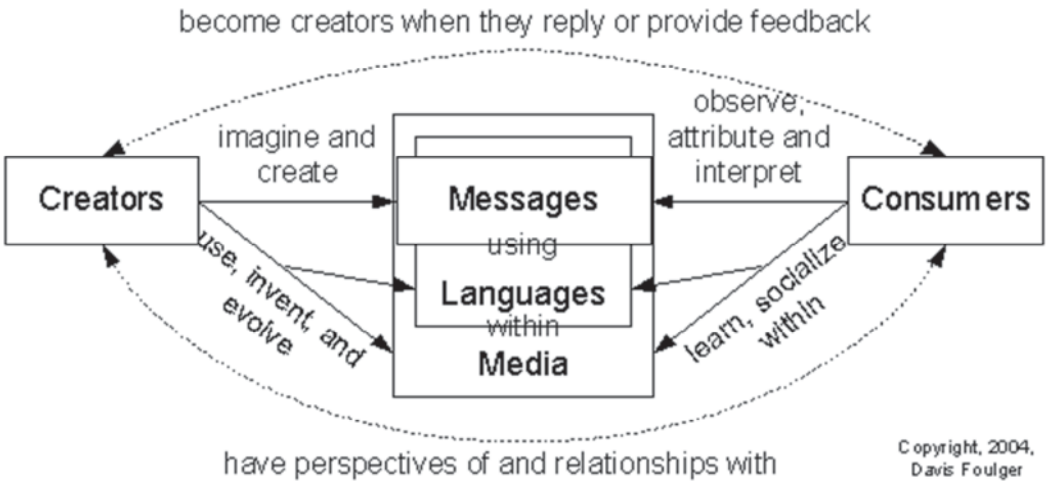


Figure 2: Foulger's Ecological Model of Communication

Source: Davis Foulger (2004) in An Ecological Model of the Communication Process, www.davisfoulger.info

3.2.2 Public Relations Theories

In contrast to transmission theories, which is an attempt to describe the communication process in a variety of contexts, public relations theory is concerned with targeted publics that frequently focuses on strategic, ongoing, and organisation-wide communication (Foley & Duck, 2006; Johnstone & Zawawi, 2003). The Symmetry or Excellence Theory dominates public relations theory (Laskin, 2009; Moloney, 2006) and is an outcomes based approach to organisational communication. Public relations theory stemmed from a comprehensive study by American researchers Grunig and Hunt in 1984 that focused on “how, why, and to what extent, communication effects the achievement of organizational objectives” (Laskin, 2009, p. 40).

Based on their extensive research Grunig and Hunt (1984) identified that the features of excellent communication are universal, irrespective of organisational size, type and nationality. They found three requirements were necessary as a basis for excellent communications and therefore excellent community relations: a strong knowledge of communication processes, shared expectations and a participative culture. Grunig and Hunt proposed four models of communication that both describe the development of communications between organisations and its publics (for instance the community), and point to a pathway to excellence.

The first two models of press agentry and public information represent less preferred one-way information flows from an organisation to its publics, similar to the first step in the participative ladder referred to in Fig. 1. The third and fourth models are more sophisticated two-way communication systems based on technical expertise and research knowledge of target audiences. Of these, the third model of asymmetrical communication seeks to understand needs, but only so that the organisation can persuade or manipulate specified publics' behaviour. Symmetrical communication uses research and technical expertise to promote negotiation and shared expectations (Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995). In this approach, communicators become advocates for public interests in decision-making.

Tymson and Lazar (2002) claim that the communication approach typically used by local government falls within the public information category of the excellence model. However, the discussion on legislative reform in Chapter Two clearly points to significant change having occurred in local government communication activity after the LGA 1989 and LGA 2002 amendments. The goals of legislative change including improved relationships with key publics and increased efficiency and effectiveness (Reid, 2005b) are the same as those of a symmetrical approach to communication as advocated by Dozier et al. (1995).

Organisational openness and a commitment to the values of participative decision-making help avoid conflict (Chandler, 2000; Dozier et al., 1995; Heath, 2001). Dozier et al. (1995) further comment that organisational culture influences the selection of communication approaches. Organisations with authoritarian cultures, characterised by centralised decision-making, authority and control will typically employ one-way or asymmetrical options (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000).

Directly referring to the principles of Grunig’s concept of symmetrical communication, Bishop (2006) identifies ten requirements for successful corporate communication: clarity, relevance, timeliness, consistency, truthfulness, presenting fundamental or core information, comprehensiveness, accessibility, caring, and responsiveness to feedback. These requirements are well captured in the codes of conduct for consultation discussed in the next Section 3.3 Consultation Guidelines.

Public relations theory focuses on mutual lines of communication, understanding and cooperation between organisations and their publics. The concept of publics is central to public relations. Grunig and Hunt (1984) characterise a public as a group of people who face a similar problem. Additionally, a particular public may, or may not recognise the problem exists, and they may or may not be active in trying to solve the problem. Grunig and Hunt identified four broad types of publics according to their awareness of, and how they relate to a problem. Non-publics do not have a problem. Latent publics have a shared problem, but are unaware of it. Aware publics know of their problem but are inactive, while active publics are additionally motivated towards doing something about the problem. Grunig and Hunt advocate that communication managers should identify their publics, and be aware of their activation status. There are clear similarities between Grunig and Hunt's activation levels and the transmission theorist Rogers' (1983) categorisation of a target population on the basis of their likelihood to adopt a new innovation. Both recommend knowledge of the perceptions of the targeted public and recognise that members of the public are likely to vary in their receptiveness to communication activities.

However, some theorists (Pieczka, 2010; E'tang, 1995, as cited in Laskin, 2009) worry that the concept of two-way communication is an ideal, an academic concept rather than a real practice. Lowndes et al. (2006) expand on this view saying that publics and organisations rarely hold equal positions. Laskin (2009) takes a more pessimistic stance noting that the result of symmetrical communication practices by organisations acts to dilute the power of publics, particularly stakeholders who are critical of the organisation. Laskin says "even if communications seem symmetrical, the end result is still likely to be asymmetrical, favouring the side with the most power, in other words, the corporation" (p. 45). These comments have clear implications for ongoing levels of trust and integrity, which are a goal of symmetrical communication.

Larissa Grunig (2000) says support for public relations theory has waxed and waned since its inception, but she believes that public relations theory is now being reborn in relationship management or building theories. Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (1997) join Grunig in reasoning that relationships are at the center of public relations study. Pieczda (2011) disagrees that public relations theory and relationship management theory are one in the same. She connects public relations and relationship building by orientation and when

referring to public relations, says that “we can conclude that what the discipline deals in is communication, but what it deals with is relationship” (p. 108).

Many theorists look to measure the effectiveness of public relations activity, and use different facets of the organisation-public relationships as the measure. Grunig (2001) cites Huang’s (2000) when pointing out the characteristics that define good relationships include trust, control mutuality, commitment and satisfaction. Kim and Rader (2010, p. 59) concur, stating that “the key indicator of public relations effectiveness in considered to be the extent to which an organization’s communication efforts influence their target public’s perception, attitude and behavior towards their relationships”.

Bruning and Ledingham (1999) also measure the influence of public relations activity on organisation-public relationships, and they venture that relationship quality can be measured at an interpersonal, professional or community level. Bruning and Ledingham used five measures; trust, openness, involvement, investments, and commitment to gauge the effectiveness of the organisation-public relationships.

Similarly, Hon and Grunig’s (1999) measures of the effectiveness of organisation-public relationships used five dimensions: trust, satisfaction, commitment, communal relationship, and exchange relationship. Hon and Grunig (1999) defined public relations theory as encompassing both communication-based relationships (which are symbolic), and behavioural relationships (which are based on actions and events).

Kim and Radar (2010) assert that communication-based and behavioural relationships must be intertwined because, if separated, public relations would become purely an image building exercise. They state organisational communication is essential in the initial establishment of publics’ expectations towards the relationship. Broome et al. (1997) link relationship management with the earlier transmission theories noting that the way in which a public’s accesses and uses organisational information is also a gauge of the status of an organisation-public relationship.

Overall, the theory that communication is a cornerstone to organisational effectiveness is well accepted (Barnett & O'Rourke, 2006; Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Heath, 2001; Johnstone &

Zawawi, 2003; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000; Moloney, 2006). To this point in the subsection, the discussion on public relations theory has worked through approaches to measuring the effectiveness of public relations and relationship building . However, putting symmetrical communication into practice reveals a huge variety in the ways an organisation may link to its publics.

Woerkam and Aarts (2008) developed a model to describe the dependencies between an organisation and stakeholder publics. They defined five groups, which all have an interest in the organisation's decisions and the ability to influence decision-making: Normative groups (e.g. media, lobby groups), groups with comparable goals (e.g. neighbouring councils), enabling groups (e.g. government agencies, funders), input groups (e.g. personnel, knowledge), and output groups (e.g. citizens).

Woerkam and Aarts (2008) place the organisation at the center of these categories of publics and identify it as a constantly changing network that creates both opportunities and threats. They note three main styles of approach are used by organisations to communicate with their publics. The first approach is based on a diversity of channels (e.g. face to face, mediated, one or two sided, using different communications senses). The second approach focuses on the aims of communication activities (e.g. whether the organisation conducts an information campaign or a persuasion campaign). The final approach seeks to link intentions to intermediate effects (viewing communication as a way to learn about the environment and position itself accordingly)

While Woerkam and Aarts draw a conceptual framework for better understanding stakeholders/publics, Bussy and Kelly (2010, p. 290) query how stakeholders are identified in practice.

> Clearly not all citizens can, or would wish to, actively participate in policy development on every possible occasion. However, on what basis should the subset of citizens to be consultation on any given issues (i.e. the stakeholders) be selected? Do they simply select themselves?

Tymson, Lazar and Lazar (2002) draw on management theory to describe stakeholders almost identically to the 'publics' of Woerkam and Aarts framework. Tymson et al. define stakeholders as "people who in some way have a stake in the way in which a company behave or performs, and whose support, tolerance or hostility can be important to that company's success" (p. 398). Thus, there are clear commonalities between stakeholder management theories of De Bussy and Kelly (2010) and Tymson et al. (2002), and the public relations theories of Grunig and Hunt (1984), Bruning and Ledingham (1999) and Woerkum and Aarts (2008).

Dozier et al. (1995) also used the stakeholder concept to define activist/lobby group represent critical stakeholders claiming that trust and mutuality reduce the likelihood that lobby groups will adopt an aggressive stance to the organisation. However, Grunig (2000) found that there was no link between satisfaction and commitment and the outcome of conflict between activists and organisations.

Piecska (2011) contends that dialogue has been central to public relations since the first theories of excellence. She suggests that the core role of dialogue is establishing 'commonality' – much like Hon and Grunig's (1999) concept of mutuality. Pieczka also notes that communication occupies a fundamental role in democracy and community-building, and should be seen as a way of establishing social connections that go far beyond the transfer of information. Combining the concepts of relationships and democracy, Pieczka maintains that Habermas's theories of democracy were antecedents to public relations theory. She explains this by saying his "interest focused on the constitution of public legitimacy for the set of rules regulating the conditions and relations which need to be present for public communication to underpin an inclusive fair and rational system of government" (2011, p. 111).

Technology in public relations

As mentioned in the discussion on process theories, technology now has a pervasive effect on communication. In relation to public relations perspectives, technology is able to facilitate two-way communication to support symmetrical relationships with publics including the media and stakeholders (Grunig, 2000). Websites, for example, are useful for growing and maintaining relationships between organisations and publics (Kim & Rader, 2010) and access

to the internet is now prevalent (Smith, Gibson, Crothers, Billot, & Bell, 2011)). Social media in particular allows for much stronger and connected social inquiry than many other communication activities (Bittle, Haller, & Kaldec, 2009; Dyer, 2010; MacIntosh, 2002).

However, internet use varies according to demographic indicators, particularly genders and is therefore an important consideration in public relations practice (Grunig, 2000; Pew Internet, 2012; Smith et al., 2011). Overall, if the aim of communication is not simply to transfer information, but also a specific outcome—say to share understanding—the considerations of asymmetrical control and less satisfactory communication outcomes are important (Dozier et al., 1994; Oliver, 2000).

3.2.3 Social Theories

Covey (1992), like Lievrouw and Finn's mediated communications model (Foley & Duck, 2006), looks at control and involvement in his relational communication theories. However, Covey's approach focuses on the development of trust and good intentions to achieve effective communication. Covey (p. 112) insists communication is contextual being grounded in perspective, and suggests "meanings are not found in words – they are found in people". Other writers, such as Kelly (2006) and Oliver (2000) agree saying the assignment of meaning to a term is an internal process. Covey explains that the nature of communication is about sharing, trust, confidence and empathy; he notes that positive relationships encourage positive interpretation of verbal, non-verbal, intentional and non-intentional communication.

The interpersonal perspective model developed by Wilmot (1995) adds to the considerations of Foulger (2004) (discussed in the subsection on transmission theories). Taking an outcome-based approach to communication, Wilmot (1995) noted that the degree to which perspectives matched (between sender and receiver) had a significant bearing on the success of a relationship and communication. Ledingham and Bruning (2000) and Mortenson (2005) concur, saying perspectives are often inaccurate, and the resulting misunderstandings are more often the cause of a relationship breakdown than disagreements.

Unlike Wilmot's (1995) interpersonal perspective model, which focused on the accuracy of perspectives, Covey's (1992) model is based on the establishment of trust and belief in good intent as an integral part of the successful interpretation of the physical message, Hollman

and Kleiner (1997) similarly suggest this is the key to developing rapport in a relationship. Self-concept is also an important part of relationship building. Covey identifies two worlds. In the 'inner' world there are personal maps which are private subjective readings inside our heads giving us frames of reference through which to interpret happening. Territory is the 'real' objective world, and for the receiver there is the combined logic of the message listened to with the ears and then the emotion of the message received through the heart and eyes (Covey, 1992; Eunson, 2008; Kelly, 2006; Mathis, 2007). Communication influences through modelling (or behaviour) seen by the receiver, building relationships (felt by others) and mentoring and instruction (heard by others).

Political theories link closely to communications theory and organisational culture. While the submitter has the desire the influence council decision, council holds a dominant position of power in the decision-making process (Nash, 2007). The way in which an organisation exerts power can create major barriers to participative decision-making and submitter satisfaction (Community Empowerment Division, 2006). Thus, communication activity that is underpinned by egalitarian person-support cultures is more likely to satisfy submitter and the wider community needs. Conversely, where an individual perceives or experiences centralised or bureaucratic power cultures, they are less likely to be satisfied. This typology reflects the organisation holding power and the individual has little influence (Campbell & Finch, 2005).

Nevertheless, while communities may have to make different types of decisions, they generally make similar judgements on fairness. The concepts proposed by Sweitzer and Gibson (2007) are relevant to judgement on the effectiveness of all stages of consultation. Sweitzer and Gibson believe that satisfaction and citizens' perceptions of ethical fairness of any decision relies on three different facets of justice: distributive justice, which in the case of consultation concentrates on the outcomes of council decision-making; procedural justice, which looks at how decisions are made during the consultation process; and interactional justice, which looks at the sensitivity with which communications are distributed. These ethical expectations have clear parallels with the consultation process requirements discussed in the first section of this chapter, and are also echoed in the research findings of Comrie (1999), Forgie (2001), and Department of Internal Affairs (2007), which are discussed more fully in Section 3.3 Investigations into Local Government Consultation Practices.

Explanations play a major part in perceptions of fairness. Providing explanations has a positive effect on an individual's reaction to decisions (Sweitzer & Gibson, 2007). Yet, even with this apparent commonality in ethical frameworks, conflict often arises over the purpose of consultation (Barton & Shaw, 2001). Different understandings of what participative decision-making processes entail contribute to tensions (Arnstein, 1969; Birch, 2002), and wide variations in knowledge and culture in the community often lead to different world views (Nash, 2007).

Yukl's (2006) observations of participative leadership are also relevant to council consultation, and are similar to those of participative democracy. Participants experience the benefits of downward consultation through improved quality of decisions by gathering knowledge, increasing acceptance or support for a solution, conflict resolution and team/community building. However, Yukl also points out that the quality of a decision is also affected by situation variables including the importance of the decision, how much knowledge is distributed, the goals of participants, participant characteristics and values and the constraints placed by time.

Additionally, when moving to a participative approach, if there is a considerable change in the leadership style, and people have not experienced the improved outcomes as a result, there will typically be a reluctance to commit to the new approach. Yukl (2006) additionally notes the difficulty in measuring satisfaction with participative leadership because it is generally conducted looking at the overall satisfaction of participants, not at the contributing factors such as the satisfaction with the approach or handling of a decision, or the resultant commitment of participants to the decision, or the changes required as a result of the decision.

Yukl (2006, p. 93) states that "after more than 50 years of research on participation we are left with the conclusion that participative leadership sometimes results in higher satisfaction, effort, and performance, and at other times it does not".

3.2.4 Conclusion

Ultimately the theories reviewed have revealed a wide range of tactical and strategic considerations for consultation. The transmissions theories remain extremely useful for

communication planners, particularly when reflecting on the different stages of consultation communication, and the strengths of different media and channels. Transmission theories also reinforce the need to combine multiple approaches to communication, and reflect the influence that technology has both as a channel for communication.

Public relations theories focus on the outcome of communications, and interestingly, mirror the legislated intentions of participative decision-making processes in the LGA 2002, i.e. a communication process that supports improved organisational effectiveness – specifically decision-making in the case of councils. The contribution of public relations to the process of identifying target publics and recognising their different characteristics and needs is extremely valuable. Yet for all the discussion on best-practice approaches, many public relations theorists (Barnett & Crowther, 1998; Crozier, 2004; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000) still have doubts as do a number of democratic theorists (Arnstein, 1969; Drydyk, 2005; Norris, 2011; Pallot, n.d) that the participative approach can be as successful in practice as it is in theory.

The social theories of power and influence provided some insight into the effect control has in any communication relationship. Particularly important to the discussion on consultation effectiveness are the measures of fairness proposed by Sweitzer and Gibson (2007) where the contributions of interaction, process and outcome finds resonance with transmission and public relations/relation management theories. In rounding out the section, Yukl's (2006) statement neatly captures the imprecise nature of communication, reinforcing that a multi-layered, multi-channel, multi-actioned approach to consultation communication appears most likely to succeed.

3.3 Consultation Guidelines

This section provides that theoretical grounding, and then introduces best practice guidelines in consultation published by central and local government agencies to strengthen consultation programmes in New Zealand and internationally. The paper goes on to discussing the variations.

Local government legislation defines the communication activity required for council consultations, for both ordinary and special consultative processes (the LTCCP consultation is conducted under the latter). However, the legislation determines only the baseline requirements for consultation. Flexibility remains around the selection of the consultation subject/subjects and the wider consultation approach (Knight, 2010; The Office of the Auditor-General, 2007).

Council consultation practices are subject to other influences including resource availability, staff skill levels, community and stakeholder relationships (Burke, 2004) as already discussed. Industry best practice guidelines also exert influence over consultation practice. This section looks at definitions of consultation best-practice according to local and central government, both national and internationally.

3.3.1 New Zealand Guidelines

In New Zealand, agencies that work with local government have provided guidelines and commentary on the best-practice consultation. The Auditor-General, Kevin Brady released a code of good practice for advertising reflecting on major advances in communication technology and the adoption rate of that technology.

The Auditor-General's (2004) principles-based document takes on the wider concept of communication, providing sound guidelines for the interpretation of the Act. The guidelines placed five broad requirements of local government consultation communication. The communication must be unbiased, comprehensive, and anticipate and include all significant viewpoints. Pre-decision communication should also be objective, and include advantages and disadvantages of the options being discussed. To promote the transparency and accountability, the Auditor-General suggests discussions with specific interest groups should be conducted through the media and with designated spokespeople rather than professional communicators. The guidelines also specify all communication activity must avoid using, or be perceived to be using, council resources to engage in any sort of political debate with a particular area of the community. Finally, the Auditor-General makes careful distinction between pre- and post-decision communications.

While current local government legislation is prescriptive about what council decisions require consultation, councils are still allowed a wide remit concerning additional decisions on which they may choose to consult (Reid, 2005b; The Office of the Auditor-General, 2007). Depending on the decision required, decision procedures may vary and the selection of consultation activities is therefore important. This is an important aspect when considering scenarios where councils are not required to consult, but may choose to do so because of perceived community or political sensitivities (Kweit & Kweit, 2007). Given the rising community expectation to be able to participate in council decision-making, making the decision to consult on decisions for which consultation is not mandatory can be difficult. Councils must carefully weigh the costs of consultation (including resources, time and raising community expectations) against the value of the consultation outcomes (Barton & Shaw, 2001; Richardson & Winefield, 2007). The parameters of local government activity were significantly relaxed with the Local Government Act 2002 (Reid, 2005b). The changing expectations and perceptions of local government were strongly influenced by this shift (Burns et al., 1994).

3.3.2 British Guidelines

The British Government has a code of conduct, now in its third iteration, to improve the consultation with stakeholders (British Government, 2008). The code details seven consultation criteria in a process-orientated approach that requires special consideration of the consultation timing, time span, clarity of scope and implications, accessibility, relevance to manage consultation fatigue, active and action-orientated feedback loops, council staff consultation skill levels and sharing of knowledge.

Formal consultation should take place at a stage when there is scope to influence the policy outcome. This principle balances the need for early contribution to the process by stakeholders, meeting stakeholders' desire to be consulted in the formative stages of planning and policy, with providing enough information to the public to facilitate informed debate. It also addresses the need sometimes to use methods other than formal consultation for seeking input, e.g. pre-consultation and issues around consulting during election periods, or deliberative techniques. The duration of consultation also requires careful consideration with longer periods of consultation encouraged to meet the needs of stakeholder groups and allow for other constraints, e.g. if a consultation goes over the summer holiday period.

Consultation documents should have clarity of scope and impact. They must be clear about the consultation process, what is being proposed, the scope to influence and the expected costs and benefits of the proposals. This criterion stresses the importance of being absolutely clear about the reason for the consultation exercise and the process. A standard table of basic information on the impact of the consultation is also suggested to make it easy for potential participants to work out quickly whether a consultation is of interest or have the potential to impact them.

The consultation process must be designed to be accessible, and then targeted at those people/groups the process aims to reach. Therefore stakeholder-mapping and designing communication processes to connect with target audiences is important.

The toll of consultation participation on stakeholders can be a burden, therefore consultation should be kept to a minimum so good participation levels can be consistently gained and consultation fatigue avoided. The guidelines encourage making the best possible use of existing data and consulting only to add to it or validate it is generally less burdensome. The criterion also talks about joining up consultation exercises and keeping to a minimum any administration associated with consultation. Intelligent use of new technology can help.

Consultation responses should be analysed carefully and clear feedback should be provided to participants following the consultation. The feedback should include the analysis of all input received during consultation exercises. The public and submitters should be kept informed following consultation exercises, usually with a summary of the responses and an explanation of how the consultation exercise has influenced decision-making. The organisation needs to have the capacity to consult. Staff running consultations should be adequately skilled on effective consultation practice, the effectiveness of consultations should be monitored, and learnings as a result of the consultation should be the shared.

The Audit Commission in the United Kingdom assesses local government consultation practices using similar criteria to the guidelines (May, 2006). Audit requirements can be distilled down to five indicators: the council showing commitment to citizen engagement; the council using a variety of consultation approaches to understand community needs; the

consultation having clarity of purpose (feedback and good communication of the consultation subjects); the council using appropriate communication channels (the Commission recommend an additional deliberative approach of a citizens' panels but on the basis that panels are a fairly sophisticated instrument the council is likely to have a range of others as well); and final communication from councils should focus on the results of the consultation that changed and improved outcomes as a result.

3.3.3 Other Guidelines and Recommendations

The Australian Government (2008) also has a published code of conduct for consultation. In the Australian guidelines, the seven criteria recommended reveal slight differences to the British codes with a heavier focus on continuity – ensuring consultation starts early in the decision process and continues throughout. Instead of concerns for the potential burden of consultation on submitters, the Australian guidelines focus on a consultation process that is consistent and flexible, so that submitters know what to expect. The Australian code does not openly discuss a council's capacity to consult, but infers this expectation in the requirements for continuity and consistency.

In addition to national codes of consultation conduct, there are a number of government-led initiatives that are actively searching for best-practice methods for consultation. The 'Civic Pioneer Initiative' in the United Kingdom has recruited councils that had shown a commitment to participative decision-making to a project to develop better ways at involving citizens in decision-making (Community Empowerment Division, 2006). The preliminary results took a different approach to best practice community engagement and consultation by specifying nine key ingredients as prerequisites to the formal consultation and engagement. The pioneers argue that the approach to participative decision-making needs to be driven from the community, in a grass roots method. The consultation needs to debate single issues, and be adequately resourced. Leaders must be prepared to champion the approach, and an organisational culture to support community participation. Local involvement and structures plus agency/partnership working relationship are important. Overall, the Community Empowerment Division says there needs to be clear objectives or targets in the consultation and stability within the structures and personal to continue to develop relationships, particularly the council – for with stability comes consistency, trust, and clearer communication.

3.3.4 Conclusion

Not surprisingly the consultation guidelines reviewed contain most of the practices recommended in the major streams of communications theory discussed in Section 3.2. There was also commonality revealed between the sets of guidelines, but also some variations worth touching on in conclusion. Both Australia and Britain have taken strong approaches to defining consultation best practice and they are relatively consistent with the New Zealand's local government consultation guidelines, focusing on the process elements of consistency, timeliness, clarity and accuracy, ease of use and access, responsiveness, continuity, and organisational capabilities. However, the British guidelines align more clearly with theory, with additional emphasis on stakeholder contribution with their concerns for consultation fatigue (choosing when to consult). There is no comment given to consideration of the timing of consultation in the Australian and New Zealand guidelines. The British guidelines also emphasise feedback and focus on the feedback content to demonstrate where submitters have influenced change. The British guidelines additionally acknowledge the requirement for appropriate staff skill levels and subsequent communication within the organisation of the information learned from the consultation.

3.4 Investigations into Local Government Consultation Practices

Citizen expectations of participative decision-making practices in New Zealand local government have been given context in the earlier chapter on current legislative requirements (see Section 2.3) and in the investigation of contemporary democratic theory in Section 3.1. This section now moves to review the research findings on citizen attitudes to council, their expectations of consultation, participation levels, perceptions and satisfaction with consultation practices. The perceptions of council staff and politicians are also included to provide additional perspective of the findings and balance to the discussion.

3.4.1 Attitudes towards Council

Local Government New Zealand commissioned national research (Robertson & Rout, 2006) that found citizens typically associated local government with rubbish collection and disposal, roads, recreation and cultural facilities, water and wastewater services, and to a lesser extent health protection and environmental management services. Total awareness was

reported as high across services. Rural ratepayers had a better unprompted recall than urban ones, and were more focused on roads, while urban ratepayers were more likely to list parks and open spaces than rural ratepayers. Of other services provided by council, ratepayers tended to recall that were relevant to them.

In the same year, another study was completed by the Department of Internal Affairs (2006), testing citizens' knowledge of their councils. While respondents were fairly evenly split in their self-professed knowledge of their reported territorial or city council ('a good deal' 30 percent, 'neutral' 38 percent, 'not much' 32 percent), ratepayers reported very low levels of understanding of the activity of their regional council ('a good deal' 18 percent, 'neutral' 25 percent, 'not much' 56 percent).

Robertson and Rout's (2006) Local Government New Zealand study 'Improving the reputation of local government' found nine percent of ratepayers could not recall any services provided by council. Young ratepayers and those who had not had involvement in local government process were more likely to not recall services (29 percent of those aged 20 – 29, and 17 percent of those who had not had involvement).

Ratepayers identified the top priorities for local government as roads and road safety (38 percent), water and sanitation (32 percent) town planning and environment management (22 percent) and rubbish collection and disposal (19 percent). These services were identified as essential core services for councils to deliver. Within those findings, rural ratepayers placed great emphasis on road and road safety services. Town planning and environment management services were more likely to be a priority for ratepayers with high incomes (over $100,000). Those on a low income (less than $20,000) were generally unconcerned about their council's performance in this area of services.

For the core services of rubbish collection and disposal, sports facilities, cultural facility water and sanitation and health protection, satisfaction was high, with over 70 percent being satisfied. There were lower satisfaction levels for town planning and environment management and roading and road safety. Richardson and Rout (2006) also found rural ratepayers tend to perceive rating systems as unfair because they do not have access to all the

services provided by council (e.g. water reticulation, rubbish disposal and cultural facilities); as a result the rural sector is less generally satisfied with councils.

Table 2 presents the findings of the 'Improving the reputation of local government' survey in relation to citizen attitudes towards local government and their expectation of opportunities to participate in decision-making. Overall, two thirds of ratepayers believe their council does a good job. Nevertheless, there was a concern that council services are inefficient, a perception driven by spending decisions according to the differing agendas of citizens (who would consider that council 'wasted' money on unnecessary things). There were observations of apparent inefficiencies (e.g. digging up newly resealed roads), councils funding private enterprises and council workers seen driving "flash cars". There was also a perception of inefficiency in areas not well understood by ratepayers e.g. biodiversity, regulations and cultural activities. However, the survey did find ratepayers believe that councils should have a long-term focus, and invest in assets for the future.

Table 2: Citizens' attitudes towards local government

Survey questions	**Don't know %**	**Strongly disagree %**	**Disagree** %	**Neutral %**	**Agree %**	**Strongly Agree %**
1.The Councils wastes ratepayers money on unnecessary things	2	4	21	19	35	19
2.Overall I think the Council does a good job	0	3	12	19	57	9
3.Councillors have the best interests of the local community at heart	1	7	21	23	42	7

Source: Adapted from Richardson and Rout, *Improving the reputation of local government*, 2006, p. 13.

The research noted that ratepayers separate council performance from the actions of the politicians. Many ratepayers believe councillors do not make decisions according to the best interests of the community, but do so to advance their own needs. This finding reinforced the theoretical weaknesses of representative democracy noted in Section 3.1.1.

3.4.2 Expectations of Consultation

Richardson and Rout (2006) were also able to link attitudes towards council expenditure, performance and councillor representation, with the ratepayers' desire to have the option to participate in decision-making. Most ratepayers (87 percent) felt it was important, or very important to be able to 'have a say'.

The Department of Internal Affairs (2006) conducted a similar survey to Richardson and Rout's Local Government New Zealand survey, looking at engagement levels with local government. Taking Local Government New Zealand's overwhelming finding that ratepayers felt it was important to have a say in decisions, the Department of Internal Affairs asked if citizens wanted to have more say in council decisions. This question tested citizens' desire for consultation activities to be expanded to cover more decisions. Almost half the respondents (47 percent) answered positively. Māori, as a subsample, felt even more strongly with 57 percent wanting to have more say.

The findings of New Zealand researchers are similar to those internationally. As noted in the Chapter Two on local government history, British local government systems have had a major influence on New Zealand legislation. Britain was an early adopter of participative decision-making and according to the Department of Communities and Local Government (2006) British citizens also have a strong belief in the right, or chance, to contribute to decision-making.

3.4.3 Participation Profiles in Local Government Consultation

While Richardson and Rout's (2006) local government survey found that citizens had high expectations for participation in local government decision-making, whether their expectation are converted into the action of submitting is another issue. Local Government New Zealand and the Department of Internal Affairs conducted research in the early 90s, tracking participation in the Annual Planning process, as a result of the Local Government Act 1989 amendments. A comparison between the 1992 and 1994 Annual Plan consultations revealed increasing submission levels (75 percent of surveyed councils reported receiving over 20 submissions in 1994/5 as compared to just over 40 percent in the earlier survey. Overall, the number of submissions in relation to the number of electors increased from 0.04 to 17.4 per 1000 electors (or 1.74 percent). The other key finding of the Department of Internal Affairs

(1995) annual plan of 1994 was that higher participation occurred with territorial authority consultations than with regional authorities.

Richard and Rout's (2006) research of ratepayers revealed that only 24 percent of ratepayers had experienced any involvement with council (i.e. been involved with council process, applied for permits or consents, made submissions or attended meetings). Of those reporting involvement, 35 percent had made a submission to council (though for rural ratepayers this number swelled to 55 percent) with around half of those having participated in the previous year.

A more recent report by the Department of Internal Affairs (2010) on the submission levels to the 2009 LTCCP consultation confirmed that many councils received record numbers of submissions. The report noted a trend of increasing participation in council consultations, observing that this may have been due to greater engagement or the impact of a specific issue.

Within the general trend of rising participation the Department of Internal Affairs (2010) compared rural and provincial councils, and found that rural authorities tended to receive higher numbers of submissions in relation to the number of households than metropolitan councils. This finding reinforced Richardson and Rout's (2006) findings about rural/urban ratepayer involvement in consultations and Drage's (2008) broader findings on participation in local government elections.

New Zealand researchers have also investigated other submitter characteristics. Vicky Forgie (2001) looked at the demographic profile of submitters to the 1999 Annual Plan consultation run by six lower North Island councils (Palmerston North City Council, Wellington City Council, Kapiti District Council, Wellington Regional, Carterton District Council, and Horizons (Manawatu-Wanganui Regional Council). Table 3 summarises Forgie's research findings showing that submissions were dominated by men, older individuals, those with higher incomes, those with higher education levels. Community organisations and businesses made up almost half the submitters, and one in three submitters were doing so for the first time.

Table 3: V. Forgie's (2001) findings on the demographic characteristics of submitters

Demographic characteristic	Finding
Gender	Men (58.9 percent) were more likely to make submissions than women (41.1 percent).
Age	Under 25 years (3 percent), 25 – 40 years (17 percent), 41 – 50 years (18 percent), 51-65 years (32 percent), 66 years and over (22 percent), no answer (8 percent).
Property ownership	With individual submission makers, 82 percent owned property, 11 percent rented.
Income	A tendency was noted towards disproportionately lower levels of participation by citizens in lower income brackets.
Occupations	Participation in local government consultation was dominated by those in management positions or in their own business. Retired citizens made up 28 percent, not retired 63.6 percent.
Representation	Individual (55.3 percent), community organisation or business (44.7 percent).
Submission experience	First-time submitters (33.5 percent), once (19.5 percent), twice (17 percent), three or more times (28.5 percent).

Source: Forgie, V. (2001). *Submission-makers' perceptions of the annual plan process in New Zealand local government*. Palmerston North: Massey University.

Additionally Jordan **(2004)** completed research in the period after the 2002 amendments, investigating submitters' perceptions of the 2004 LTCCP process of four councils; Palmerston North City, Rangitikei District, Tararua District and Wanganui District.

Table 4 presents the findings from this later research, which shows a shift towards more women making submissions, though submitters still tended to be older, and have tertiary qualifications. First-time submitters made up around the same proportion of submitters as Forgie's (2001) earlier research.

Table 4: A. Jordan's (2004) findings on the demographic characteristics of submitters

Demographic characteristic	Finding
Gender	Just over half were female but there was variation between districts.
Age	16– 24 (3 percent), 25 – 34 (4 percent), 35 – 44 (13 percent), 45 – 65 (43 percent), over 65 (29 percent), no response (8 percent).
Education	The majority had a qualification (54 percent)
Occupations	A quarter of the respondents were retired One-third of respondents were in employment and the other largest groups were part-time (12 percent) and self-employed (12 percent).
Submission experience	First-time submitters (32 percent), previous submitter (68 percent)

Source: Jordan, A. (2004) *Participation through communication: An investigation of communication tools used by stakeholders when participating in local democracy*. Palmerston North: Massey University

Jean Drage noted similar results in the profiles of women noting that not only were women less likely to participate in submissions (2002), they were also less likely to be a political representative or in council senior management (2006) a trend that extended into Australia and Asia (2001).

Norris (2001) noted a similar profile apparent in her international comparisons of democratic activism. Norris found that higher education levels were strongly linked to higher political interest levels, and she reasoned that the cognitive skills and capabilities developed by schooling were likely to improve a citizen's understanding of complex issues. As a result, Norris found higher levels of engagement amongst the educated.

The process of identifying the profiles of New Zealand submitters to local government consultations reflects the demographic characteristics of submitters. Importantly, those who are less likely to participate are also identified at the same time. These demographic groups can be regarded as 'difficult to reach' (Brackertz, Zwart, Meredyth, & Ralston, 2005). Australian researchers Brackertz (2007), Carson (2008, 2011), and Brackertz et al. (2005) also identify groups with certain attitudinal characteristics as difficult to access. Brackertz (2007) contends that people are likely to be hard to reach because they believe that council does not listen to citizens, does not care about them, or that council activity is irrelevant to them.

In her work with Australian councils, Brackertz (2007) also identified other hard to reach groups: culturally and linguistically diverse groups; the young; elderly; disabled; homeless; indigenous; businesses (traders); and those with low civic skills. However, context is more important than an inventory, as Brackertz et al. (2005) and Carson (2011) point out that groups may be more difficult to engage in some locations or contexts, and not in others.

The impact of differing agendas

The general agendas of environmental, economic, social or cultural concerns are specified in the legislated purpose of local government (LGA 2002, Part 2. Section 10(b)). Within these broad categories there is, by virtue of the number of services provided and the diversity of community needs, a diversity of agendas that makes local government decision-making extremely complex. Balancing multiple agendas is therefore a process that can generate considerable conflict (Nash, 2007). The submitter's level of awareness of council activities and responsibilities also influences the topics of submissions.

An early study by the Department of Internal Affairs (1995) asked councils about the common agendas expressed by submitters in the Annual Plan consultations. Half the councils reported improving basic services (in particular, sewerage, roading, and flood protection) was a core theme of submissions. Increasing community services (e.g. libraries, welfare, or recreation) received only slightly fewer comments (at 43 percent). Reducing overall spending was reported by a third of councils.

Forgie (2001) found that submitters in the 1999/2000 Annual Plan focused on five main areas of concern: rates and charges; the provision of physical facilities; social facilities; the quality of the local environment; and the quality of council services. Half the submitters in Forgie's research said they made a submission because of a particular issue, while around one in five did so because they were concerned with the quality of their council's decision-making.

The focus on infrastructure as a leading submission agenda has continued, but with some interesting additions according to more recent research. A recent investigation of the 2009 LTCCP consultation and plan content by the Department of Internal Affairs (2010) confirmed councils generally tended to focus on wider economic and social issues, the results of

community consultation, and the audit process. There is no mention in this report of environmental or cultural issues being central considerations.

The general themes identified included the influence the economic downturn has had on the community, with this concern rippling through to plans for delivering services. This issue was specifically linked with affordability of rates and councils had typically responded by aiming to balance affordability with ongoing levels of service. There was a related focus on maintaining infrastructure service levels and an emphasis on long term planning, particularly with major assets. Finally, there was clear recognition by councils of their important leadership role in their communities.

Agendas are also influenced by council communication (Cook, 2006; Freeman, 2006; Richardson & Rout, 2006), and by the decision-making styles of both councillors and the community (Nash, 2007). Simon Nash (2007) dedicated his thesis to the difficulty of integrating the wide variety of agendas into local government decision-making. Nash noted the decision-making styles of council and community had various characteristics e.g. fact versus emotion, technologists versus environmentalists, science versus society.

3.4.4 Influences on Participation Levels

Barriers to engagement

Nationally and internationally many citizens remain unengaged, or have become disengaged, with the consultation process. The barriers to engagement vary (Brachertz, 2007; Cheyne, 1997; Comrie, 1998; Drage, 2004; Forgie, 2001; Lowndes & Sullivan, 2004; Nash, 2008). In the Department of Internal Affairs (2006) research looking at public knowledge of local government, 36 percent of respondents said that it was unlikely or very unlikely that they would give their views on a subject to council. The most common reason cited was that they ‘couldn’t be bothered’ (36.2 percent), they did not bother to make a submission because it ‘would make no difference’ (28 percent), and they ‘did not have the time’ (19.2 percent).

Levels of participation are also a product of the transparency of a political system as suggested by the Department of Internal Affairs’ (2007) study on barriers to participation. The ten main constraints to participation are shown in Figure 3.

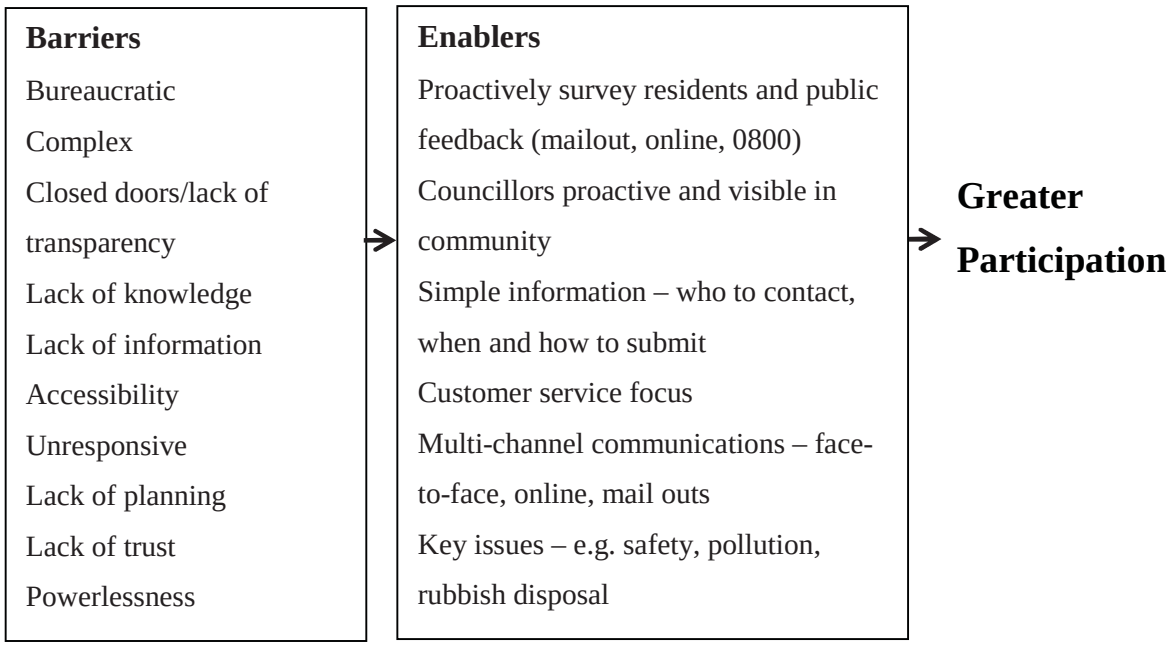


Figure 3: Barriers and enablers to participation

Source: The Department of Internal Affairs, 2007. *Barriers and Enablers to Participation in Local Government. A qualitative report summary.*

Leading British theorists Lowndes et al. (2006) developed a model of participation barriers that has clear similarities to the Department of Internal Affairs (2007) model. They identified three central determinants to participation: the capability and capacity to participate (resources) often indicated by demographic status; the level of social capital in the community (relationships); and the formal and informal norms that govern participation (rules).

Lowndes et al. (2006) note that the relationships between the three drivers of resources, relationships and rules drivers are complex, but they recognised ‘resources’ as the strongest influence to participation at a local level. However, “institutional rules in the participation game” (Lowndes et al., 2006, p. 542) both formal and informal, have a huge impact on participation levels and can shape engagement. Lowndes et al. pointed out that the ‘rules’ are the most important consideration for councils because it is the area that can be most easily changed in the short term. Examples of these rules include methods of making a submission, and the length of time allowed for submission.

The Socio-Economic Status model identifies that in localities where people have high levels of resources—civic skills, money and education—participation tends to be higher. A citizen audit in Britain predicted that this trend is likely to continue as participation modes become more individualistic (Pattie et al., 2004). The influence of social capital revolves around relationships of trust and reciprocity between decision-making participants; council, community and individuals. Social capital builds into patterns either consciously or unconsciously that shape participation (Putman, 1993). However, writers conclude that social capital has a weaker influence on participation levels than resources and rules, and at any rate trust is not a prerequisite for participation (Lowndes et al., 2006; Pattie et al., 2004).

Foley and Duck (2006) argue the importance of relationships, saying in a more general sense they are pervasive and the existence of good relationships enhances social identity which feeds back into social capital. Weiss (1974) proposed several outcomes from relationships that are particularly relevant to the discussion on social capital and the consultation process. These include: a sense of belonging and a sense of reliable alliance; emotional integration and stability; opportunities for communication about self; provision of assistance and support; reassurance of worth and value; and an opportunity to help others. While these are primarily individual provisions, they go some way to predict and explain the expectations of citizens in their relationship with councils.

New Zealand researchers Jordan and Comrie (2006) investigated ‘rules’ when looking at how submitters made their comments to council consultations. Paper and post was used by 78 percent of the submitters in their four-council project. Oral submissions were used by 13 percent and, curiously, electronic submissions were used by under 2 percent, while around 1 percent used the phone. The research showed that there was little change in approach from their practice in previous years for those that were repeat submitters (close to 70 percent of the sample).

The Department of Internal Affairs’ (2010) review of the 2009 LTCCP looked at council submission forms and found that councils using submission forms based on tick-boxes tended to receive submissions focused on the material in the boxes, while submission forms with opportunity for open-ended questions tended to elicit a more comprehensive range of

feedback. The report made no comment of the impact a tick-box style submission form had on submitter numbers.

The Department for Communities and Local Government's (2006) research of British local government found the most common methods of citizens' involvement with their council were petitions (18 percent), surveys and telephone calls to council (both 14 percent) and written letters (13 percent). Conversely, the most preferred method of involvement was by survey-type forms (46 percent), followed by written letters (34 percent), signing petitions (33 percent), public meetings, meetings with councillors and telephone calls (all receiving 22 percent support). Meetings with staff received a rating of 18 percent.

Goldman (2004) additionally suggests that the community must have a neutral space for safe and impartial discussion. He advocates for authentic deliberation that is real and meaningful to support a real exchange of perspective, learning and changes in perspective, and an empowered public voice. Goldman says the participative mechanism must allow the community the chance to really influence decision-making for participation levels and satisfaction to increase. The issue of openness and neutral space is one also picked up by researchers Goldberg, Pasher, and Levin-Sagi (2006), and Halseth and Booth (2003), and by many government agencies (Department of Housing, 2007; Ministry of Social Development, 2008; Queensland Government, 2011), all who suggest that council responsiveness to submitters is an effective pathway for council and community growth.

It seems that there are conflicting messages in the findings on council consultation. On the one hand, a strong body of research attests to a rising desire to 'have a say'. Additionally, the overall trend in submission numbers is one of rising participation. Yet, one in three citizens reported they were unlikely to take up the opportunity that they apparently valued, with the leading reasons that they could not be bothered, or did not think it would make a difference. These reasons seem to point to the issues of relevance and influence/responsiveness as key constraints to citizen participation.

Even though submitters were optimistic about the effectiveness of paper and post submissions, Forgie (2001) found that only just over a third of submitters felt their submission had made a difference, while a third felt neutral about their influence, and just

under a third felt they had made no difference. These perceptions were additionally shown to correlate directly to the overall satisfaction levels with consultation outcomes.

The wider community often feels little control over local government decisions and there is a perception that only the outspoken and demanding – the squeaky wheels – gain attention from decision makers (Forgie et al., 1999). While citizens might report scepticism about their influence, the proximity they have to council means people are more likely to think that they can have an impact in their local community than in national issues (Pattie et al., 2004).

In an analysis of the actual changes councils made to their draft 2009 LTCCP, the Department of Internal Affairs (2010) reported that some councils did make relatively major changes between the draft and final LTCCP – possibly as a result of consultation. However, across the sector, major changes were not made to financial figures. The consultation process appeared to drive adjustments in the timing of projects, minor deletions or additions. Overall, there was little appreciable change in operating expenditure levels, between the draft and final versions of the 2009 LTCCPs.

The role of the media

Richardson and Rout's (2006) Local Government New Zealand research showed that only one in three taxpayers could remember any involvement with local government, yet it also found that around half of all ratepayers could recall information on the council received through the media, or from council communications. McGregor, O'Leary, Fontaine, and Comrie agree that there are typically low levels of involvement with local government, saying that "the majority of the public only ever 'experience' the Town Hall, apart from visits to pay rates and parking fines, from the news media" (2002, p. 98). McGregor et al. note that the news media plays many roles in relation to local government. It can influence submitter choice, set and prioritise agendas by telling local what to think, and campaign on local issues. The media can act as a forum for discussion, and importantly as the fourth estate keep the local body accountable for its decisions.

The print media has historically taken the most notice of local government, with television and radio less interested in providing coverage (Bush, 1995, cited by McGregor et al., 2002). Newspapers typically serve circulation areas similar to local government boundaries.

However, the mediascape is changing and the circulation of daily newspapers continues to dwindle (ACNielsen, 2011; Allen, 2009; Greenslade, 2009).

McGregor et al. (2002) say that in New Zealand newsrooms in newspapers, television and radio continue to retract as 'commercial pressures and technological imperatives' challenge resourcing, and note the pressure has negative impacts on both the quality and quantity of local body coverage in newspapers.

In the United States, an Economist (2011) survey found that readership of newspapers is now largely confined to older citizens. Also in the United States, radio, once the favourite of young audiences, has now been surpassed by the web and television (Stern, 2011).

Of importance for the New Zealand local government context, public notices in daily newspapers now only have low readership (National Newspaper Association, 2010). However, the National Newspaper Association found that community newspapers are experiencing sustained and improved readership levels. Freeman (2006) and Barton and Shaw (2001) both emphasise the opportunity community newspapers present to council consultation and public relations planners as an effective communication channel.

Partnerships and Networks

There is an increasing requirement for local government to establish partnerships and networks (Reid, 2002). There are important differences between the two though, with partnerships seen as formal relationships between agencies. Partnerships typically have memberships and specified parameters of operation. Less formal than partnerships, networks are characterised by loose memberships and indistinct boundaries, operating via relationships between individuals rather than organisations. The two approaches can operate to hinder, or assist each other (Lowndes & Sullivan, 2004).

For councils, participating in or responding to networks can be difficult and the complexities of network relationships are increased by the differing approaches of networks. In practice, some enthusiasts will commit to networking as a method to support urban regeneration, community participation and innovation recognising networks can overcome traditional bureaucratic barriers, organisational systems and boundaries (Barton & Shaw, 2001).

However, opponents may use networks as leverage to circumvent democratic processes (Moloney, 2006). Moloney argues that activists use networks to meet strategic goals. Conversely, pragmatists use networks as a way of indicating links to the community, establishing agendas and securing funding from local government sources.

There are obvious tensions that impact on the operation of networks or partnerships. It is difficult for networks to overcome fragmentation in the pursuit of integration. Similarly, there is tension between inherently competitive citizenscapes in which differing agendas demand attention, and the goal of working cooperatively (Lowndes & Sullivan, 2004). Additionally there is pressure between the attractive outcomes of both centralism and localisation – where the former can claim gains in efficiency and the latter stronger responsiveness (Burns et al., 1994).

Council Communication

The wider council/community relationship is characterised by a flows of information through various channels. Richardson and Rout's (2006) survey found that only one in four ratepayers reported direct contact with council (of that group 58 percent had applied for a building permit, 35 percent had made a submission, 31 percent had applied for a resource consent and 26 percent had attended a council meeting). In the same study, the recall of council advertising and communication showed that overall 41 percent of ratepayers had seen council advertisements in local newspapers, or local newspaper articles about council.

Table 5 summarises the responses to the question "What advertising or communication from your local council do you remember seeing or hearing in the last 12 months?" revealing that brochures and flyers were recalled by the highest number of citizens (Robertson & Rout, 2006).

Table 5: Ratepayer recall of consultation advertising and communication

Communication activity	Recall %
Brochure/flyer/leaflet	31
Local newspaper article	28
Council newsletter or newspaper	27
Local newspaper advertising	22
Information with rates bill	18
Addressed mail from council (not rates bill)	8
Radio advertising	5
Unaddressed mail from council	5
Radio news	4
National newspaper article	4
None	6
Don't know/ can't remember	7

In a large British study (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006), the local media (37 percent) and council communications (33 percent) were found to be the most common sources of information about council. In contrast websites and direct contact were the information sources that engendered most confidence in the information (34 percent and 33 percent respectively). Feeling well-informed was found to have a strong correlation with overall satisfaction levels.

In the British study closer on-going communication was also identified as important to the community. Local government communication was lowly rated with 70 percent saying they felt poorly informed on their councils' performance. However, the research also showed that the feelings of being informed improved with the age of the respondents and people in rural areas felt better informed than those in urban areas (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006). The findings on urban/rural engagement are similar to New Zealand research (Drage, 2006; Forgie, 2001; Robertson & Rout, 2006).

Communication, either mediated or direct, was revealed as a leading driver to community satisfaction with local government (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006). Overall, while the quality of council services, the value for money services represented, and the social deprivation index of a locality are leading influences on citizen'

satisfaction, media coverage and direct communication from councils ranked fourth and fifth respectively. Positive interactions with council staff ranked seventh. Figure 4 illustrates the findings.

Figure 4: Influences on satisfaction levels of the community

Source: Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006.

3.4.5 Perceptions and Satisfaction Levels with Consultation Participation

To date this chapter has investigated the research on consultation, from the evolution of representative democracy to the current participative hybrid. Attitudes toward local government and awareness of the role and responsibility of councils provided context for the profile of typical submitters to local government consultation. The profile of submitters is important because submitter comment that reflects community needs and desires is the goal of consultation.

There has been considerable discussion already on the influences to participation, and from a submitter's perspective the barriers to making a submission have been covered. This section will therefore briefly touch on submitters' perceptions of fairness in the final decision from a submitter's perspective before stepping across to the council staff and politicians' perceptions of the difficulties of the consultation and decision-making process.

The submitter's perspective of fairness

Inherent in every local government decision is the challenge to find a solution that responds to the competing needs of citizens in a way that is fair and balanced (Cheyne, 1997). As noted in Section 2.3, the current legislative environment enables citizen participation in decision-making as a mechanism to facilitate councils' responsiveness to the needs and desires of their different communities. Yet while communities require different types of decisions, they generally make similar judgements on fairness (Sweitzer & Gibson, 2007). When citizens judge outcomes to be fair, they experience satisfaction and are more likely to be supportive of the outcome. Sweitzer and Gibson say community perceptions of consultation fairness typically focus on three notions of justice; interactional, procedural and distributive. Interactional justice is a product of the sensitivity with which communication, in the case consultation, is conducted. Procedural justice reflects on how decisions are made, and distributive justice is assessed as the result of the outcomes of council decision-making.

Yet, even with this apparent commonality in ethical frameworks, conflict often arises over the perceived purpose of consultation. Different understandings of what participative decision-making processes entail contribute to tensions (Arnstein, 1969; Birch, 2002). Further, contrary to the findings of Sweitzer and Gibson (2007), New Zealand researcher Nash (2007) contends that wide variations in knowledge and culture in the community can lead to different world views.

As a community becomes increasingly diverse, the many agendas jockey for attention and resources (Sullivan, 2004). The end result of this competition for resources is that part of the community will regard the council decision favourably, and the balance will be neutral or perceive it negatively (Richardson & Winefield, 2007). This outcome impacts on overall satisfaction measures of council decision-making, and of the consultation activity itself.

From a submitter's perspective, influencing the outcome is not the only result to accrue from participation in consultation. Effective consultation also provides for more community involvement and commitment to the solutions (Comrie, 1998; Forgie et al., 1999; Jordan & Comrie, 2006). It reflects positively on the council's public image (Heath, 2001), encourages dialogue and an ever-widening 'submitting' community (Freeman, 2006). It also increases citizenship (Cheyne, Johnston, & Lange, (n.d.)) . Mike Reid (2005a, p. 40) of Local Government New Zealand summed up the benefits of consultation when referring to

Harvard's Professor Michael Sandel who suggests "citizens are created by taking part in the process of governing".

Forgie's (2001) research investigated the submission experience further, finding that four in five submitters reported participating enabled them to get things off their chests, with less than 20 percent saying that the experience did not provide the forum they wanted.

Nearly three in four submitters felt that the process encouraged councils to listen to community issues, with the same number feeling that the submissions allowed fine-tuning of the proposal. However, a similar proportion of submitters felt that council only consulted because the law required the process. Overall though, the submitters felt the strengths of the consultation were the opportunity to be heard (23.1 percent), participating in the democratic process and understanding council (19.6 percent), and that it encouraged councils to establish priorities, to plan, budget and think ahead (18.3 percent). Having an influence on decisions (8 percent), encouraging informed decisions (7.3 percent) and personal contact with councillors (4.8 percent) were other less frequently mentioned strengths of participation.

Council staff's perspective

To this point in the literature review submitters' perceptions have been focused on, yet the perceptions of politicians and staff also contribute to the success of the process. These perceptions are also useful to identify potential barriers to a satisfying participation experience.

A core issue in government and local government engagement practices is the commitment to and skills needed to collaborate successfully with citizens and partners when making decisions. While there are good examples of successful engagement initiatives at central government level, a number of tensions arise through the complexity of relationships, and the availability of resource to dedicate to the process (Cheyne, 2002).The Auditor-General reflects the fine balance between efficiency and effectiveness(The Controller and Auditor-General, 2007, Section 2.38):

> Effectiveness and efficiency are important elements of good performance. The decision-making and consultation processes that local authorities use will have a considerable effect on whether they appropriately address these elements. The use by local authorities

of their discretion as to how to observe the consultation and decision-making requirements and the proportionality principle, will be relevant to effectiveness and efficiency.

Thus, a balance in a resource-hungry process must be found between the expectations of community and council, and the outcomes (Cheyne, 1997). As Nash (2007) noted earlier, the culture of local government is typically process driven and risk adverse. Some staff and politicians fear loss of control, and through process and in perceptions there is sometimes a lack of respect for expertise in the community (Lowndes, 2004; Ministry of Social Development, 2008; Nash, 2007). Staff turnover and other organisational change will also often disrupt the growth of partnerships (Pallot, n.d).

Additionally, Stone (2005) says council structure can inhibit a collective council effort in consultation, either where resources or information are not shared, or where there are differing goals (e.g. meeting legislation requirements as in getting the job done versus dialogue). Different cultures within councils can also lead to variations in consultation approaches as well as the decision-making part of the process (Nash, 2007).

Problems with public consultation and decision-making have been well reported (Ministry of Social Development, 2008). Within organisations there are knowledge gaps around engagement processes and benchmarked good practice and little targeted opportunity to train and up skill. Combined with work pressures and resource constraints around delivering effective engagement, there is often questionable commitment to engagement. Yet the costs of poor engagement through poorly conceived policy, combined with the loss of respect, trust and legitimacy drive the search for solutions in relations with citizens (Gramberge, 2001).

The background to and context of any consultation has a huge influence on the consultation outcome, as does the understanding of the key issues according to community perceptions (Cheyne, 2002). The actual process of consultation is also important. This includes managing the hearings, hearing submissions, a council's approach to deliberating on the submissions, and analysing the submissions (Comrie, 1999). Ultimately, the approach taken by a council when consulting with its public must be appropriate in the wider scheme of consultation and public dialogue.

A study of staff perceptions of local government engagement after the acceptance of the LGA 2002, noted a number of process and operational issues (Richardson & Winefield, 2007, p. 22):

> Officers identified a number of risks associated with consultation and engagement, for example
>
> - Paralysis – it can slow down decision-making with contentious issues being difficult to resolve.
> - Avoidance– some elected members avoid making hard decisions by constantly putting off those decisions pending further consultation i.e. the temptation is to conduct even more consultation in search of consensus.
> - Timing– it can be time consuming and frequently takes much longer than anticipated or allowed.
> - Costs– can be resource intensive for council and the community participants/submitters
> - Bias – Council can be persuaded by persistent representations from well-organised and/or well-resourced groups.

Richardson and Winefield (2007) believe their research showed that consultation is often rendered ineffective by councilors failing to demonstrate suspended judgement during the process, or by not fully engaging the community. In Richardson and Winefield's research, council staff also said consultation was sometimes used as a delaying tactic when elected members were struggling to make a tough decision. These failures lead the public to question the integrity of consultation, or infer manipulative intent by council. Consultation fatigue was also mentioned, particularly repetition occurring where other community agencies consulted on similar or overlapping subjects.

The politician's perspective

The process of consultation in a decision-making process has inherent tensions and governance issues and it is perceived differently according to the role played in participation (Nash, 2007). Leadership appears to be an important consideration in these attitudes. As local government continues to take on more local activity due to devolution of central government powers, leadership becomes particularly relevant for local government in relation to their

respective communities (Local Government New Zealand, 2006). The Department of Internal Affairs' (2010) audit of 2009 LTCCP consultation activity confirmed that councils increasingly recognise their roles as leaders in the community.

While there is strong theoretical support for participative decision-making, the process can put excessive pressure on local government and arguably only works well in homogenous communities (Bush, 1980). Authority can be undermined and governing members disheartened in the effort of trying to please everyone (Forgie et al., 1999). Participation can be lengthy, and this often leads to delays and conflict (Pallot, n.d). Open communication climates can also lead to information overload, consultation fatigue (Forgie, 2001) and unrealistic expectations for results of participative decision-making (Kweit & Kweit, 2007; Morris, 1998).

In practice, politicians can sometimes be left out of the development of plans and so feel little commitment or understanding of the complexities when faced with the decision-making task (Barton & Shaw, 2001). There is also evidence of a breakdown between the public participation initiatives and councillors. An Economic Social and Cultural Rights study in Britain found despite numerous consultations and discussions forums, connections through to representatives and the decision-making process were seldom made (Sullivan, 2004).

It can also be difficult identifying whether the louder council critics represent the views of the wider population, particularly when the views expressed oppose a council's stance (Comrie, 1999). A later 2007 review of local government consultation activity conducted for the Local Government Commission found elected members worried about consultations being captured by interest groups concerned that "a minority is able to get its way at the cost of the silent majority" (Richardson & Winefield, 2007, p. 21).

Richardson and Winefield's (2007) review also reported elected members were concerned about the way determined or organised interest groups could also lengthen the decision-making process and create controversy to attract media attention. Referring to consultation activity in general, elected members felt it sometimes raised expectations falsely, delayed decision-making and increased the overall cost of governance.

Additionally there is a tendency shown by some staff and politicians to assume the public have little to contribute to the decision-making process (Bush, 1980; Cook, 2006), often not understanding complex technical and scientific issues (Nash, 2007).

3.4.6 Conclusion

The discussion on local government consultation practices tracked the attitudes and expectations New Zealanders had for local government and consultation practices, finding that people mainly associated local government with the core services of roading, rubbish, water reticulation, and sporting and community facilities. Town planning and responsibilities for the environment were cited by ratepayers with higher incomes, and not surprisingly those with no contact with the council recorded the lowest levels of knowledge of council services. Indeed, while only one in four people reported any involvement in council activity, close to 90 percent said they strongly believed citizens should have the opportunity to participate in council decision-making, and almost 50 percent said that there should be more consultation opportunities.

In practice, only a small proportion of the community took part in consultations, though participation levels are rising. Of those making submissions, around a third was participating for the first time. The research revealed that New Zealand submitters had similar demographic profiles of participation to those predicted by international writers with submitters being mainly older, European, male, and having attained higher education and income levels. Territorial authority reported better engagement levels than the regional councils, similarly rural councils displayed higher levels of participation than urban.

There is an excellent body of research nationally and internationally on the barriers to consultation. The only weakness lies in New Zealand research, where there has been little empirical research conducted since the LGA 2002 changes to examine the effect of those changes. This is relevant particularly given the speed at which community expectation of participation and communication technology is changing. However, overall the theory and research available on consultation methods and best practice approach is particularly strong.

In New Zealand, the main reason ratepayers gave for not taking part in consultation was apathy (they could not be bothered), they also felt their comments would not have any effect on the final decision, and that they struggled to find the time to take part. Internationally

leading researchers identified resources, relationships and rules as the leading barriers to participation.

For those that did experience the consultation process, each actor has a different encounter. Submitters feel the strengths in the consultation process are in the opportunity to be heard and improving knowledge of council activities and processes. They report feeling uncertain that they can influence the final decision, and many express doubt that councillors have the best interest of the community at heart. Satisfaction with the consultation experience is likely to be a product of the sensitivity of communications during the consultation, the adequacy of the consultation process and the final assessment of the consultation outcomes.

Council staff report weaknesses in the decision-making process with councillors sometimes avoiding or delaying making decisions, showing bias, and lacking transparency. Council staff also noted the significant time and resource required by consultation activity. Councillors have a difficult time of consultation, partly because they often become disconnected from the consultation process, and they can find it difficult to identify what submission comment is representative of the general population and what is from council critics. Overall the more open the system is, the more prone councillors are to information overload and consultation fatigue.

CHAPTER FOUR – RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 Introduction

As described in the introductory chapter, the aim of this study is to explore the outcome of legislative change where the LGA 2002 amendments introduced more extensive public consultation requirements in council decision-making practice. As a result, the research questions seek to find out how the new legislative requirements have contributed to councils' overarching purpose of enabling democratic decision-making and action by their respective communities.

The 2009 LTCCP consultation, required of all councils, was chosen for investigation because it is likely to present a comprehensive sample of local government' consultation practices. This assumption is made because the breadth and impact of the plan itself is highly significant (Reid, 2005b).

The literature review established that there is little known about the current satisfaction levels of submitters to council consultations or what the typical characteristics of submitters are, particularly in the current legislative context. Therefore the questions that need to be answered when framing the research instruments are; what are councils currently doing to encourage participation (to ascertain current council consultation activity), what are the characteristics of the citizens making submissions and what areas do submissions cover? The research items also need to be framed to find out what submitters feel encourages or limits their participation in consultation and what would make it better for them.

The research methods selected were a combination of survey and interview approaches. A survey of submitters was chosen to gather data on submitter characteristics, perceptions and satisfaction levels because it could generate a large, representative body of both quantitative and qualitative data for analysis (Malhotra, 1999). Also, the questionnaire was expected to encourage submitter response as it is the most common method of research and, if designed well, easy to use (Eunson, 2008; Hague & Jackson, 1999).

An interview approach was preferred for gathering information about consultation practices from the lead staff members in each participating council. In-depth interviews are effective at gathering rich qualitative data, and are useful investigating subjects where answers cannot be anticipated. The interview approach also allows easy and immediate clarification of both questions and answers (Malhotra, 1999).

The approach of combining a submitter survey and staff interviews was essential because it would gather data from different perspectives, capturing the important contributing influences in the consultation process – the council efforts, aims and practices, and then the submitters response to the consultation, their perceptions and satisfaction levels.

That has been a very brief reintroduction of the aims and hypotheses of this project to frame a high level description of the research design. The chapter progresses with a section that further develops the research questions, and then describes the initial recruitment of councils to participate in the research project. For ongoing clarity, further discussion on the two research methods is separated into different chapters. The discussion is presented as the decisions are made stepping through the design and implementation process. What follows is a discussion on the rationale behind the method selection, research design, gathering participants for the survey and interviews, and the process undertaken to administer the instruments. The approach used for data analysis and the research design limitations rounds out both descriptions. Finally, the ethical considerations of the research are described and a summary completes the chapter.

4.2 The Research Question

To this point in the discussion, the research question has been developed from an overarching enquiry asking how successful were councils in the 2009 Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) consultation process in enabling democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, their communities? The project planned to answer this question by finding data relating to four sub-questions, which also guided the design of the research instruments.

1. From the perspective of council staff, what did councils do to encourage participation in the LTCCP consultation?

Staff opinion gathered in depth interviews would be used to generate information about the LTCCP consultation practices i.e. the length of time for consultation, pre-consultation activity, consultation communication and targeting of communication. The resourcing approach to the LTCCP consultation activity would be investigated to identify any limiting factors to activity and the general commitment of councils to the process. Council staff perceptions of the impact of lobby group activity, news media reporting and council media relations on the community response to the consultation would provide useful information on outside factors influencing response rates and agendas. An overarching question on council staff perception of the relationship between their councils and the community was also necessary to provide further context for the information gathered.

2. Who made submissions to council LTCCP consultation and what were the submissions about?

A submitter survey would gather three areas of information on the characteristics of submitters. From an overall community consultation perspective, the survey needed to provide information on the levels of community participation in the 2009 LTCCP consultation. The survey also needed to capture data on submitter demographic characteristics, and their agendas.

3. What are the barriers and enablers to participation in the LTCCP consultation as perceived by submitters?

This question would be answered with survey information on the external communications that influenced citizens to participate. First-time submitters would be selected to find out what motivated them to make a submission for the first-time, and what their perceptions were on the barriers to participation they had encountered prior to making their first submission. The different steps of the consultation process would be broken down to identify what communication/consultation systems submitters felt encouraged or supported their participation and conversely what communication/consultation systems acted to inhibit their participation in the LTCCP consultation.

4. From the perspective of submitters, what would make consultation better for citizens?

The survey would also capture the overall perceptions of submitters towards the consultation experience and their satisfaction levels. A question on opportunities to improve the LTCCP consultation process would both give pointers to that effect and also an indication of the priorities of submitters.

4.3 The Survey

A survey of submitters to the participating councils' LTCCP consultation process is the first research method discussed in this research design chapter.

4.3.1 Surveys as a Method

As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, a survey was chosen as a method to capture submitters' perceptions and satisfaction because a broad set of empirical data was needed to answer the research questions. Survey research has a number of other strengths that led to this method being selected; the approach is flexible, research results are reliable, participants generally find surveys easy to use, and there are administrative efficiencies to be gained (Eunson, 2006; Malhotra, 1999).

A structured survey approach allowed an instrument design that was administratively efficient and effective in collecting data (Groves, 1987; Malhotra, 1999), an important requirement in this project as there were limited resources available, and a large sample was needed. By using a predesigned form, surveys can be implemented through a variety of channels including telephone, personal, mail and electronic (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 1999) – in this case a combination of electronic and paper/mail was used (see more in Section 4.3.4 Administering The Survey). The electronic on-line survey was preferable as it was inexpensive to send, and efficient to process as the responses automatically load to a database. Thus, the channels selected not only encouraged response rates, but kept production, distribution, administration and collation costs low.

From the perspective of integrity of research design, the survey approach is flexible, allowing a full array of question types (Hague & Jackson, 1999) including the classification,

behavioural and attitudinal queries that are required (these questions are defined in Section 4.3.2). The survey tool could also identify the nature of consultation communication and how that communication related to other variables. Another strength, and key reason for selection, was the ability to capture quantitative and qualitative data to pinpoint weaknesses in the consultation process and opportunities to improve communication processes and awareness levels (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 1999).

For participants, surveys have a number of advantages. Surveys are the most widely used method in communication research and are common in evaluation research and public opinion research (Frey et al., 1999). Therefore most participants are used to them, which encourages participation and enhances understanding (Hague & Jackson, 1999).

The channel a survey is presented through can influence the participant response rate (Eunson, 2001). In this project a combination of electronic and postal mail channels was chosen for delivering the survey because these approaches are not invasive for the participant, allowing them to decide on a completion time that best suits their needs. Time, in general, is often a barrier to survey involvement, so the perceived commitment to survey completion needed to be kept low to encourage responses (Malhotra, 1999). The questionnaire took participants between 10 – 15 minutes to complete. The email and mail channels were also able to efficiently connect with a large geographically dispersed population of submitters.

From a researcher's perspective, a survey approach was a good fit for this project because the method can be used at both strategic and tactical levels to identify the nature of communication, and how communications relates to other variables (Dozier et al., 1995; Frey et al., 1999). The timing of the survey implementation could be conducted after the consultation process was complete, and therefore capture feedback on different stages on the process as well as evaluating overall effectiveness (Aaker, Kumar, & Day, 2000).

A structured approach to the survey questions was taken because it could gather manageable representative information about a large population (Eunson, 2008). The structured approach used a combination of closed, or multi-choice question, keeping the number of open questions down and allowing the questions to be designed to gain the information required (Malhotra, 1999). Surveys can alternatively be semi-structured and unstructured, but these

approaches were discounted because analysis of a large sample of open-ended responses would have been too difficult.

The self-reporting approach of a survey is most feasible when gathering data on perceptions and attitudes (Frey et al., 1999). For the survey participants, a set of structured questions encourages a response and makes it easier to respond (Frey et al., 1999; Malhotra, 1999)

Delivery methods for the survey instrument were also able to be kept flexible. Originally the survey research was designed to capture submitter responses using an online survey form. However, as the project developed the number of withdrawals from councils that had earlier indicated interest, coupled with some councils omitting the offer of the survey opportunity to submitters on the council submission form, meant other channels needed to be developed to ensure a good sample of submitters was captured. As a result, submitters in three of the participating councils were offered both the paper and electronic format as a response method. Using two channels gave the respondent choice and improved the reach to all submitters (Malhotra, 1999). However, the paper survey option was more expensive because of printing and mail costs and the responses required the researcher to input them manually into a database (see Table 8 for a description of approaches used).

Interestingly, the response rates to the submitter surveys varied depending on how they were distributed (Duncan, 2011). A higher response rate indicated the alternative paper version was seemingly preferred by respondents, but the processing cost was correspondingly higher (see Table 15 to compare the final response rates and survey channels).

Encouraging response rates

As an overall measure of research effectiveness, response rates can be low with the survey approach (Malhotra, 1999). Response rates will vary depending on the characteristics of the medium and channel they are applied through, the use of incentives and the length of the survey. For submitters these factors translate into the cost of responding (Eunson, 2008), and the subsequent response rate will vary for all the reasons given above – fear of repercussion, overexposure, previous disappointment, or querying the value of responding. Various techniques can be used to improve responses rates, five have been shown to consistently improve pickup; personalisation, monetary incentives, pre-notification, follow-up, and return

postage (Duncan, 2011). Three of these approaches were used in this survey – pre-notification for the email survey, and personalisation and return postage for the paper version.

Limitations of the survey method

While the structured survey approach has many strengths, it also has weaknesses. Structured surveys can constrain participant responses, but a good knowledge of likely replies as provided in secondary research, makes it possible to anticipate and design for most responses (Hague & Jackson, 1999). In addition, this survey was designed to allow for comments or responses that could not be anticipated, e.g. the likely barriers to participation in consultation were identified first in a four multi-choice options in question 3a, but participants could alternatively note additional barriers in the catchall 'other' option. The use of mixed search questions captured both quantitative and qualitative data about a subject (Eunson, 2008).

Additionally, there is little chance for the respondent to clarify their understanding of the questions in the survey, and responses are generally very short with longer, in-depth responses unlikely. Also, while familiarity with the survey approach was discussed as a strength that removes barriers, if the method is too prevalent people can become overexposed to it and therefore less inclined to respond (Duncan, 2011). The introduction to the survey should be carefully written to overcome this weakness and convey the value of the response to both council and the submitter.

There are also numerous potential hardware and software problems with online surveys, particularly presentation of the survey in different browser windows and glitches in the respondent computer system setup. These are hard to identify because the problems are often at the participants end, however they can hamper response attempts (Malhotra, 1999).

4.3.2 The Survey Design

The development of the research questions was covered in the introduction and Section 4.2 and the final survey questionnaire is included in Appendix C. This part of the research design chapter describes the design of the research instrument itself.

The questionnaire had nine subsections, as shown in Figure 5, with the sequencing emulating the flow of the consultation process from the submitter's perspective, for easy orientation.

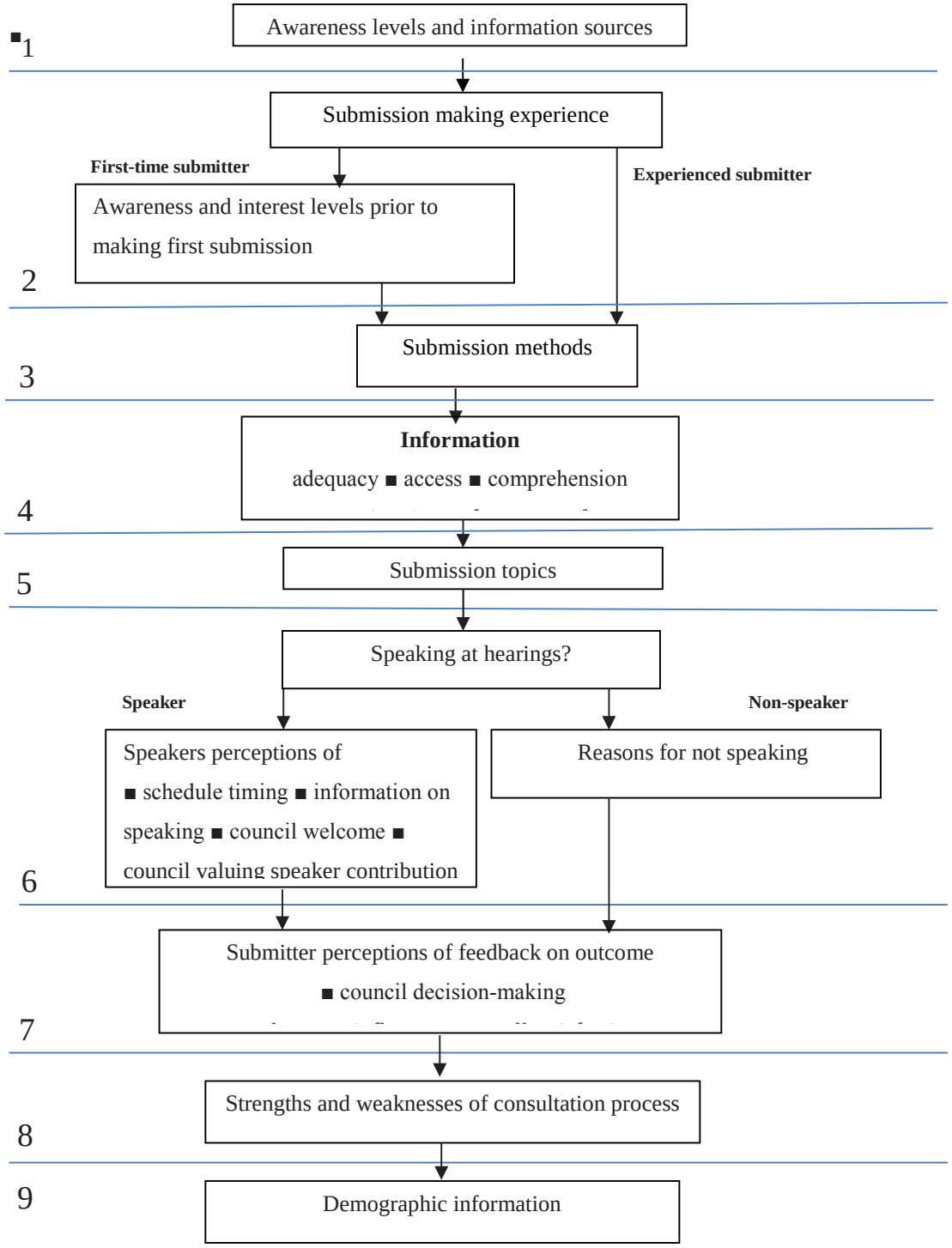


Figure 5: Survey subjects and the flow of questions

The survey length was kept as short as possible to encourage completion; even so there were 19 questions to complete.

Subsection 1. Consultation awareness levels and information sources

The survey began with two questions asking how the submitter became aware of their council's LTCCP consultation, and then how submitters sourced their consultation information. Both were multiple-choice questions that included an 'other' option that also allowed for description of 'other'. The approach allowing a further description of the 'other' option in the multiple-choice question was applied throughout the survey wherever multiple-choice occurred. The first question on awareness constrained the respondent to one answer, while the second information question allowed multiple answers. Response to both questions was required in order to continue the online survey.

Subsection 2. Submission-making experience

The second subsection of the survey separated submitters into two categories; experienced submitters and first-time submitters. To do this the closed question "Have you made a submission to any council consultation before?" was asked with a dual choice multiple-choice options 'yes' or 'no, this is my first-time'. This question also required a response in the online version.

Subsection 2 then continued for first-time submitters only. In the online survey, experienced submitters were sent directly to subsection 3 questions, but first-time submitters were asked two further questions. The first asked first-time submitters to describe their awareness and interest levels in regard to consultation prior to making their submission. The question was presented as a multiple-choice with one option only. However, the inclusion of an 'other' response option, as with the first section, allowed responses outside those identified as typical. An accompanying text box allowed description of the 'other' response.

The second question for first-time submitters in subsection 2 asked an open question "What made you make a submission for the first-time?" Text answers were required, but an answer was not essential to continue with the questionnaire. The choice of an open-ended question and text requirement was made to allow unconstrained responses from participants.

Subsection 3. Submission methods

Subsection 3 also contained two questions and was asked of all participants. The first question queried respondent behaviours, asking how they had made their submission. The multiple-choice response listed six main submission methods and an additional ‘other’ choice. The second question was an open-ended text question, asking respondents if there were other ways of making submissions that they might have preferred that were not available to them.

Subsection 4. Information

The fourth subsection presented a series of questions about the characteristics of the LTCCP information in a five-point Likert scale, where participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a preceding statement. The point options were ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, ‘neutral’, ‘disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’. Responses to the scales were mandatory, but an additional option of ‘don’t know’ was provided.

The questions focussed on the respondents’ perceptions and attitudes to the consultation information. The characteristics of consultation information were identified as: whether the information was easy to understand, easy to access, adequate enough to feel well informed and if there was enough time allowed for submission preparation. These characteristics are also legislated requirements of the special consultative provisions in Section 82 (1) of the LGA 2002. Additionally the final scales canvassed perceptions of the council submission form. An open 'comments' text box was used as a catchall opportunity after the scales to allow participants the freedom to further comment on their ratings.

Subsection 5. Submission topics

In Subsection 5, respondents were asked what subjects their submission included. This was a multiple-choice question covering the significant activities of all council types. It also included an ‘other’ option, and respondents could indicate multiple subjects. Response to the question was mandatory in the online surveys.

Subsection 6. Speaking at the consultation hearings

The sixth section was a series of questions to find out about the attitudes of submitters who had declined to speak to council in additional support of their submission. It started with a

classification question (as the first-time submitter section had), which identified the participants who had spoken at the LTCCP hearings. The multiple-choice yes/no responses then directed respondents to different sets of questions depending on their answer.

For the non-speakers, a multiple-choice question asked for the reasons why. The aim was to identify potential barriers to people taking up the speaking opportunity which is potentially more influential (Department of Internal Affairs, 2010). An 'other' option allowed further description if the choices did not adequately represent the participants' reasons.

For the submitters who spoke at council hearings, another set of Likert scales was used (the same structure as those used in the section on information) to test their attitudes and perceptions of the experience. The areas tested were; the time given for speakers to prepare for the presentation, the council's welcome, the submitter's comfort in the public speaking role, the information available for speakers prior to their appearance, and the value the council appeared to give to the respondent's comments. While there were some process-orientated questions in this scale set, section six was the first section to ask for perceptions of council attitude and responsiveness. All scales required a response.

Subsection 7. Submitter influence, council decision-making, and feedback

Subsection 7 began to draw the survey to a close. The question sequencing in the survey had been following the natural flow of submission experiences, moving from awareness to information sourcing, making a submission, speaking at hearing and then the final notification of council decisions. There were three questions in subsection 7. The first was presented as the third and final set of scales in the survey. The scale structure was as with the information and speaker questions. The scales asked for participants' perceptions of: their influence on the council decision; whether the council decision showed they had listened to submitters; and how well the final letter to submitters explained the council's final decision. There was also a summative question on participants' overall satisfaction levels with participation. The purpose was to find out if submitters believed councils responded to submissions and the reasons for the final decision or decisions were understood as required in Section 82 (1) of the LGA 2002.

Section 7 had two further open text questions that asked respondents to identify what their council had done well in the consultation and what would have improved the consultation process for them. These questions are unprompted and designed to capture the top-of-mind issues and opportunities. Responses to the text questions were not required.

Subsection 8. Demographic information

The most sensitive/personal questions were placed in the last section to lessen the likelihood of withdrawal (Malhotra, 1999). Subsection 8 asked demographic questions on gender, age, education and income level, ethnicity, household makeup, representation and council. Each area had a multi-choice single response approach except the representation question, which allowed for more than one choice. In the paper format of the survey, respondents were not required to identify their council as the forms were branded with the relevant council logo, and could be identified during the manual input of the survey by the researcher.

The selection of question type was made early in the design phase, and with reference to Patton's (1980) five general groupings; classification, knowledge, feeling, opinion/value, and experience/behavior. There classification questions gathered background on the submitter and demographic characteristics (subsection 8). Knowledge questions that gathered information about participants' knowledge opened the survey in subsection 1. However, much of the survey used feeling questions, or opinion/value questions to identify the respondent's emotional response to the submission experience, perceptions of council's attitudes and behaviours, the consultation process and decision-making outcomes. Finally, experience and behaviour questions were used to capture a definite picture of what respondents had done (if they were first-time submitters, how they made their submissions, and whether they spoke at hearings).

The questions were phrased to encourage response (Frey et al., 1999). All questions were worded simply and focused on one issue only. Additionally, they were worded to ensure that they did not lead a respondent to answer in certain way (Malhotra, 1999).

As noted earlier the question sequencing roughly follows the consultation process and in doing so provides a natural ladder of thought through which the respondent is supported to recapture memories of the experience. The questions also naturally link together because of

the use of a tunnel format, with the survey content moving through sets of similarly organised questions, providing a sense of familiarity and structure for the respondent (Frey et al., 1999).

A combination of open and closed questions was used to improve the accuracy of the data. The closed questions confined respondents to a specific set of responses for exact quantitative analysis, yet the open questions allowed the respondents freedom to elaborate on responses, or to respond additionally with an answer otherwise unanticipated. The survey used dichotomous answers (e.g. yes and no), multiple-choice answers for classification and behavioural questions but Likert rating scales were employed to capture the strength of participants' perceptions and attitudes.

The closed questions, specifically in the classification questions (e.g. demographic and behavioural questions), allowed categorisation to be exclusive, exhaustive and equivalent (Malhotra, 1999). Closed-end questions have benefits for respondents and researchers alike. For this thesis, the body of response when considering the processing of data is reasonably large, thus closed ended questions made analysis less of a burden on the researcher by saving time. Closed questions are also well suited to the computer analysis capabilities of the database used in the research (i.e. SurveyMonkey).

Closed-ended questions are more specific, and less likely to lose their meaning through interpretation, which is the weakness of analysis with open-ended questions (Hague & Jackson, 1999; Malhotra, 1999). Importantly, the survey also included four open questions (number 3.a.2, 5, 10 and 11). These open questions allowed more information and a greater variety of feelings to be captured, and the additional insights added value to the project. Nevertheless, qualitative questions require more time and effort by both participant and researcher, so they were used carefully (Frey et al., 1999). This tendency for open questions to lower question response rates is further discussed in the results chapter.

The electronic version of the survey also had skip logic functionality to streamline questioning, presenting respondents with different sets of questions based on their responses. In the survey there were two questions (first-time submitters and speakers) that required this approach and as an example non-speaking submitters were only presented with questions

about their choice not to speak, thus the electronic version of the survey was less cluttered from the participants' perspective.

4.3.3 Survey Participants

Participation in the survey was limited to submitters that had taken part in the LTCCP consultation of the ten participating councils. Table 6 lists the number of submissions received by each participating council and allows comparison with the total population of that local authority.

Table 6: Submission numbers from participating councils

Council	Total population of local authority	Total submission numbers
Hauraki District Council	17,190	75
Hawke's Bay Regional Council	147,783	94
Horizons	220,089	143
Hutt City Council	97,701	900
Nelson City Council	42,891	1,111
Ruapehu District Council	13,569	87
Tasman District Council	44,625	4634
Timaru District Council	42,000	149
Western Bay of Plenty District Council	42,000	700
Whakatane District Council	32,810	1160
Totals		9053

4.3.4 Administering the Survey

Following the design of the survey and confirmation of potential survey participants, the survey went through a final iterative and polishing round of testing and piloting before implementation, and the analysis of the resulting data.

Testing and piloting the survey

Testing and piloting of the survey instrument was undertaken in July and August. This was managed concurrently with the process of adding survey recruitment mechanisms on council consultation forms. Table 7 describes the timeline of finalising the survey instrument.

Table 7: The timing of testing and piloting activity

Action	Date
Draft paper based survey sent to participating councils for feedback.	7 July 2009
Changes made to submitter survey as result of council staff comments.	Completed in early August
Online version of submitter survey developed	Early August
Online survey piloted and adjusted.	Completed by late August

The draft survey was emailed to all participating councils on 7 July for comment prior to piloting (see Appendix E). This action was taken for two reasons. Firstly, the participating councils had to be comfortable with the questions, and this approach meant there were no surprises for councils taking part. Secondly, additional subjects or changes were encouraged because the questions needed to be generic enough to be relevant to the activities of both the territorial and regional councils taking part. The feedback received was positive and the most significant adjustment made was to the list of questions on consultation issues was to add more options.

The finalised survey was then developed in an online format in SurveyMonkey (www.surveymonkey.com), and in a paper format. The online format is described in Appendix D, which shows the eight screens used to group questions. When developing the survey online, three different approaches were taken to allow respondents to track their progress, but to also limit the survey from appearing to be overwhelming. Online, the survey was presented in multiple pages with each page generally presenting two or three questions to lessen the need to scroll downwards. There was a progress bar added to each page to let the respondents track themselves. The respondents could navigate back through the survey and change or add to answers. When respondents finished they were presented with a page that thanked them for their time and gave an email link to the researcher for any additional queries.

The final pilot of the survey was completed by Nelson City Council staff (the researcher was working for Nelson City Council at the time) and by some of the more interested staff involved from the participating councils. A request to pilot the final online version was not sent out to all council participants in an effort the limit the research requirements on this group. The pilot was conducted in mid-August with 14 people taking part. The feedback was collated and responded to on an individual basis. As a result, only minor adjustments were made to formatting.

Recruiting participants for the survey

The sample was to be drawn from a total population of 9053 submitters across the ten participating councils, as identified in Section 4.3.3. Adding to recruitment complexity, the survey was to be delivered through electronic (using SurveyMonkey) or paper channels with an electronic option, depending on the arrangements made. The process undertaken to recruit participants in each council varied and requires separate explanation with the specific council on a council by council basis. Table 8 includes a full description of recruitment approaches.

Table 8: Recruitment methods used by participating councils

Council name	Recruitment approach
Hauraki District Council	Panel for recruitment on submission form
Hawke's Bay Regional Council	Panel for recruitment on submission form
Horizons – Waikato Regional Council	Inclusion of survey form and introduction in final letter of notification to all submitters
Hutt City Council	Panel for recruitment on submission form
Nelson City Council	Panel for recruitment on submission form
Ruapehu District Council	Panel for recruitment on submission form
Tasman District Council	Mention on submission form of survey – direct to researcher (email address given)
Timaru District Council	Inclusion of survey form and introduction in final letter of notification to all submitters
Western Bay of Plenty District Council	Panel for recruitment on submission form
Whakatane District Council	Inclusion of survey form and introduction in final letter of notification to all submitters

The timing of the subsequent rollout of the electronic and paper survey occurred between late June and September of 2009 and varied depending on the rate of progress in the LTCCP

process by each council. The survey had to be timed to launch after the feedback process on consultation decision was complete, but at a time when good recall of the experience was still likely for the participant.

The electronic survey form

Six councils added a panel on their LTCCP submission form to recruit potential survey respondents. Placed at the end of the submission form, the panel introduced the research project and asked submitters to indicate their interest in participating by ticking a box and leaving their email address for subsequent contact by the researcher.

This approach allowed the willing submitter to be 'captured' early in the consultation process for later contact when the consultation and subsequent decision-making had been concluded. The councils then collated the email contact details and sent these to the researcher for later contact with the submitter.

The wording of the recruitment question at the bottom of the council submission forms was as follows:

Would you be interested in participating in a survey looking at submitter satisfaction levels with the LTCCP consultation? ☐ *Yes* ☐ *No*

If yes, please supply your email address – you will receive an email with a link to the survey in July, after the full consultation process has finished.

Email address _____

The recruitment approach was selected because it required minimal action from the participating council, and was inexpensive for both the participating council and researcher. Additionally, capturing the email addresses of submitters meant that the follow up contact with the prospective respondents could be conducted by email. A link to the online survey was then emailed to participants in introduction. This email is included in Appendix F.

Surveys do not encourage full responses as personal surveys do, and there is little chance for the submitter to clarify questions (Frey et al., 1999). However, there was a contact email link

provided to respondents if they had questions. Two participants emailed the researcher to clarify what would happen with the data.

The response rate to the electronic surveys was affected in a minor way by incorrect email addresses with 23 email addresses returned as unable to be delivered. Five returns were able to be resolved and their address corrected. A full discussion on the resulting response rates is included in Section 5.3.1 of the results chapter.

The paper survey

As mentioned earlier, as the process of administering the survey progressed several councils deviated from the original approach. In response, the process of recruitment became increasingly flexible. This was because the participating councils did not, or could not, follow the instructions of putting the recruitment panel on the submission form. One council instructed submitters they could take part in the survey by contacting the researcher direct. Another council inadvertently omitted the survey invitation on its submission form, while another two received approval to take part only after the submission forms had been printed. Thus adjustments to the research approach were required so these councils could participate,

For the three councils that missed the opportunity to include a recruitment panel on the submission form, the paper version of the survey was simply included in the final feedback letter to all that council's submitters. Horizons, Whakatane and Timaru District councils sent out a paper version of the survey with final letters to all submitters. For the paper-based survey, a recognised barrier to completion is getting around to returning the feedback. Freepost addresses were given in all cases to remove this barrier. The introduction also offered submitters the opportunity to fill out the survey online. This gave respondents choice in their method of response and served as pre-notification (Duncan, 2011).

The paper approach had significant strengths however. It was more inclusive as it was sent out to all submitters. In presenting the recruitment panel on the submission form, submitters who did not use the form may have been unaware of the opportunity. Also, the electronic approach precluded those submitters who did not have access to email and the web. The paper survey had freepost addresses for returning responses and was branded with the

Council's logo. With those Councils employing the paper channel, the response was directed back to the Council, compiled and sent on to the researcher.

The paper format of the survey was presented on an A4 double-sided piece of paper (see Appendix C). The survey was self-evident and easy to complete. All the information required for the respondent to complete the survey was on the form including the return address and the logo and name of the participating council. The font of the survey was maintained at an easily legible size (frutiger size 9 condensed), and while the form was designed to appeal to the eye and look professional, no colour was used in the design to keep printing costs to a minimum.

The completed paper surveys were gathered by the three councils and forwarded to the researcher for processing. There were 236 surveys in all. One paper survey was excluded from the analysis because it lacked any data.

Timing of the implementation of the submitter survey varied across all participating councils. The rollout process started in early September and once all paper surveys were received the online survey closed on the 12 November. The online survey closure was a fortnight later that the last online survey was received; however, the instrument remained open to allow manual input of the paper survey responses.

Survey validity and reliability

The submitter survey used a non-probability sampling method with volunteer subjects, as opposed to a purposeful sample where individuals are selected to survey (Malhotra, 1999). In this method, the questionnaire was offered to the full population of submitters, not all from the population responded however.

Follow-up contact may have improved response levels, but unfortunately none was possible due to the inability to track early responders (for the purposes of excluding them from the follow-up contact), and also because of the varying approaches to offering the survey.

Non-random approaches mean that sampling errors cannot be calculated (Frey et al., 1999). However, sample size should be sufficiently representative of the target group for

generalisations to be valid. The sample size required for a population of 9053 submitters with a confidence level of 95 percent and a confidence interval of +5 is 369 according to the online calculator (www.surveysystem.com).

Making a submission is a personal experience and choosing this population-wide sampling method (and communicating that approach) supports the perception that a council is interested in all submitters' comments. The approach satisfies external validity criteria by being replicable and internal validity is supported with a question format that avoids consistency, fatigue and redundancy (Malhotra, 1999).

After the survey was administered, the responses were received and processed. Each participating council received a report containing the quantitative and qualitative responses pertaining to their council submitters, and a copy of the overall results.

4.3.5 Analysing the Survey Responses

The data collected from the submitter survey was collated in SurveyMonkey for analysis. The SurveyMonkey functionality, which can be viewed at www.surveymonkey.com, allowed the data to be cross tabulated and filtered. All other analysis was completed using Windows Excel.

The data analysis methods used were descriptive in nature and aimed to numerically describe the characteristics of the submitters taking the survey and their experiences of the LTCCP consultation. The descriptive statistics gathered detailed measurements relating to frequency, distribution, variability, and proportions/percentages of the sample of submitters. These results are presented in Section 5.3. Where qualitative data was gathered, the responses were analysed for topic themes and then the frequency with which the themes appeared.

Some cross-tabulation was carried out for further comparison of the characteristics of submitters. Cross-tabulations were carried out for age, income, household status, gender and education levels attained, first-time/experienced submitters, non-speakers/speakers appearing before council. Cross-tabulations do not identify causality, (i.e. where one variable causes an effect on another) but did provide evidence of variations in responses within the categories.

The small size of the subcategories in the cross-tabulations means that the results can be taken as an indicator only.

The other analysis tool used was the Net Promoter Score (NPS) approach. This is a relatively simple, but recent, marketing methodology developed to measure customer satisfaction (Reichheld, 2003). In this thesis, NPS is applied to the Likert scale questions to identify the overall balance of satisfaction, as a percentage proportion of those who feel positively about a statement in comparison to those that feel negatively.

4.3.6 Limitations of the Survey

This section on the limitations of this submitter survey complements the discussion of the survey instrument weaknesses in general (included in Section 4.3.1).

Question design

The additional comment panels provided in question sets 6 and 9 (refer to the survey form in Appendix C) worked effectively as an additional opportunity for submitters to comment on their ratings to the associated scalar questions. However, the comments could not always accurately be attributed to a particular facet and could only be analysed as general comments.

In longer surveys, the time costs for participants may be too high (Malhotra, 1999). The 10-15 minutes estimated for the completion of this research survey was clearly stated however, it is acknowledged the length was probably close to the threshold for participants to decline on that basis. There were however only 13 withdrawals from completion with the on-line version once participants started the process. The online survey mechanism did not record withdrawal prior to starting.

The paper based survey form

The mail out approach (used by three participating councils) has its own distinct set of limitations. While the response rates were higher, inconsistencies in response could not be constrained as well as in the online survey (Malhotra, 1999). For example, respondents who are ‘speaking submitters’ may also fill out the question for non-speakers, or select more than one response in a multi-choice question where only one response is required. Additionally, the researcher can make errors transcribing the responses to the database, or someone other

than the submitter may fill out the form (Frey et al., 1999). Also, as mentioned earlier, the requirement for manual update by the researchers was time-consuming and added significantly to the administration costs (Malhotra, 1999).

4.4 The Interviews

In-depth interviews of the council staff leading the LTCCP consultation are the second research method discussed in this research design chapter.

4.4.1 Interviews as a Method

Semi-structured telephone interviews were selected as a complementary research method to add perspective and context to the broad snapshot of submitter satisfaction provided by the earlier described survey of submitters. The semi-structured approach suited the research scenario, which research had predicted would be widely variable (Cheyne, 1997; Comrie, 1999; Nash, 2007) and therefore difficult to anticipate answers to (Hague & Jackson, 1999). Hague and Jackson (1999) also say interviews are well suited when involving professional people because they are a common method in business and allow direct attributions. A qualitative research approach was needed because the majority of information required from participating councils could not be realistically gathered or observed (Aaker et al., 2000), and with only ten participants, a more rich flexible approach was possible. The qualitative interview approach suited the small size of council sample and considerable information was generated, in this case ten interviews were conducted and over ten hours of notes gathered (the interviews were not recorded).

From the participants' point of view, the flexibility and informality of the telephone interview encouraged willing, free and frank discussion from council staff members. There was no preparation required by interview participants, and the interviews were able to be scheduled for a time that best suited the participant. The scheduling was undertaken through email exchanges. The interviews take between 30 minutes and an hour and a half, with the continuity and the length of interview largely controlled by the participant (Malhotra, 1999). A telephone interview can yield rich qualitative comment as the participant has the opportunity to talk for the majority of the interview – as opposed to taking turns in a focus

group, and their responses are uncontaminated by other participants' comments and influence (Aaker et al., 2000).

The research questions for the interview included the same categories as the submitter questionnaire allowing classification, attitudinal and behavioural answers, but there was an emphasis on classification and behavioural questions (Patton, 1980). The interviews did allow an excellent and immediate opportunity for participants to clarify their understanding of questions and similarly for the researcher to clarify responses (Hague & Jackson, 1999; Malhotra, 1999). To this end, telephone interviews represent synchronous communication in terms of time, however in terms of place they are asynchronous (Opdenakker, 2006).

The interviews were planned to be conducted over the phone with the exception of the Nelson where the interviewee and researcher both lived – this was conducted face to face. As an approach, the phone interviews were cost and time-effective because they did not require travel by the researcher, and allowed the participant to suspend the interview if necessary (this happened with two councils where the interview took longer than was scheduled and had to be resumed at a later date).

From the researchers' perspective a strong knowledge of the consultation process and communications planning in a local government setting helped establish rapport. Additional probing and pertinent questions could be asked to obtain information (Frey et al., 1999). The researcher was a long-time communication manager in local government and therefore was known by many of the participants. The researcher's knowledge of local government also helped develop early rapport with the interviewees who were not known by the researcher. As a result the interviews were relatively informal in tone.

Limitations of the research method

Overall, the telephone interview method worked well for participant and researcher alike, however there were two limitations to the approach requiring acknowledgement. Because the telephone interview is asynchronous in terms of place, the researcher has no knowledge or control over the environment in which the participant takes the telephone interview is taken (Opdenakker, 2006). Additionally the social cues available for understanding questions and responses are not as strong as in face to face interviewing.

However, cost-effective access to a geographically dispersed sample of council staff outweighs this negative aspect.

4.4.2 Interview Participants

The council staff interviewed all had similar roles coordinating the LTCCP consultation, their broader substantive roles varied as described in Table 9. It is important to note that designation titles and subsequent responsibilities for communication/consultation vary widely across councils. The variation is, based on the researcher experience of councils, a product of the historic structure and culture of the councils, and the skills and interest of the staff member. Thus in one council a strategic planner may take the same consultation coordination role that the communication manager may take in another council.

Table 9: Substantive roles of participating staff interviewed in the research

Council	Designation of interviewee
Hauraki District Council	Policy Analyst
Hutt City Council	Divisional Manager Strategic Planning
Nelson City Council	Manager Strategy and Planning
Ruapehu District Council	Leader – Strategic Development
Tasman District Council	Manager Strategic Planning
Timaru District Council	Manager Strategic Planning
Western Bay of Plenty District Council	Strategic Planning Manager
Hawke's Bay Regional Council	Communication Manager
Horizons	Communication Manager
Whakatane District Council	Communication Manager

4.4.3 The Interview Design

The approach taken to developing the interview questions was similar to that taken in the survey. The literature research had pointed to three broad areas of investigation; the council's communication practices (used to encourage community participation in the LTCCP consultation), external influences (including media and lobby groups) that would likely impact on participation levels and public agendas, and the wider context of councils' historical relationship with the community.

As with the survey questions, Patton's (1980) general question types were used to refine question selection. Knowledge and experience/behavior question were identified as the most valuable approach to capturing a picture of the council staff perspective of the 2009 LTCCP consultation, at that point in time. It was vital that the participants' knowledge of their council's commitment to consultation and community relationship was revealed, and that a good description of council consultation practices was gathered.

Once the information requirement and the question types were identified, the interview questions were drafted. There were twelve open questions, which were supported by additional clarification/prompting questions that were asked, or left unasked, depending on the initial participant response to the question.

A copy of the interview instrument is included in Appendix B. The interview started with a ground-setting discussion of the council's objectives at the outset of consultation. The early questions also scoped the resourcing (i.e. staffing and operational budget) dedicated to the consultation effort. Information on council's goals and resourcing would provide indications of the intent and level of commitment of councils going into the consultation.

The communication tools used in consultation were the next line of inquiry. To gain an understanding of the consultation processes and activities used by the participating councils, there were questions on pre-consultation activity, the length of time allocated to the consultation, the channels and methods of consultation and target audiences. The interview participants were asked about the levels of media interest experienced during the consultation, and if they tracked the media coverage in any way. The interviewees also listed the lobby groups active during the consultation period, and to discuss their influence.

Leading up to the LTCCP consultations, New Zealand Audit had advised all councils to orientate their consultation around the most pressing issue councils were facing in the LTCCP consultation (Department of Internal Affairs, 2010), an approach designed to improve the clarity and focus of consultation. Thus where the submitter survey tested what subjects submitters had made comment on, the telephone interview gathered the council's perceptions of key agendas.

The interview ended with a broad summarising question asking the staff member's perceptions of the relationship between council and the community, and what the previous consultation activity levels had been. These two questions were to gain some idea of the typical levels of engagement in their communities.

While the schedule was used as a flexible basis for the interviews, it was important that the basic outline of questions was adhered to so there could be comparison between participant responses. The specific wording and order of subject remained flexible enough to be influenced by answers (Eunson, 2008), allowing council staff the freedom to discursively discuss related subjects, while the essential topics were addressed in the process.

4.4.4 Conducting the Interviews

Testing and piloting the interview questions

The question schedule draft was peer reviewed by a work colleague of the researcher, the Nelson City Council Strategic Planner. No formal pilot as such was undertaken.

Administering the interviews

In very early email contacts and telephone calls during the development phase of the survey, participating council staff were advised of the telephone interviews, and that they would be undertaken after the consultation process was completed. The interviewees were subsequently contacted by email and based on the staff member's response, a tentative schedule was drawn up and closer to the time of interview a follow-up email was sent suggesting a time for the interview. The council staff members were then encouraged to suggest a new time if the suggested time did not suit, or to confirm.

Those who did not respond were contacted by phone to confirm the approach and a time. The Timaru participant was going on an extended holiday and chose to complete his feedback via email.

In three cases no response was required and a follow-up telephone call was used to confirm interview times and requirements. The interviews were completed over a four month period between July and November 2009 depending on staff availability and also the completion of the final LTCCP feedback letters – some of which were not scheduled until October. Table 10 gives a breakdown of the timeline in scheduling and conducting the interviews.

Table 10: Timing of contacts to schedule and conduct interviews

Month	Action
July	Initial email to full group picking up the interview subject again.
August	Begin scheduling interviews
September – October	Conduct first three interviews (Ruapehu, Whakatane, Horizons). The Timaru staff member completed his via email. The next month's interviews were scheduled.
November	Conduct four interviews (Nelson, Horizons, Hauraki, and Western Bay of Plenty). Schedule next interviews.
December	Conduct final two interviews (Hawke's Bay Regional, Tasman) Upper Hutt, Tasman).

The interviews ranged in length from between 30 and 75 minutes depending on the individual interviewee's responsiveness. All interviews followed the same format and conventions. Notes were taken as a record of the interviews. The responses were chronicled verbatim as far as possible, always using the interviewee's words. Transcripts were full and all follow-up probing questions were also included (Frey et al., 1999).

After the interview was completed, and the notes fully written up, a copy of the transcript was sent to each interviewed staff member for review. The idea was to confirm the researchers understanding and notes on the comments. Participants were encouraged to change anything they felt did not accurately represent their interview comments, and add anything that they felt might contribute further to the research.

4.4.5 Analysing Interview Data

The telephone interview yielded a large volume of qualitative data. The interview notes were then explored using a content analysis approach to generate categories, identify general frequencies of themes where appropriate, and then subsequent explanations.

4.4.6 Limitations of the Telephone Interview Research

Overall, the strengths of the telephone interview approach far outweighed any limitations. However during the implementation there were some limitations that became apparent. The time required to prepare, schedule and interview was greater than expected, particularly the scheduling.

Qualitative interviews can mean results are susceptible to the researcher's influences and interpretation, (Malhotra, 1999) and there is an absolute requirement for the interviewer to accurately capture comments. The researcher is very familiar with the local government environment and knows some of the interviewees so there is the potential of strong subjective biases, which means transcribing the comments closely is important. Recording the interviews may have overcome this problem. However, the potential for bias was largely controlled with the transcripts of the interview being sent back to the interviewees for approval and additional comments.

4.5 Recruiting Councils to Take Part in the Research

The research design aimed to capture a representative sample of local authorities, i.e. a variety of types and sizes of councils. New Zealand, at the time of the research, had 12 regional councils (primarily responsible for environmental matters—land, sea, air and water) and 73 territorial councils (responsible for the provision of an array of infrastructure, community facilities and services). The regional council category includes four unitary councils (which combine the regional and territorial responsibilities). In 2009, the territorial council category comprised 16 city and 57 district councils.

An invitation to participate in the research was sent electronically through two nationwide local government list serves (a subscribed, electronic distribution list) on 20 February 2009. A

copy of the national list serve email to planners and communication staff is included in Appendix A.

The Society of Local Government Managers (SOLGM) provides a variety of list serves for council staff use. The first list serve directed the invitation to council communication staff, or staff with an interest in communication. The second list serve reached council planning and policy staff. The list serves are used by managers as a networking tool to discuss news and issues relevant to their discipline. The list serve approach was used because it had good reach across the councils and directly targeted the council staff who had overall responsibility or at least a significant role in the LTCCP consultation process.

The Senior Planning Manager for Local Government New Zealand subsequently sent out an email on the list serves in support of the research project in late February 2009, which acted as a reminder to prospective participants.

In response to the invitation, 18 councils signaled an interest in participating in the research project. There were also several councils that expressed support for the project, but were too far advanced in their consultation process to be able to participate. If this research were to be repeated, the timing of the first contact should be adjusted to recognise the diverse timings of the LTCCP consultation in different councils. During the initial stages of research, eight of the original 18 councils had to withdraw because of timing and resource issues, which left ten participating councils located from throughout New Zealand.

The final sample contained a good spread in the type of council represented, with one city, five district, two regional and two unitary councils taking part. Similarly, there was a spread of rural and urban councils, although the three large metropolitan centres Auckland, Wellington Christchurch did not take part. Table 11 lists the participating councils and gives details of the population and land area of each local authority for comparison.

Table 11: Characteristics of participating local authorities

Council type an name	Rural/urban	Population	Size/km^2
Territorial – City Councils			
Hutt City Council	Urban	97,701	380
Territorial – District Councils			
Ruapehu District Council	Rural/urban	13,569	6,730
Western Bay of Plenty District Council	Rural/urban	42,000	2,120
Timaru District Council	Rural/urban	42,000	2,602
Hauraki District Council	Rural/urban	17,190	1,144
Whakatane District Council	Rural/urban	32,810	4,330
Unitary Councils			
Nelson City Council	Urban	42,891	423
Tasman District Council	Rural/urban	44,625	9,786
Regional Councils			
Hawke's Bay Regional Council	Rural/urban	147,783	14,200
Horizons Regional Council	Rural/urban Encompasses 10 local authorities	220,089	22,215
Total		700,658	69,930

4.6 Ethical Issues

There are many ethical considerations included in the research design and implementation. Institutional approval of the research proposal was gained in the first instance from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee.

When recruiting the sample of councils, the list serve email was open and transparent as to the purpose and requirements of the research. Each interested council was then asked to specifically approve the research parameters, and telephone contact was made with each committed council to clarify approach and answer any questions. Councils could pull out of the survey at any time, and indeed a number did as time pressures with the LTCCP became too much. The research was designed so that time required from the participating councils was kept to a minimum.

Before the survey was finalised, all participating councils had the chance to comment on the questions and feel comfortable with the orientation of the survey before release (see Appendix E). Additionally the research committed to working within any standards councils had defined in regard to their residents and ratepayers (ensuring that no damage was done to the relationship between the ratepayer participants).

Notwithstanding the more obvious requirement for the research to be compliant with the relevant law, there is also the clear responsibility for the research to be conducted in a manner so as not to cause any damage to the welfare and dignity of the participants – i.e. councils, council staff and submitters. For the submitters this meant ensuring confidentiality of response information and privacy, and taking a non-invasive approach to gathering submitter feedback. The requirements of the survey were clearly described in the email sent to submitters (see Appendix F). In gaining consent from the participants, the language used was clear and understandable so that consent was appropriately informed. While participation was voluntary, the privacy of the personal information (the demographic data in the final panel of the survey in particular) and comments were confirmed in introduction that presented the survey document (also see Appendix F).

Participants could engage or withdraw with from the research at any time in SurveyMonkey. Inducements for participating in research (for the purposes of increasing participation) were not considered because of the small budget for the research project so there were no further ethical considerations in this area regarding appropriateness of reward.

Considerations of courtesy and respect were factored into all texts, including a note of thanks given at the end of the survey form. Similarly, courtesy and encouragement was extended to the staff taking part in the research. Finally, in the process of undertaking the research, all steps must be taken to honour any commitments made to contact, provide information, or respond to participants during the research.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has stepped through the important considerations during design of a research project, phase by phase. Four sub-questions were developed to gather information to answer the overarching research question on how successful were councils in the 2009 Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) consultation process in enabling democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, their communities? The sub-questions clarified the research parameters and guided the selection and development on the survey instruments. They were as follows:

1. From the perspective of council staff, how did councils encourage participation in the 2009 LTCCP consultation?
2. Who were the submitters in the 2009 council LTCCP consultation and what were the submissions about?
3. What are the barriers and enablers to participation in the LTCCP consultation as perceived by submitters?
4. From the perspective of submitters, what would make consultation better for citizens?

In-depth phone interviews were chosen to gather information from council staff responsible for the LTCCP consultation to answer the first sub-question. The interviews, which were conducted over the phone, proved an effective instrument in gathering a rich body of qualitative data for analysis.

Answers to sub-questions 2 – 4 were gathered by online and postal mail questionnaire of submitters. The survey approach was selected for contact with submitters to the 2009 LTCCP plan because it was likely to be familiar to participants and could reach a geographically dispersed population. The survey approach and structured question design proved successful in efficiently gathering a broad, rich set of quantitative and qualitative data.

Ten councils from across New Zealand participated in the study and this participation level achieved the desired representation of a variety of councils large and small, with a collective constituency of over 700,000 citizens. However, the addition of a large metropolitan council would have improved the sample.

The following chapter discusses the findings of the research.

CHAPTER FIVE – RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the research. The first section summarises the results of interviews with staff from each participating council about the consultation process and provides context for the survey findings, described in the second section in this chapter.

Section one summarises the in-depth phone interviews conducted between June and November 2009 with leading staff from each of the councils involved in the consultation process. The staff were asked about influences on consultation activity, and their thoughts on barriers to wider community participation in consultation. The interview section finishes with coverage of councils' engagement activities and methods used to encourage participation as described by the staff interviewed.

The second section contains a detailed quantitative and qualitative analysis of the 452 responses received to the survey of submitters to the LTCCP consultation in ten councils. The second section opens with a description of response rates and respondent demographic and psychographic data. This section also covers how and where participants heard about the LTCCP consultation. The survey results also detail the characteristics and perceptions of first-time submitters focusing on barriers to participation. A further section reports on the perceptions of those respondents who spoke before council.

The survey findings are rounded out with tables presenting the participants' perceptions of their 2009 LTCCP submission experience and their overall satisfaction levels. Finally, frequency analysis of submitter comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the consultation process is presented.

5.2 Results of Interviews with Council Staff

The following section presents the information gathered in ten semi-structured interviews of the council staff that had led or played a significant role in the 2009 LTCCP consultation in each of the participating council. The interview questions are included in Appendix B.

5.2.1 Consultation Objectives and External Influences

Consultation objectives

The staff telephone interviews opened with a general discussion on the consultation objectives to gain an appreciation of the goals and commitment of participating councils to the consultation activity. Consultation goals typically fell into three categories. Participants from two councils said their paramount goal was to gather feedback on key issues facing their communities (Hutt City and Whakatane District Council). Four councils had the more general goal of reaching a large number of constituents, and to run an "effective consultation" process (Western Bay of Plenty, Hawke's Bay Regional, Timaru District, and Ruapehu District). The remaining four councils (Hauraki District, Horizons, Tasman District and Nelson City) combined specific issue-based goals with the wider goals of effective consultation engagement.

Respondents from the issues-orientated councils stated their main goal was gathering feedback to guide and/or support the decision-making process. The influence of a policy background was clear in the Hutt City interview with comments reflecting the Council's financial strategies. The Divisional Manager of Strategic Planning noted that Hutt City Council "had pursued a strategy since the 1990s where they keep rates to the level of inflation and allow only half a percent increase. They also vigorously pursue decreasing their debt levels". As a result, the Hutt City Council LTCCP consultation was limited and focused predominantly on funding facility development through land sales. According to the interviewee, Hutt City therefore simply wanted to gather the community's perceptions of priorities for development of community facilities.

The Whakatane Communication Manager spoke of checking community priorities for levels of service. This council had a primary goal of prioritising infrastructural development, and the staff member noted the "LTCCP was the opportunity to check that this was right".

Neither Hutt City, nor Whakatane District specified a single service as a focus for consultation, but both interviewees talked of affordability across wider areas of development work (i.e. facility and infrastructural development). However, the Whakatane Communication Manager did identify one issue later in the interview – that of his council's proposal to sell council housing.

Both Whakatane District and Hutt City interviewees said their councils also felt representative comment was important. They wanted to be confident they knew the thoughts of different audiences in the community with the Whakatane District Council participant saying that they "needed to establish acceptable levels of service" and "acceptability of the costs". Indeed, the Whakatane Communication Manager was the only one to specifically mention acceptability of the proposal as a consultation objective. While this was not verbalised in other interviews, the aim was implied by all other interviewees.

Discussion in the 'combination' group (i.e. Hauraki District, Horizons Regional, Tasman District and Nelson City) interviews revealed similar goals to the 'issues' group with each council consulting on a set of key topics. However, members of this group also spoke of the wider goals of engagement and of providing the community with adequate information to enable participation. Typical comments were "encouraging quieter groups in the community to comment", "raising levels of awareness and interest", and (most commonly voiced) the aim of getting "good engagement".

Finally, a group of four councils (Ruapehu, Western Bay of Plenty, Hawke's Bay Regional and Timaru) who aimed for "effective consultation" explained their activity along relational lines. This group described the generic aims: to reach a wide selection of the community; to stimulate interest and raise awareness; to engage the community and specific audiences; to motivate and encourage response; and to provide enough information for the community to make an informed response. To this end, this group focussed primarily on the consultation process and particularly on reach. The participant from Western Bay of Plenty wanted "to reach every ratepayer", the Hawke's Bay Regional participant "to reach more ratepayers", and Ruapehu to "get as many views as possible".

All participants were also asked if the goals of the LTCCP consultation differed from previous consultations. Only two councils (Whakatane and Nelson) had goals significantly different from previous consultations. The Whakatane Communication manager noted that his council had shifted from an approach focussing on operational level issues to aiming to consult at a more strategic level. Nelson City Council had a group of key issues it specifically wanted feedback on and this was the first-time in a major strategic consultation that Nelson had taken this approach. For the remaining eight councils the responses confirmed goals were the same or very similar to previous consultations and that the consultation approach and contents were part of an incremental evolution of practice and purpose.

Media activity and influence during consultation.

The interview moved onto questions on councils' media activity, monitoring of coverage and perceptions of how the media influenced community agendas. All councils reported keeping a very general watching brief on media and respondents could comment on media activity. However, there were four councils (Tasman District, Hawke's Bay and Horizons and Whakatane District) that specifically dedicated resources to tracking media activity during the LTCCP consultation. Monitoring was limited to local print media and typically meant that local papers were read for coverage, both for general media stories (generated by council media activity), and also stakeholder or lobbyist comments in opinion pieces and letters to the editor. Of the monitoring group, one council—The Hawke's Bay Regional Council—recorded the results and translated coverage into positive, neutral or negative comment. Hawke's Bay reported their end results as 83 percent positive coverage, or 86 percent positive or neutral.

Most respondents said it was difficult to track media coverage effectively. Media fragmentation (especially radio) was the leading reason given and councils with large territories reported struggling to monitor the numerous weekly community newspapers as well as daily newspapers in towns and cities.

Two participants reported low media coverage. Hauraki District Council's Policy Analyst reported local media showed only minimal interest in the LTCCP consultation saying that

“they didn’t even attend the hearings… however, we did not have a draft that contained anything which we thought was contentious”.

The Strategic Planning Manager from Western Bay of Plenty attributed the low media interest in its consultation to media attention being fixed on neighbouring Tauranga City Council, where a high profile argument with the audit office dominated local and national media coverage. The focus on Tauranga (not part of this study) deflected potential media attention and energy from Western Bay of Plenty.

Whakatane and Nelson reported fluctuating coverage during the consultation. The Whakatane Communication Manager commented that media coverage varied, with some stories receiving more negative coverage than expected, this attributed to lobbying by community groups. Additionally some Whakatane councillors actively campaigned against parts of their LTCCP proposal. Interestingly, the Whakatane Communication Manager felt some of this negative coverage was due to the lack of engagement with the media by council staff, saying “we did not have the resources to dedicate to managing media attention more effectively”.

After good media pickup on the consultation launch, the Nelson City Council Manager of Strategy and Planning felt media coverage of consultation issues was then dominated by lobby groups. The most active was the local Residents’ Association, which argued strongly against any rates rise.

A group of councils reported good media pickup of council initiatives and active, positive relationships with local papers: Hutt City, Ruapehu District, Horizons and Hawke’s Bay Regional councils. The Hawke’s Bay Regional Communication Manager aimed to improve his council’s relationship with local media and its understanding of the LTCCP proposal, saying the council had a goal of “including media in on discussions as much as possible to get them involved”. He felt this approach translated into well-informed and accurate media coverage and commented that “there were not any difficult issues or key concerns in our consultation …the media didn’t really jump on any one story”. This appeared to translate into wide-spread coverage, across a mixture of issues.

All participants talked of an on-going relationship with media and overall, while there was variation in comments on media coverage, they typically felt media coverage was fair. However, because of the lack of monitoring, this feeling was largely based on anecdotal information. No participant specified media coverage that was unfair or grossly inaccurate. Some participants additionally noted a general on-going issue of varying levels of pickup of information from council media releases, media briefings, interviews/information and occasional inaccuracy in reporting. This comment was not specific to the LTCCP consultation.

Overall, the interviews indicated council staff believed the media had a strong influence on the perceptions of the community. However, participating councils did not rely on the media to convey the LTCCP story. The legislative emphasis on making information available and accessible, and the importance of the consultation contributing to the LTCCP as the guiding strategy for council activity led to direct communication lines with households through newsletters and summary mail-outs. In particular, the Tasman District Manager of Strategic Planning was very specific about the direct communications approach taken, saying Tasman had achieved more influence setting public agendas through local meetings and tailored summary documents. As a result, she felt the media had less influence on overall public perception.

Community groups and lobbying

Remaining on the subject of external influences to submitter activity and agendas, participating staff were asked to describe the special interest groups that were active during the consultation. Community lobbying for special interests was reported as a pervasive tactic. Eight of the councils reported active special interest groups that worked collaboratively to influence council, the media and the community. Participants from Ruapehu and Western Bay of Plenty reported an absence of lobby groups in this consultation, noting the likely cause was that their consultation did not present difficult issues. They said there were active special interest groups in their community, and both had both experienced prominent lobbying activity in prior consultations. Whakatane District had a notable example of community action with its proposal to sell pensioner housing generating a street march and petition with 4,700 signatures. Table 12 lists the lobby groups active in the LTCCP

consultation as reported by each council participant. The table demonstrates a wide variety of interests represented, especially those generated by issue-based proposals.

Table 12: Lobby groups in participating council consultations

Council	Lobby group
Hauraki District Council	Grey Power – active in community though not in media Transition Towns increasingly active
Hawke's Bay Regional Council	Kiwifruit Fruit Growers – distributed submission template Rural residents – affected by cutback in road funding distributed their own submission template Bay Buzz – an individual that follows all council activity, has a following, mediated via the web
Horizons	Rural residents
Hutt City Council	Residents for Fluoridation of the Water – organised and active
Nelson City Council	Mountain biking club – wanting trail development, distributed its own submission template Track cycling club – protesting removal of cycling track and distributed its own submission template Nelson Residents Association Grey Power – affordability concerns, active via media
Ruapehu District Council	Not this time – no issues
Tasman District Council	Can Plan Operator on recycling costs – with his own submission template sent to all residents via the mail Track cyclists – distributed their own submission template Tourism Groups – distributed their own submission template Rowing group Modjeska community
Timaru District Council	Transition Towns – sustainability interests, lobbied via media
Western Bay of Plenty District Council	Not this consultation, but in the past small communities have competed against each other for resorting
Whakatane District Council	Pensioner housing lobby group (including religious groups, elderly residents and younger residents) petition and march. Charter and fishing boat operators – Harbour Bylaw changes Commercial property owners against proposed pan charge

Key agendas from a council staff perspective

Interviewees were also asked about the major issues presented by councils to their communities in the proposed LTCCP. The responses to this question were to be later compared to the agendas of submitters (captured in the survey). Table 13 groups the issues that participants described as primary considerations in the consultation.

Table 13: Key LTCCP issues

Issue	Number #
Infrastructure – sealing roads, wastewater (2), water pipeline, major infrastructure projects	6
Community facilities (Performing Arts Centre, Aquatic Centre, Sports facilities, community housing, harbour fund)	5
Affordability	4
Rating philosophy	3
Levels of service, one council also said a service centre	3
Sustainability – recycling, climate change	3
Divestment of property (pensioner housing, excess reserves)	2
Funding of disaster mitigation projects	1
Going to metered water	1
Māori partnerships	1
Water quality and access	1
Community demographics – ageing population	1

New Zealand Audit had required councils to make a clear statement on the major agenda items needing to be discussed with their community. These agenda items were the items that councils specifically needed community feedback on to make a decision. While looking at various aspects the council core services of infrastructure and community facilities led the agendas mention. Affordability was third and appeared closely linked to the agendas of infrastructure and community facilities.

5.2.2 Variations in Council Approach to the Consultation Process

Time spent in consultation

The legal requirement for the duration of an LTCCP consultation is one calendar month. All councils in the study met the legislative requirements, consulting for the calendar month or just longer. Four councils (Nelson City Council, Tasman District Council, Hawke's Bay Regional and Horizons) extended consultation time to six weeks. Participants from councils that offered an extended consultation period said this was to give the community, and in particular community organisations, more opportunity to gather feedback for comment. Participants from councils that were active for just the statutory month cited pre-consultation activity by the council (covered in greater detail in Table 14) as the reason for not extending the consultation period.

Consultation resourcing

Consultation resourcing was asked about gauge, in part, the commitment of councils to the consultation and also identify where consultation activity was constrained. The answers showed there was a wide range of approaches to resourcing for the LTCCP consultation. Half the participating councils (Ruapehu, Whakatane, Tasman and Timaru District, and Hutt City) said they had limited resources to dedicate to the consultation effort with resource availability the leading constraint on their consultation activity. Active engagement methods in the community (e.g. meetings and presentation/expo type activity) were identified as time consuming and some councils simply did not have the staffing to commit to these activities.

Three reasons were given by the five councils to explain limits to the volume of resources dedicated to the consultation effort; staff availability, staff levels, and the priority given by the organisation to the consultation. Staff availability was a major constraint, particularly where councils had very few staff in the Planning or the Communications area because of the council size. In one council's case, recent staff losses had temporarily lowered staffing levels. Also, where the LTCCP proposed a 'steady as she goes' approach (in the case of Hutt City and Timaru) it was judged that there were fewer resources needed for the consultation activity.

As part of a discussion on low resourcing levels, the Hutt City Manager of Strategic Planning said if they had had the resources they would have spent more time out in the community

encouraging participation. Talking about other influences on the nature and amount of community response, she said that "there was not a huge amount of resource was available for the consultation, but we got a generally good response from the community because we use a well-designed survey submission form".

When asked which staff were used in consultation activity, respondents from four councils reported using only planning staff as internal resources dedicated to the consultation (Hutt City, Ruapehu, Timaru, and Tasman District Councils). The other six had communication and planning staff sharing the responsibility. Asset managers were additionally mentioned by Hauraki District Council as helping with the LTCCP consultation. Indeed, the Hauraki Policy Analyst reported the consultation was a whole of council approach. At the other end of the continuum, in one small council, the consultation was left to one person with the support of outside contractors (graphic designers).

Responding to questions on the limited resources available for consultation, participants from three councils commented that to be more efficient they rolled additional consultations into the LTCCP effort. This was where potential consultations had come up as a matter of business in the six months before the LTCCP and decisions were delayed and the issue subsequently included as part of the LTCCP consultation. This created a bigger resource pool (staff and operational budgets) for use in more time-consuming consultation activity particularly engagement activities like meetings, forums, stalls and expos. However, the tactic appeared to have its weaknesses with one staff member observing the council had received feedback that the piggybacking approach confused submitters by further complicating the issues under discussion. However, this combination approach did take advantage of the excellent reach of the LTCCP summaries, mailed out to each household. (Further discussion on the distribution of LTCCP summaries is included in the following Section 5.2.3).

Relationships between council and community

The subject of on-going council relationships with the community was discussed in the interviews to investigate this variable as a potential barrier to citizen participation. All participants considered their council's relationship with the community to be generally

positive. Eight of the ten reported their councils making an active and conscious effort to engage with the community, saying working relationships continued to grow.

When asked why the relationships were positive, participants gave a number of reasons. Four participants felt their council's on-going strategic efforts towards building the relationships had paid dividends, particularly the time spent actively discussing issues with communities of interest. Hawke's Bay Regional Council, for example, has a specific strategy to strengthen stakeholder relationships. The Communication Manager there reported that relationships had improved with stakeholders, although in the wider community the relationship remained hampered by low levels of awareness of the regional council roles and responsibilities.

The Hauraki District Policy Analyst mentioned the Mayor's influence on a positive community relationship, saying his open door policy was well regarded and "interested parties will come to speak directly to the Mayor". She also attributed the positive relationship to councillors and staff attending many meetings in the community.

Another participant attributed the council's trusting relationship with the community to the honesty her council demonstrated. Reflecting on the prior performance of the council she explained that "in the past where we have made mistakes, we have openly admitted these and this has had a positive effect". The Strategic Planning manager from this council felt the honesty also showed transparency, and as a result the council was perceived as "more human and less bureaucratic".

In a similar vein, another interviewee said his council/community relationship was positive because they had listened to the community in the past and responded by changing proposals as a result of submitter feedback. The participant said this response from the council showed that consultation proposals were open to community influence and submitters have the power to influence in the relationship.

Participants from four councils commented on variable relationships within different parts of their community. The Ruapehu District Council Leader of Strategic Development commented on the surprising difference between local ratepayers and those ratepayers living

out of town saying “the out-of-town citizens are more engaged making submissions, though the locals probably have the ear of the councillors”.

Three other participants reported variations in the relationship according to particular wards and the stance of community boards representing those communities, with one saying relationships were sometimes negatively influenced by community boards. Instead of representing the council, the boards appeared to assume an advocacy role that was sometimes adversarial. This participant said the wider relationship between council and the smaller communities represented by the boards had suffered as a result. Other participants were more guarded in their responses, one saying the relationship “depended on the community group”, and another reporting relationships were “variable from year to year” and attributing media as a key influence in this variation.

When discussing why the attitudes and relationships varied so much, one participant commented that the consistency of her council’s relationship was a product of the decisions being made. This participant felt that community interaction tended to be positive until controversial or difficult decisions had to be made, and that difficult decisions had the tendency to polarise the community and public opinion of council.

The Hawke’s Bay Regional communication manager noted that the easy relationship with the community was not necessarily driven by the performance of the council. He believed relatively low levels of awareness in the community, particularly the general understanding of the council’s role, contributed to low interaction and expectation levels.

The size of the rate increases was mentioned by staff from two councils as having a strong effect on community relationships. The Hutt City Manager of Strategic Planning said “low rate increases were credited as driving positive, or at least less negative, comment in the community”. The Hauraki Policy Analyst illustrated this point when explaining that “we typically have a good relationship with the community, but we didn’t have a big rate increase proposed, and this likely influences our relationship”.

5.2.3 Consultation Activities to Encourage Engagement

Target audiences for consultation

Participants were asked to describe if, and how they targeted audiences. This line of enquiry gathered information on the council practices that were used to identify and communicate with different communities in their area, and communities of interest. The interviews revealed that targeting as a communication tactic was pervasive. All but two councils used a targeted approach, proactively recognising the needs or special interests of different audiences and tailoring consultation approaches to those needs.

Geographic areas (wards or townships), special interests (e.g. boating, kiwifruit growers, property developers) and relationships (partners and stakeholder relationships in particular) were the basis of targeting activities. Six councils targeted geographical areas and towns with Tasman District Council showing huge commitment to this tactic. Tasman published 17 separate, locality-specific, LTCCP summaries for each geographic area (settlement) in the region. Each settlement publication reflected the distinct characteristics and interests of the areas, and included information on the infrastructure and services proposed for that community. The Tasman staff member said the settlement plans were "smaller and more user friendly" than the larger high-level summary of the region, and reported that the council got a "huge" amount of positive feedback on the documents.

The remaining councils that targeted geographic areas did so by meetings and tours to raise interest and communicate with smaller communities. Western Bay of Plenty Council was a good example of this tactic—staff and councillors toured their eastern communities to discuss the proposed water metering and a wastewater scheme.

Stakeholder organisations were another common target. All eight councils that reported using the targeting approach mentioned stakeholders as a focus. The two participating regional councils, Horizons and Hawke's Bay had already noted their council had an on-going strategy to build and strengthen stakeholder relationships. The stakeholder organisations mentioned by the eight councils included the Chamber of Commerce, Federated Farmers, Tourism and Economic Development entities, Fish and Game, District Health Boards, local iwi, and in the regional councils' case, territorial authorities.

Meetings were the preferred method of communicating with stakeholder groups. These took several different forms. In some cases, the councils invited stakeholder representatives to council meetings and presentations specifically set up for a discussion. Other participants reported "piggybacking" on the stakeholders' own meetings, taking that opportunity to present and discuss the key issues. Breakfast meetings were used by Nelson for informal discussions and presentations, while the Hawke's Bay Regional Council developed a speaker series where stakeholders were invited to attend presentations from experts on various subjects.

Additionally there were four councils which targeted special interest groups that were not of stakeholder status. These included Whakatane District Council's discussions with the boating fraternity about Harbour Bylaw proposals; Hawke's Bay Regional Council's targeting of local pip fruit growers; Nelson City Council's strategy of publishing information on the LTCCP issues in community organisation newsletters (e.g. Grey Power); and Ruapehu's direct responses to action groups in the community.

There were also councils (e.g. Nelson, Tasman, Ruapehu and Western Bay of Plenty) that targeted audiences they felt were typically underrepresented in submissions. Based on prior knowledge of the profile of community response, youth, ethnic groups and iwi were named as examples. Two respondents (Hawke's Bay Regional and Nelson) noted media as a specific target group, and another three (Nelson, Horizons, and Hawke's Bay Regional) listed neighbouring councils or the territorial or regional councils as target audiences for council communication efforts.

Participants were also asked if their councils tracked the typical levels of first-time submitters in their consultations, to identify whether councils used this indicator to measure consultation effectiveness. Interviewees from Nelson City and Ruapehu Districts reported collecting this information intermittently. Historical consultation results from both councils showed between 30 percent and 40 percent of submitters were first-timers. Nelson's Strategic Planning Manager commented that the proportion of first-time submitters varied depending on the consultation subject, and what type of submission form was made available. The participant from Nelson strongly advocated a simple "survey-like consultation form" to encourage

response from first-time submitters and those less likely to submit. Hutt City Council also found a simple survey form effective in raising the number of submissions made.

Raising awareness with pre-consultation activity

A question on pre-consultation activity was asked to identify the likely impact of this activity on consultation awareness levels, community relationships, and the time allowed for the formal consultation process. Pre-consultation activity proved to be another pervasive tactic used to improve engagement. Nine of the ten participating councils used this approach in various forms and intensities. Comments also reflected that pre-consultation activity was conducted for a variety of purposes.

Four councils used pre-consultation to place the upcoming consultation issues in the agenda of the media and the community. More specifically, Western Bay of Plenty focused on its funding policy, water and wastewater proposals "to ensure when the LTCCP consultation launched it wasn't the first-time people had seen the debate and information". Both Tasman District and Nelson City councils used pre-consultation to identify and confirm the key issues that would later spearhead their attempts at having the "right debate", as directed by New Zealand Audit, during the consultation proper.

In two cases, the pre-consultation activity was aimed at improving community awareness of council services. For example, Hauraki District Council ran bus tours and invited residents and ratepayers from its three wards to "hop on a bus and tour the other wards". Hawke's Bay Regional Council reported a year of pre-consultation activity to raise public awareness of council services and role.

Aligned with the approach to educate the community to council's roles and responsibilities came pre-consultation activity used by another two councils to increase community understanding of levels of services and perceptions of service delivery with the community. Whakatane District Council discussed assets and services and their relative costs to the community by using focus groups, special interest meetings and a web-forum.

Target audiences were covered earlier in the interview, but in the discussion about pre-consultation most of the interviewees mentioned stakeholders, iwi and residents/ratepayers.

Additionally, the media were mentioned by most in discussing their pre-consultation activities (although media were only specified by one council in response to the direct question on target audiences).

Engagement methods and activities during consultation

All participants reported that the 2009 LTCCP consultation activity was an example of consultation being conducted in a way that represented best practice for their council. Throughout both pre-consultation and consultation activity, the interviews revealed evidence of a wide variety of methods, media and channels used by the councils.

Table 14 collates the communication activities conducted by the participating councils for the LTCCP consultation. The table shows seven tactics appear to be core communication approaches being used by all councils; advertising, media releases and media activity, email contacts, printed summaries, meetings with stakeholder groups, posters and displays, and website information. A printed summary of the LTCCP was produced by all councils as required by the LGA 2002, but not all councils directly distributed a copy to households. The communications activity common to all councils covers a wide variation of regular communication channels and levels, from interpersonal through to mass communications, written to visual and interactive.

The councils also showed considerable innovation in additional communication tactics, developing approaches designed to stimulate interest and motivate target audience and a wider community response. Notable examples of this innovative communication practices include:

- Bus tours offered to the public in wards – to visit neighbouring wards and inspect their infrastructure and community facilities (by Hauraki District Council).
- The Seventeen Settlements Summary LTCCP documents which broke down the LTCCP into summaries that were relevant and specific to each of Tasman's seventeen towns (by Tasman District Council).
- Dummy rates invoices to all ratepayers to project the likely rates increases on an individualised basis (by Western Bay of Plenty).

- A speaker series to raise the profile of local environmental issues with stakeholders (by Hawke's Bay Regional Council).
- Lunchtime speaking and engagement activities at secondary schools to increase engagement of youth target groups (by Nelson City Council).
- Council expos in local towns to raise awareness of the regional council role and responsibility (by Hawke's Bay Regional Council).

Table 14: Comparison of consultation activities (pre-consultation activity included)

	Hauraki District Council	Hawke's Bay Regional	Waikato Horizons –	Hutt City Council	Nelson City Council	Ruapehu District Council	Tasman District Council	Timaru District Council	Western Bay of Plenty District	Whakatane District Council
Advertising (paper and/or radio)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Council dedicated expos		●								
Dummy rates projection (paper/web)					●				●	●
Letter to stakeholders		●	●		●		●			●
Facility tours (bus)	●									
Focus groups/workshops	●	●	●		●	●	●		●	●
Email contacts (usually stakeholders)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Media releases, briefings	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Newsletters (periodic)	●	●	●		●		●	●		●
Newspaper space	●		●			●	●	●	●	●
Posters and displays	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Public meetings	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●
Radio talkback		●			●				●	
School engagement activities					●					

	Speaker series	Stakeholder Meetings	Printed summaries	Summary to all households	Mini local summaries	Tables/stalls in public places	Television interviews	Website information and submissions	Web forum
Whakatane District Council		●	●	●		●		●	●
Western Bay of Plenty District Council		●	●	●		●		●	
Timaru District Council		●	●	●				●	
Tasman District Council		●	●	●	●	●		●	●
Ruapehu District Council		●	●					●	
Nelson City Council		●	●	●		●		●	●
Hutt City Council		●	●	●		●		●	
Horizons – Waikato		●	●	●		●		●	
Hawke's Bay Regional	●	●	●				●	●	
Hauraki District Council		●	●	●		●		●	

Community responsiveness to consultations

Staff participants were asked to comment on their observations of general trends in submission numbers in their area. All participants noted a trend of rising numbers of submissions to council consultations. Three participants explained the rising submission levels as a consequence of the controversial issues being discussed, particularly single issues. These councils (Timaru, Whakatane and Tasman District) noted increased numbers taking part in the LTCCP consultation and recent related consultations where specific issues (an Aquatic Centre, selling pensioner housing and changing recycling costs) raised submission numbers markedly.

The Tasman District Manager of Strategic Planning gave an interesting example of the council's influence. Tasman had an active lobbyist who was the local contractor for recycling. The council proposed changing the service and as a consequence the service provider (i.e. the lobbyist) would likely change. The proposal was projected to cost ratepayers more but promised to deliver an improved service. In response the lobbyist mailed freepost pro-forma submission forms to all residents encouraging them to protest against the proposed change because of the increased cost. (Tasman had already mailed out summaries to all households that included the council submission form). The lobbyist's pro-forma submission forms were used by a large proportion of Tasman's submitters, their response resulting in a huge spike of participation from the community with several thousand submissions received. However, the staffer reported that submitters showed that they were already engaged in the consultation process because the pro-forma responses included a high number of additional comments on other issues – sometimes several issues were covered in one response.

The answers of the remaining seven interviewees focussed on the positive influence council consultation efforts had on engagement and ultimately submission levels in their communities. These councils felt the rise in submissions was a general trend of increasing numbers of people in the community wanting to become involved in civic decisions. Two participants noted that the style and format of consultation documents had an effect on submission content. They said that the substance of submissions was improved by a more clearly directed/structured consultation summary and submission form and as a result they received "fewer submissions that were essentially service requests". Both participants commented submitters were typically more

firmly focused on the particular issues identified in the consultation document than issues affecting them personally or their local area.

As part of the conversation about submission levels several participants also noted they typically gained higher numbers of submissions from single issue consultations. Nelson City Council's Manager of Strategy and Planning gave dog control bylaws as an example and Timaru District Council the Aquatic Centre. In these other prior consultations, outside of the LTCCP, it was felt the single discussion point made contribution easier, and the non-strategic topic meant people at all levels felt they could have a valid say. Additionally, a single issue had a clear purpose.

As discussed earlier in this section, Hutt and Nelson City Council participants specifically mentioned the design of submission forms. The Hutt City staff member strongly endorsed the council's well-designed submission form which she said encouraged submitter response. This was important to their consultation because other wider-ranging engagement activities were out of the council's reach due to resource constraints. The Nelson City and Horizons staffers both noted a wider trend of rising submission numbers which they attributed to having a survey-like submission form which made it easy to make a submission.

The Nelson City Council Strategic Planning manager commented that their survey form allowed for selections and brief note-like comments. This approach was perceived as encouraging people in the community to make a comment. He believed many submitters would otherwise find the effort and writing requirements too difficult because of the time and the level of writing skills required.

Comments on the efficacy of the survey form and the summary package were often made in the same response, however. Several interviewees felt that submission levels were positively affected by the improved availability of the submission form and the summary itself. Most councils mailed or delivered the summary to all residents. For the less motivated resident—and potential submitter—the personal cost of responding (in terms of time and effort) was lessened by offering simple response methods including free post and online submission forms.

Several participants also felt the level of engagement had increased because of the methods used for consultation. Western Bay of Plenty is an example with the staff member saying that council expos gained a good following. These expos had a much higher attendance than the public meetings held previously. Although the attendance levels could not necessarily be translated into higher submission levels, there was a strongly-held belief within the Western Bay of Plenty council that the expos improved the community's awareness of the breadth of council services and, in doing so, the council's relationship with the community.

5.3 Results of the Submitter Survey

The following section gives a full breakdown and analysis of the survey results beginning with the response rate gained in the survey. A copy of the submission form is included in Appendix C.

5.3.1 Response Rates

The ten councils in this research project received a total of 9053 submissions to their LTCCP consultations and 452 took part in the submitter survey. Therefore, given the sample size and wider submitter population, a level of 95 percent confidence and confidence interval of 5 can be attributed to the research being representative of the total submitter population.

As discussed in the chapter on research design (Section 4.3.4), participating councils used a variety of approaches when offering the survey to submitters. Seven out of the ten councils included the survey invitation tick-box on their consultation form. In the remaining three councils, a paper-based survey form and freepost return envelope was included in the final 'summary of decisions' letter to all submitters. Two of the councils that took the paper-based approach additionally offered submitters the alternative of completing the survey online. Table 15 lists the submission numbers and participant response rates for each contributing council, relating them to the research survey methods used. The inclusion of the paper survey form in the final notification letter seems to have been the most effective recruitment method.

Table 15: Submission numbers from participating councils, their survey response rates and recruitment methods

Council	Response Count (#)	Proportion of submission total (%)	Total submission numbers (#)	Respondent recruitment method. Paper (P), online (O) or both (B)	Method of survey request
Whakatane District Council	148	12.8	1160	B	Tick box and follow up letter with paper form, plus an online option
Hutt City Council	77	8.6	900	O	Submission form tick box and follow up email with link to online survey
Timaru District Council	61	40.9	149	P	Paper survey form included with final letter to all submitters
Nelson City Council	48	4.3	1,111	O	Submission form tick box and follow up email with link to online survey
Horizons	47	32.9	143	B	Paper survey form included with final letter to all submitters, plus online option.
Western Bay of Plenty District Council	35	5.0	700	O	Submission form tick box and follow up email with link to online survey
Hauraki District Council	10	13.3	75	O	Submission form tick box and follow up email with link to online survey
Tasman District Council	7	0.2	4634	O	Required to register with researcher, follow up by email to online survey
Hawke's Bay Regional Council	5	5.3	94	O	Submission form tick box and follow up email with link to online survey
Ruapehu District Council	4	4.6	87	O	Submission form tick box and follow up email with link to online survey
Not specified	10				
Totals	452	5.0	9053		

Only ten respondents did not identify the council they made their submissions to. Proportionally the highest response rates to the research survey were generated by submitters to the Timaru District (40.9 percent) and Horizons Regional Council (32.9 percent) consultations. Both these councils sent the paper survey out to submitters. While both Timaru and Horizons had relatively

low overall submission numbers when compared with Whakatane District Council and Hutt City Council, the proportional response to the survey was much higher.

Unfortunately, because of the small sample size, samples from each council could not be regarded as representative of that council, except in the case of Timaru and Horizons. This meant that the individual council data sets and findings could not be used for individual comparison. However, the overall sample size of 452 respondents was statistically representative of the population of submitters in the research, which numbered 9053. The survey findings in the following sections therefore focus on the total respondent sample, except where specific questions are asked of first-time submitters and the speakers at submission hearings.

5.3.2 Submitters' Demographic Characteristics

The survey asked six demographic questions about gender, age, ethnicity, income, education and household makeup of respondents. Demographic questions were placed at the end of the survey because they can be perceived as sensitive by respondents and inhibit participation. Where possible, the demographic findings are compared to the 2006 census data, sourced from Statistics New Zealand.

Gender

All but 7 percent of the responding submitters identified their gender. More men (57.4 percent) responded to the survey than women (42.6 percent). By comparison census data reveals women make up 51.2 percent of the population. Appendix G includes a cross-tabulation of survey results comparing the responses of female and male respondents. The comparison found a higher proportion of women were first-time submitters (45.8 percent of women compared with 40.6 percent of men). Female submitters were also typically younger and more ethnically diverse. Women also registered higher satisfaction levels with most aspects of the LTCCP consultation.

Age

The age categories used in the questionnaire allowed comparison against census data (during the design phase a comparison of ratepayers age profiles, in addition to the census data was contemplated, but discarded because many submitters are not ratepayers or residents).

The question was answered by 419 respondents, with 33 declining. The bar graph in Figure 6 shows older people dominating the sample of submitters who responded to the survey.

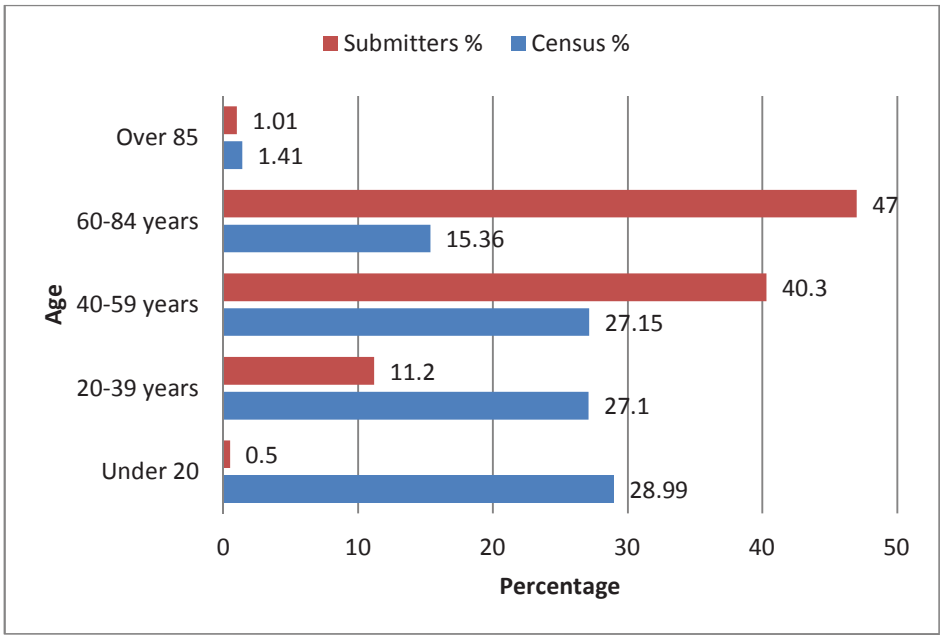


Figure 6: The age of submitters responding to the survey

Source: Statistics New Zealand, Census of Population and Dwellings, 2006.

A high proportion of the submitters—almost half (47 percent)—were between 60 and 85 years of age, compared to the census profile of just 15 percent of the population in this age category. Similarly, the second largest group of respondents (40 percent) were between 40 and 60 years old. In comparison, the census data this age group constituted 27.1 percent of the country's population. The third largest age group in the results was between 20 and 40 years. In the general population the 20-40 years age group is around the same size as the 40-59 years age group, yet the survey found only 11.2 percent of respondents were aged between 20 and 39 years.

Underrepresentation in comparison to the general population profile was also evident in younger age groups with very few respondents under the age of 20 years (just 0.5 percent) taking part in the survey. This percentage is tiny compared with the large proportion (28.1 percent) of the general population this age group represents. However, at the other end of the age range, in the

over 85 age group, the findings were much closer to population profile with 1 percent of respondents compared to 1.4 percent of over 85s in the general population. A cross-tabulation of the survey results across age groups is included in Appendix H. Most notable in this set of results in the tendency for younger age cohorts, i.e. under 20 years and 20 – 39 years of age, to be more ethnically diverse and closer to national gender proportions.

Ethnicity

The submitters that responded to the survey could indicate their cultural background with a choice of four ethnic categories or an additional 'other' category. A relatively high number of respondents (9.7 percent) chose not to answer this question. Most respondents were European (86 percent) compared with the national census figures of 61.2 percent; 8 percent were Māori (census 13.3 percent); Pacific and Asian ethnicity were hugely underrepresented at just 0.5 percent and 1.2 percent of participants respectively (census 6.3 percent and 8.3 percent).

Household income

Household income levels received the lowest response rate of all questions with 90 of the submitters responding to the survey refusing this question. Figure 7 compares the survey findings with census data, revealing respondent income levels were very similar to that of the general population.

The largest variation was in the under $30,000 bracket with the national profile just 2.5 percent higher than the responding submitters. These findings contrast with the considerable variations from the census data shown with other demographic characteristics. A cross-tabulation of the survey results across income levels is included in Appendix I. Notably, the data shows a strong trend where submitters with high incomes tend to be younger and submitters with low incomes make up a high proportion on the older age cohorts.

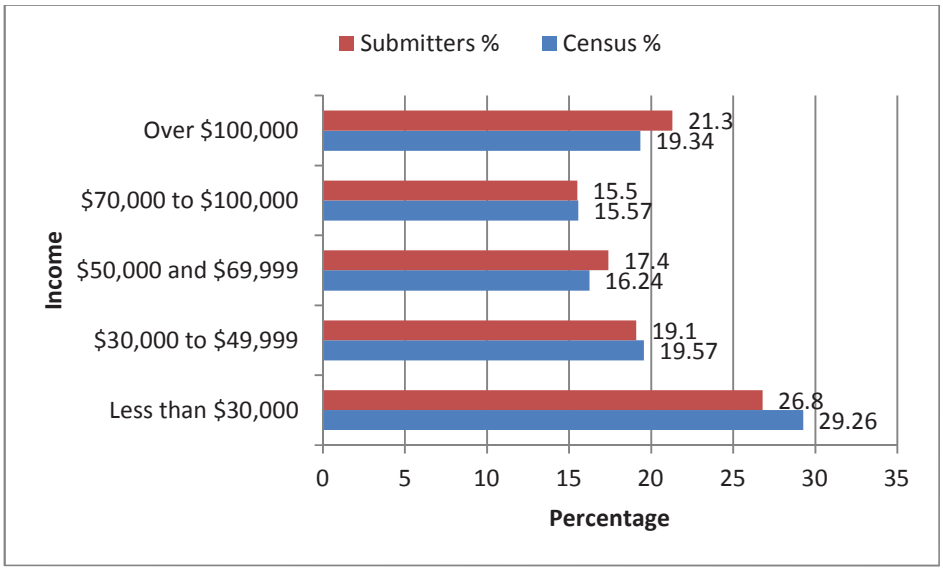


Figure 7: The household income of submitters responding to the survey

Source: Statistics New Zealand, Census of Population and Dwellings, 2006.

Education levels

There were 414 responses to the demographic question on education levels, 38 submitters (8.4 percent) chose not to answer. Figure 8 shows the survey findings in comparison with census data. The survey results revealed 43.2 percent of responding submitters had a degree or higher qualification, as compared to 15.8 percent in the census. The variance was even more marked when combined with respondents who indicated they had a vocational qualification. Collectively those with a degree or vocational qualification made up almost two out of three survey respondents (62.8 percent), whereas in the national population those with a degree or vocational qualification only make up 25.3 percent. The census identifies just under 75 percent of the population have no qualifications beyond secondary school, whereas this group made up 37.2 percent of the survey respondents. While the census reports one in four adults (25 percent) have no qualifications, fewer than 6 percent of submitters reported no qualifications.

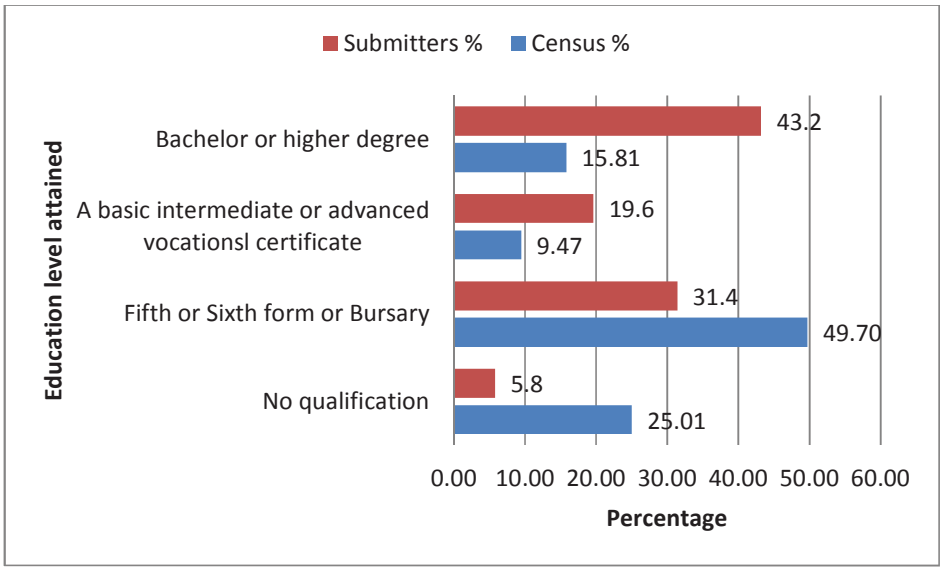


Figure 8: The education levels of submitters responding to the survey

Source: Statistics New Zealand, Census of Population and Dwellings, 2006.

A cross-tabulation of the survey results across education levels is included in Appendix J. This analysis showed that a high proportion of submitters with no education were first-time submitters, and that this cohort was also much more likely to visit council offices to get information on the LTCCP. Conversely, those with bachelor or higher degrees were much more likely to make a submission about the environment.

Household makeup

There were 419 responses to the demographic question on household makeup. Thirty-three respondents (7.8 percent) chose not to answer. Figure 9 shows the survey findings in comparison with census data. The survey results showed 54.9 percent of all respondents lived as a couple (without children) as compared with a census proportion of households 29 percent. All other household types were underrepresented, with the most marked being single parents with children at home, registering 2.4 percent of respondents compared to the national population of 13.2 percent. Collectively those families with children (i.e. couples or single parents) make up 43.7 percent of all households but were only represented by 24.4 percent of submitters.

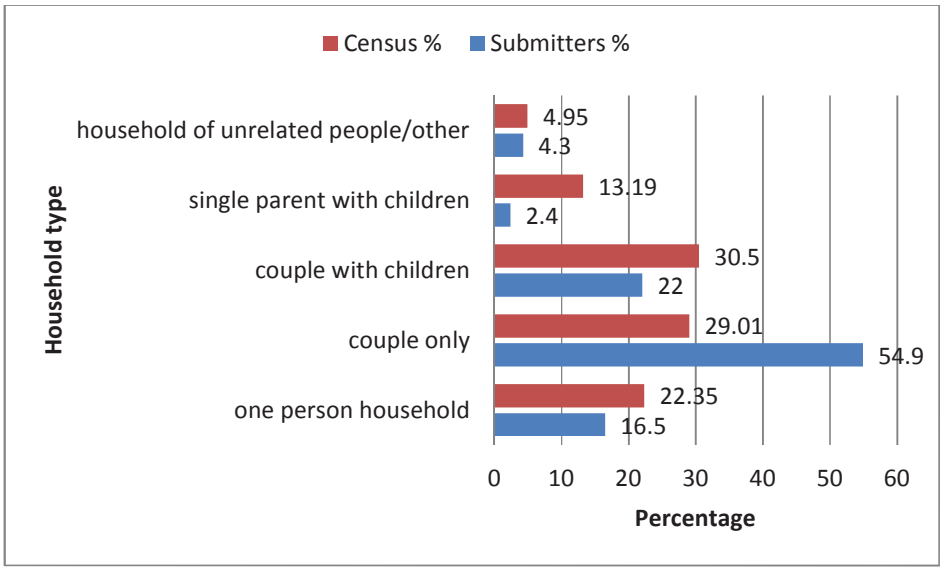


Figure 9: The household makeup of submitters responding to the survey

Source: Statistics New Zealand, Census of Population and Dwellings, 2006.

A cross-tabulation of the survey results comparing the responses of different household types is included in Appendix K. The most marked variance in household demographics was found in single person households, where female respondents made up 61.2 percent of the findings, disproportionate with overall percentage. Couples with or without children and other types of households were more evenly spread.

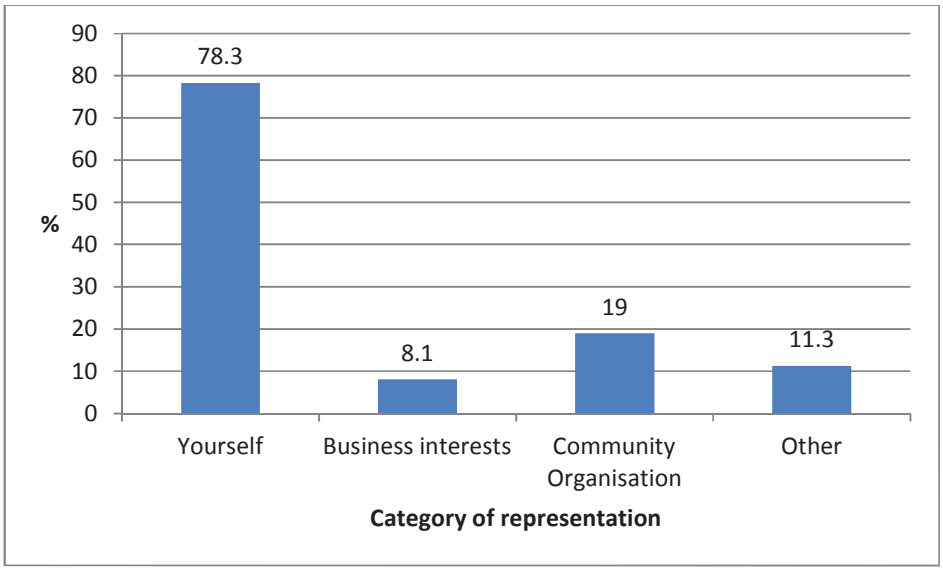
5.3.3 Representation and Experience

A series of questions asked who or what interests submitters represented, if the respondent was a first-time submitter, and whether the responding submitter also chose to speak to council in support of their submission. These characteristics were then compared against the demographic and the satisfaction level results.

Representation

The representation question allowed more than one response; therefore, the percentage total of responses is in excess of 100. Ten submitters (2.2 percent) chose not to respond to the question.

Figure 10 displays the results, showing nearly four out of five submitters represented individual interests. The results showed that almost 40 percent (19 percent + 8.1percent +11percent) of submitters made submissions representing an entity other than an individual. The question did not ask how many submissions the respondent had made; therefore, some respondents may have made multiple submissions, or made comments on their submission representing two or more entities.



Base: 442

Figure 10: The interests represented by submitters responding to the survey

'Community organisations' was the largest group represented with one in five submitters reporting they represented a group in this area. Just over 11 percent of submitters said they made their submission on behalf of interests other than community organisations or business. However, there was no opportunity given in the survey to capture further description of the nature of such groups.

Experience levels

The data showed a large proportion (41.8 percent) of respondents were first-time submitters. Overall, the results showed first-time submitters, while still skewed, were closer to the characteristics of the national census profiles than repeat submitters, particularly in the categories

of gender, age, and education. First-time submitters are still skewed from the national gender profile but less so with women making up a higher percentage of first-time submitters.

First-time submitters were a relatively high proportion of respondents in the age groups under 40 and over 60. The age group 40 to 60 years had a lower proportion of first-time submitters than the overall result.

Submitters with no qualifications were twice as likely to be first-time submitters, and single person households had a higher rate of first-time submitters as did those with an income under $30,000 and between $50,000 and $70,000. In the ethnicity results, Māori and Asian respondents, although being a small sample, had higher proportions of first-time submitters than the overall results indicate. Table 16 allows comparison between the proportions of first-time submitters/experienced submitters against census profiles, across the demographic survey questions of income, gender, age, education, ethnicity and household makeup.

Table 16: The demographic characteristics of repeat and first-time submitters

Gender	**Repeat%**	**First-time%**	**Census%***
Male	59.6	54.4	48.8
Female	40.4	45.6	51.2
Totals	100	100	100
Age	**Repeat %**	**First-time %**	**Census %***
Under 20	0.0	1.1	29.0
20-39 years	9.7	13.3	27.1
40-59 years	43.9	35.6	27.25
60-84 years	46.0	48.3	15.4
Over 85	0.4	1.7	1.4
Totals	100	100	100
Ethnicity	**Repeat %**	**First-time %**	**Census %***
European	85.9	86.1	61.2
Māori	7.7	9.3	13.3
Pacific	0.9	0.0	6.2
Asian	1.2	1.2	8.2

Other	4.3	3.4	10.1
Totals	100	100	100
Income	**Repeat %**	**First-time %**	**Census %***
Less than $30,000	24.2	30.6	29.3
$30,000 to $49,999	20.9	16.3	19.6
$50,000 and $69,999	15.8	19.7	16.2
$70,000 to $100,000	15.4	15.7	15.6
Over $100,000	23.7	17.7	19.3
Totals	100	100	100
Education	**Repeat %**	**First-time %**	**Census %***
None	3.4	9.1	25.0
Fifth or Sixth form or Bursary at Secondary School	29.0	34.7	49.7
A basic, intermediate or advanced vocational certificate	18.1	21.6	9.5
Bachelor or higher degree	49.6	34.6	15.8
Totals	100	100	100
Household makeup	**Repeat %**	**First-time %**	**Census %***
One person household	14.8	18.7	22.4
Couple only	56.9	52.2	29.0
Couple with children	22.4	21.4	30.5
Single parent with children	2.5	2.2	13.2
Household of unrelated people/other	3.4	5.5	4.9
Totals	100	100	100
Representation	**Repeat %**	**First-time %**	**NA**
Yourself	64.6	70.6	
Business interests	7.5	6.2	
A community organisation	19.7	11.4	
Other	8.2	11.8	
Totals	100	100	

* Source: Statistics New Zealand, Census of Population and Dwellings, 2006

Please note a complete cross-tabulation comparing the responses of repeat and first-time submitters across all survey questions is included in Appendix M.

First-time submitters were asked further questions about why they had chosen to make their first submission. The results are discussed in Section 5.3.5.

5.3.4 Where Submitters Learned Of the Consultation

Survey respondents were asked a series of questions to identify the relative success of communication channels raising awareness of the LTCCP consultation. There was also a question on the subsequent information sources used by responding submitters prior to making a submission.

Public awareness of the LTCCP consultation

A multiple-choice question gathered data on how submitters became aware of the LTCCP consultation. All 452 respondents answered. There were 557 choices made, this including 57 additional comments on information sources used by submitters that were not included in the options presented.

Table 17 allows comparison of the results of the survey in order of prominence, revealing two dominant sources of consultation notification – newspapers (in council advertising and in stories about LTCCP issues) and the Council LTCCP summary mail out to residents. Both sources were named by around two out of every five submitters. Nearly one out of five found out by word of mouth, with advertising, radio and web channels only accounting for low numbers in this initial awareness-raising phase.

Knowledge of the LTCCP consultation was most often attained through non-personal communication channels, with these sources accounting for 429 selections. Submitters who responded to the survey reported knowledge through personal experience or interpersonal networks on only 115 occasions.

Table 17: Information sources that notified submitters of the LTCCP consultation

Answer options	Response %
Local newspaper	40.5
Council summary sent by post	39.6
From another person	18.1
Radio	4.6
Poster or advertising	4.4
Council's website	3.3
Other	12.8

Base: 452

The option ‘other’ gathered a further 57 comments, which were analysed based on the frequency of response. Table 18 lists the additional sources noted. Personal contact with council staff or politicians led the mentions.

Table 18: Analysis of the 'other' comments for notifying information sources

Answer options	Response% (of total)
Council contact (staff, councillors)	3.3
Prior knowledge or experience	2.2
Council newsletter or letter	1.9
Don't know	1.3
Community Organisation	1.1
Community Organisation (Māori)	0.7
Advertising	0.4
Council meeting	0.4
Library	0.4
Other	1.1
Total	12.8

Base: 57

Information sources about the LTCCP

The survey then asked where submitters got their information on the proposed LTCCP Plan from, after they had become aware of the consultation. All 452 respondents answered the question. The question consisted of six selection tick boxes, including an 'other' option allowing respondents to specify sources not listed. Submitters could select more than one source and 615 selections were made in total, including 80 specified 'other' sources.

Table 19 summarises the responses showing mailed council publications (either newsletter or summary) were the leading source of information, being reported by over 70 percent of submitters. The other information sources listed by respondents required submitters to actively seek the LTCCP information. Council websites and council offices dominated these 'active' sources of information, both being reported by over 20 percent of submitters.

Table 19: Information sources for the LTCCP

Answer Options	Response %
Council summary sent by post	44.2
Council newsletter	26.1
Council website	23.0
Council offices/staff	21.0
Council Library	4.0
Other (specify)	17.7

Base: 615

There was a large response in the 'other' comments field, and Table 20 presents a frequency analysis of these comments picking up an array of additional information sources. Social contacts and family were the most common other sources, although they were only mentioned by 4.2 percent of submitters.

Table 20: Frequency analysis of qualitative comments

‘Other’ information sources	Response % (of total)
Social contacts and family	4.2
Newspaper	2.7
Community organisation	2.2
Full copy	1.5
Council meeting	1.3
Councillor	1.1
Council (channel not specified)	1.1
Council newsletter	0.7
Various	2.9

Base: 80

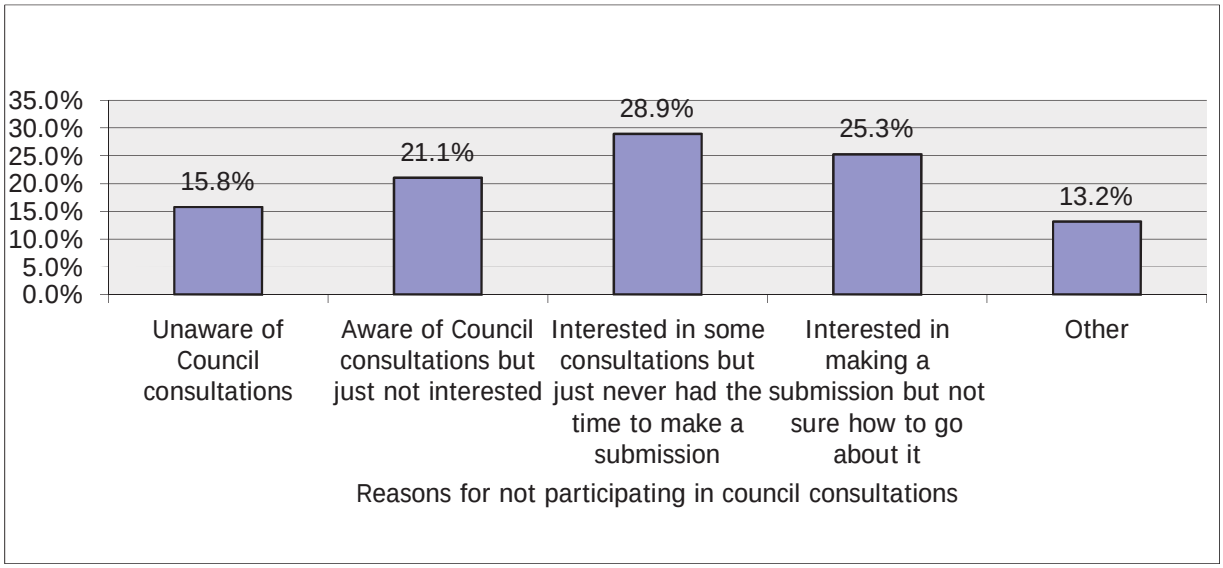
5.3.5 First-Time Submitters

After identifying the past submission experience of respondents, the survey then split. The sub-sample of 190 respondents (41.8 percent of the total sample), who were first-time submitters were presented with two additional questions to ascertain their feelings and attitudes towards consultation prior to their submission, and the reason why they made their first submission. Please note a cross-tabulation of all quantitative survey responses comparing repeat and first-time submitters is included in Appendix M.

First-time submitters – how they felt prior to making a submission

First-time submitters were asked to describe their levels of awareness and interest of council consultation processes prior to making their first submission. This question was aimed at identifying barriers non-submitters typically encounter to making a submission. Four multiple-choice options were offered with a further ‘other’ option allowing additional comment to be captured if these selections had not provided adequate description of the barriers. The four options roughly follow a pathway of evolving awareness and interest – unaware, aware but not interested, interested but not enough time, interested but without the skills to participate.

There was a wide spread of responses to this question and Figure 11 shows the reasons for non-participation were headed by lack of time. This was the leading reason cited almost 30 percent of first-time submitters indicating the perception that submissions take time, or that respondents were likely to have little time to spare, as a major issue. The results also identified that low levels of awareness had not been a major issue to limit participation in the LTCCP consultation amongst the respondent sample with only 15.8 percent of first-time submitters citing this reason.



Base: 190

Figure 11: First-time submitters - feelings prior to making a submission

Another major barrier to consultation participation was being unsure of the consultation process with one in four first-time submitters identifying this barrier. Additionally one in five respondents who were first-time submitters (21.1 percent) said they had previously not been sufficiently interested or motivated to make comment.

There were 25 further comments made under the ‘other’ option and these were analysed by frequency. The comments varied widely, but three themes emerged and these are listed in Table 21. A cynicism about council consultation and wider council decision-making processes was the most prominent other reason cited; however it was listed by only six submitters.

Table 21: Frequency analysis of additional comments to the question "As a first-time respondent, how would you have described yourself before making this submission?"

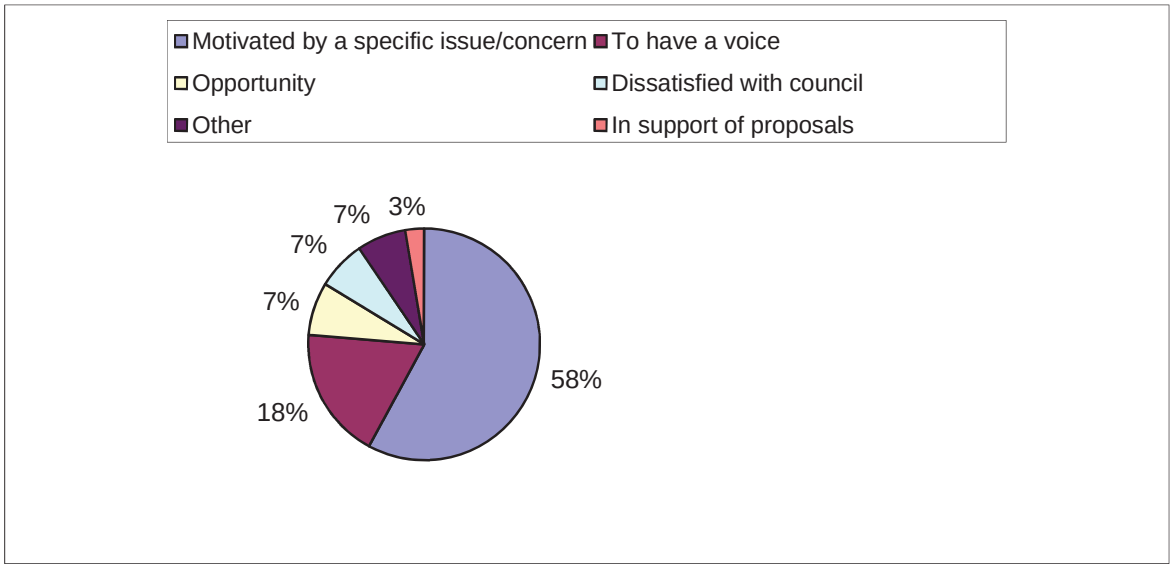
Comment	Response % (of total)
Cynical about council consultation (believed my submission would make no difference)	3.2
Had a reason to make a submission – motivated by a specific subject or issue (had not been so before)	2.6
Interested and finally made the move	2.1
Other	5.3

Base: 25

Why first-time submitters participated

The second question asked of first-time submitters was "What made you make a submission for the first-time?" This question was an open text response and the comments were coded and collated for frequency of mention. All 190 first-time submitters responded. Figure 12 shows the results in a pie graph, comparing the relative frequency of reasons mentioned by first-time submitters for making a submission. There were some clear and dominant themes arising from the responses.

Specific concerns or issues were the leading reason for participation by first-time submitters being mentioned by around three in every five responders. Exercising the democratic right to have a say was the second most cited reason, by close to one in five participants. There was a mixture of ideas within this theme, with the dominant concerns being thoughts for what the future might bring, and also a legacy-type desire of future planning for the next generation.



Base: 190

Figure 12: First-time submitters - reasons given for participating for the first time

Fourteen (7.4 percent) of first-time submitters commented that they made their submission because they had the opportunity to do so. Thirteen submitters (6.8 percent) said they did so because they were dissatisfied with their council's performance.

Leading reasons for first-time submitters making a submission– issues and concerns

Issues and concerns were the leading reason for first-time submitters to participate (58 percent), thus the comments within this set of responses were re-examined to identify any common themes. The analysis revealed that the issues concerning first-time submitters varied widely, however two principal themes emerged; community facilities (23.8 percent of those first-time submitters who identified an issue motivated their participation) and rates affordability (16.8 percent). Table 22 gives a full breakdown.

Table 22: Issues and concerns driving first-time submissions

Issue	Response %
Facilities (including pensioner housing)	23.8
Issues on rates affordability	16.8
Environmental concerns	7.9
Financial policies	5.0
The priorities of Council	4.0
Roading	4.0
Ratepayer lack of influence	4.0
Various other/not specified	34.7

Base: 190

Emotion levels in the response comments

In working through the responses, it was noticeable that some of the submitters that responded to the survey were highly emotional about the experience of making their first submission. A rating system was developed to categorise the responses according to emotional content. The reason behind this analysis was an interest in the level of activation required for the first-time respondent to finally make a submission. Table 23 gives a breakdown using a simple three levelled rating system with categories of highly emotional, emotional and the more intellectualised reasoned interest.

Table 23: Level of emotion in first-time submitters' comments on motivation by issues

Emotional level in comments	Response %
Highly emotional	17.9
Some emotion	38.4
Reasoned interest	37.4
Other	6.3

Base: 190

The categories were assessed according to the general language used in comments and the words describing emotions that were part of the answers. Responses were typically a simple statement and seldom extended beyond a sentence. Examples of *highly emotional* category of responses include “horrendous Council policies” and “extravagant proposals” and “anger at Council”. One in five submitters made comments at this highly emotional level – and these appeared to express high levels of prior dissatisfaction. However, most responses showed a more moderate level of emotion, or an intellectual interest with three out of every four responses accounted for in these categories. Examples of responses with *some emotion* include “concerned about some of the issues” and “impressed by”. Reasoned comments include “interested in”, and the “online submission was fast”. The additional ‘other’ responses were unable to be coded.

5.3.6 Making Submissions

Submission methods used by submitters

All submitters were asked about the methods they used to make a submission. Response options were presented in a multiple-choice array with submitters confined to making a single response. Five submitters did not answer this question. Table 24 presents the resulting findings on the submission methods employed by submitters and shows the council paper-based submission form to be the leading submission method, used by around half the respondents.

Table 24: Preferred methods for making submissions

Submission method	Response %
Consultation form (paper)	50.1
Written submission (other than a council form)	19.2
A form on the Council website	13.0
By email	7.4
On a form sent to me by another interest group	3.8
Text	0.0
Other, please specify	6.5

Base: 447

Written submissions that did not use the council submission form (including forms from another interest group) were made by close to one in four submitters (23 percent). An online council submission form accounted for another 13 percent of submitters. When comparing the printed against electronic means of making submission, printed options dominate, being used by close to 75 percent of submitters. Conversely, electronic channels via the website and email collectively made up just over 20 percent of submissions. It is important to note that not all submission methods listed may have been available to submitters. Participating councils varied in the methods of submission made available to submitters.

Satisfaction with submission form

A subsequent survey question tested respondent satisfaction levels with the submission form, asking respondents to comment on how easy the submission form was to use. This question was delivered as part of a group of scales. Five respondents chose to not to give a rating.

The results showed that just over 80 percent (361) of submitters knew of the submission form and could comment on its ease of use. One in five submitters indicated that they either did not know of the form, or that the question was not applicable. Table 25 focuses on the subset of those submitters who commented on the council submission form (by removing the 'don't know' responses and recalculating percentages).

Table 25: Satisfaction levels with the council submission form

Question statement	Strongly disagree %	Disagree %	Neutral %	Agree %	Strongly agree %
Was the council submission form easy to use?	6.1	8.0	23.3	41.6	21.0

Base: 361

Over 60 percent of the submitters who were aware of their council's submission form reported feeling positive about it, either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the question statement. There was a substantial group of about one in four submitters who knew of the form but felt only

neutral about its use. Finally, there was a much smaller group (14.1 percent) of submitters who felt negatively about their council's submission form.

Other preferred submission methods

To identify other potential barriers to making submissions, submitters were also asked if there were methods that they would have preferred to use to make a submission, but were not offered. This question was an open text option and did not require an answer from submitters. Just over 87 percent (394) of respondents skipped the question. The 58 responses received were analysed for emerging themes and the findings included in Table 26.

Table 26: Other preferred submission methods noted by submitters

Synopsis of comment	% of those answering	% of total submitters
Satisfied with options available	27.6	3.5
Face to face	19.0	2.4
Internet/online methods	13.8	1.8
Early pre-consultation involvement	8.6	1.1
Hui	3.5	0.4
Suggestion of referendum	3.5	0.4
Email	1.7	0.2
Information needs to be clearer	1.7	0.2
Through legal means	1.7	0.2
Meetings	1.7	0.2
Phone	1.7	0.2
Should organise a protest	1.7	0.2
With support	1.7	0.2
Other	12.1	1.6
Totals	*100*	*12.83*

Base: 58

Almost 30 percent of respondents to this question took the opportunity to support the options available, however 42 submitters did make suggestions, and there were three main themes found. Eleven submitters mentioned the desire to have more face-to-face contact with council and councillors. One particular statement illustrates the general feeling of these comments saying they wanted “some informed discussion with just 2-3 councillors, in our own small township”.

Additionally online/internet methods were mentioned by almost 14 percent of those that made comment – but put in context were mentioned by 1.8 percent of all respondents. It is likely the availability of online submission processes, not just forms, varied. There were also a handful of submitters who would have liked more opportunity to discuss issues in the pre-consultation phase.

5.3.7 Satisfaction Levels with Information

Perceptions of the consultation process

A set of scales was used to examine submitters’ perceptions of the consultation process. The scales asked about key information characteristics; clarity and ease of understanding, accessibility, information adequacy, and time given to prepare a submission. The latter timing question was identified as important, particularly for community groups that might meet only monthly (the Local Government Act requires a minimum one month consultation period).

Five respondents chose to skip the scale set, with 447 response collected. There were 98 additional comments collected. Table 27 shows broad satisfaction levels across the process areas with the time allowed to prepare a submission registering the highest volumes of satisfaction at the ‘strongly agree’ level. Conversely, ‘feeling well informed’ about the consultation topic yielded lower satisfaction levels with fewer submitters agreeing with the statement and higher numbers disagreeing.

Table 27: Satisfaction levels with consultation information and submission forms

Question statement	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)	Don't know/ NA
The consultation information was easy to understand	35	37	106	**180**	75	14
Information was easy to access	31	47	105	**165**	77	22
There was adequate information to feel well informed	29	80	98	**152**	65	23
There was plenty of time to prepare your submission	22	46	86	**153**	120	20

The scale findings are further analysed with measures of central tendency for each scale included in Table 40 in Appendix O. The scale label is allocated an ordinal value (e.g. strongly disagree = 1) to develop the measures of location and variability. The mean and standard deviation scores add to understanding the spread of responses. The results show small variations between each category, with the statement on time for submission preparation registering the highest average score with 3.71. Information adequacy received the lowest mean of 3.34, and while this finding was only 0.37 lower than the highest mean achieved it shows that the submitters were significantly cooler about the adequacy of information available.

The standard deviation results look at variation around the mean. The submission forms ease of use showed the least variation around the mean. This finding reflects that the ratings for this question were the most closely clustered around the mean of any of the questions in this set. By contrast, the statement on information adequacy had the largest standard deviation showing the statement had more of a tendency to polarise respondent opinion.

The co-efficient of variation results are included because they give a more exact picture of the variance in satisfaction between these sets of scales. The co-efficient of variation is the standard deviation expressed as a percentage figure and as a measure of relative variability gives a simpler indication for understanding and making comparisons.

Overall positive and negative perceptions – using a net promoter score (NPS)

To get a strong, but simple, indication of likely positive or negative feelings for the indicators, Table 28 gives the net promoter score (NPS) for each scale.

About Net Promoter Scores (NPS).

The NPS is a tool used to describe the proportion of likely supporters of a process, service or product against the detractors, i.e. those that are likely to actively speak out against the experience. The NPS is derived by subtracting the percentage sum of the 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' respondents from the 'agree' and 'strongly agree' respondents. The sum, if positive, represents the percentage of respondents likely to promote the consultation process outweighing those that would be detractors and speak negatively of it. The results are different from other statistical measures used in this research and useful when trying to identify aspects of the consultation process that might be usefully improved.

Table 28 shows that there is considerable variance in the NPS results across the question statements. The information adequacy result reveals the lowest NPS and is significantly lower than the other results at just 24.94 percent. On the other end of the scale, time given to make a submission registered the highest NPS with 47.34 percent.

Table 28: Net promoter scores for the Likert scales testing satisfaction with process

Question statement	Net promoter score NPS (%)
1. Consultation information was easy to understand	42.3
2. Consultation information was easy to access	37.9
3. There was adequate information to feel well informed	24.9
4. There was plenty of time to prepare a submission	47.3
5. The Council submission form, was easy to use	40.4

Additional comments on process issues

There were 98 comments received in addition to the scale scores. When analysed, 110 distinct ideas were identified and then coded into themes. Table 29 gives a breakdown of the frequency of theme mentions. It is important to note that the comments were not attached to any specific scale, however most were able to be pinpointed to a statement in question. The third column in the table links the responses to the original question statements. Interestingly only the submission form statement received any additional comments that were positive. The majority of comments were negative.

Table 29: Summary of comment themes on information adequacy

Comment themes	Response count	Statement likely to be related to
Lack of information in the plan	**17**	**Information adequacy**
Form format difficult	12	Submission form adequacy
Doubted transparency of Council information	**11**	**Information adequacy, easy to understand**
Submission form asked leading questions	10	Submission form adequacy
Respondent expressed satisfaction with form	10	Submission form adequacy
Information difficult to understand	**8**	**Easy to understand**
Plan was too big	**7**	**Easy to understand**
Information difficult to access	**7**	**Information accessibility**
Decision was disappointing	4	Other
Combination of policies, too much information	**2**	**Easy to understand**
Influenced to submit by others	2	Other
Omissions in plan	**2**	**Information adequacy**
Time inadequate	2	Time for submission
Other	16	Other
Total	*110*	

There were 32 comments referring to the submission form that could be split into three groups.

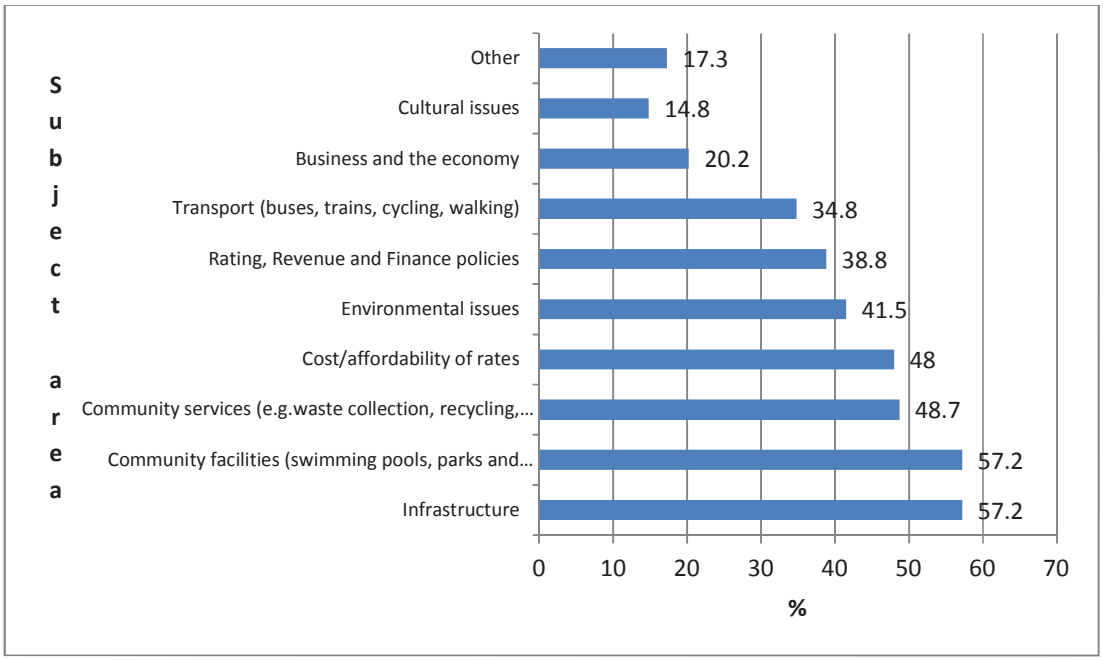
Concerns with the LTTCP information was the leading theme, with 54 comments (these are bolded above) linking to this concern. Seventeen felt there was not enough information, and in a similar manner 11 submitters expressed distrust by doubting the transparency of the information. Eight submitters felt the information was difficult to understand and linked/related to concerns about information overload because of the plan size or because of inclusion of wordy, detailed policy.

What issues were discussed by submitters in their submissions?

A question on the issues raised by submitters in their submission was asked in a multiple-choice format. Respondents were able to select more than one answer. While 446 submitters answered this question (six submitters did not comment), there was 1597 choices were selected. An 'other' option gave submitters the chance to specify additional issues outside those described in the multiple-choice options. A further 77 comments were gathered by the 'other' option and these comments were further split into 85 individual concerns.

Overall 1674 issues were identified, represented an average of 3.8 selections per responder. This result showed most respondents made submissions on multiple issues. Figure 13 depicts the wide spread of engagement across the options.

Infrastructure and community facilities were the most common subjects in submissions, both commented on by 57.2 percent of submitters. Community services and the cost/affordability of rates also gained high levels of attention from submitters in turn registering the next tier of interest at 48.7 percent and 47.3 percent



Base: 446

Figure 13: Range of issues commented on in submissions

Environmental issues, rating policies, and transport issues all commanded a large and relatively even share of interest, each attracting over one in three submitters with 39.7 percent, 38.8 percent and 34.8 percent respectively. Of the multiple-choice options, the business/ economy and cultural issues appeared of least concerned the submitters, they still commanded enough interest for one in five (20.2 percent) submitters to mention business or the economy in their submissions. Only 14.3% reported having cultural concerns.

A breakdown of the additional 'other' comments reveals a wide spread of subjects represented with 41 individual issues identified. Whakatane District Council had included new harbour regulations in their LTCCP consultation, and this local subject topped the table with nine mentions. Political comments on the amalgamation of councils and the concerns around water use were next with eight mentions; facility management fielded six mentions, concerns about crime levels received five mentions, as did CBD planning and roading/footpath improvements. All other issues identified registered three or less mentions.

5.3.8 Perceptions of the Experience of Speaking At LTCCP Hearings

Twenty-nine percent of all survey respondents reported choosing to speak to council in support of their submission. First-time submitters made up a relatively small proportion of those appearing before the council, with only one in five (19.7 percent) of them choosing to speak.

Appendix L presents a table comparing the difference between the demographic characteristics of speakers and non-speakers. It is noticeable that speakers are more likely to be male and typically had higher education qualifications. Community groups were proportionally overrepresented, while businesses and individuals were less likely to speak. Conversely, income and age were two areas where speakers were similar to the sample profile.

Satisfaction levels when speaking with Council

The 128 submitters who reported speaking before their council were presented with an additional set of questions to gauge their perceptions and level of satisfaction with the experience. The questions were a combination of process questions about timing, and information about speaking at the hearings, and questions about their perceptions of the relationship with the council in that setting.

Table 30 gives a breakdown of the response ratings across each of the five questions. The question statement tested perceptions of how well councillors valued the speaker presentations. To the statement “Councillors valued your presentation” submitters registered much higher disagreement and don’t know responses than other statements about the speaking experience.

Additionally, Table 41 (see Appendix O) describes the measures of location and variability on the scale responses. The mean findings for each of the questions excluded the 'don’t know' category. The question on the hearing schedule notification time registered both the highest average of 4.13, and also the lowest standard deviation, showing ratings had clustered around that high mean score.

Table 30: Results from the scalar questions on speakers perceptions

Question statement	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)	Don't know
You were advised of the hearing schedule in plenty of time	2	4	18	**52**	48	4
You had/received enough information to know what to expect at the hearing.	4	8	29	**43**	41	3
You were made welcome in the hearing	3	6	30	36	**51**	2
Councillors valued your presentation	10	16	30	**35**	22	15
You were comfortable speaking before Council	5	7	23	**52**	40	1

Base: 128

Conversely, the question on councillors valuing the presentation received the lowest average with 3.38, and the widest spread of scores shown by the highest standard deviation. However, while there were doubts shown about the value councillors ascribed to the presentations, submitters registered high levels of satisfaction with the welcome they received resulting in a mean of 4.0 for that statement.

Overall positive and negative perceptions – the Net Promoter Score (NPS)

(Note: The NPS is derived by subtracting the percentage sum of the ‘disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’ respondents from the ‘agree’ and ‘strongly agree’ respondents.)

The NPS for each scale is included in Table 31, and revealed very high positive ratings for all scales except for the question on perceptions of “Councillors valuing your presentation”.

Applying the NPS to analyse results strongly emphasises the wide differences between the response statements, differences that the mean and standard deviation measures do not display so clearly.

Table 31: Net promoter scores for the Likert scales testing satisfaction levels of speakers at the council hearings

Question statement	Net promoter score NPS %
You were advised of the hearing schedule in plenty of time	73.44
You had/received enough information to know what to expect at the hearing.	56.25
You were made welcome in the hearing	60.94
Councillors valued your presentation	24.22
You were comfortable speaking before Council	62.50

Speakers' additional comments

Eighteen respondents also made open-ended comments about presenting at the hearing. The dominant theme that arose in these comments was the concern that the councillors were just going through the motions with six mentions. Comments such as "got the feeling it was just the required process, that they had already decided on the results" were typical. There were three comments on the apparent inattention of the councillors possibly linked to the perception that councillors were going through the motions. This perceived inattention is described in the following quotes, "the Councillors exhibited a general air of boredom" and "one councillor kept looking at their watch". There were also three process-orientated comments relating to scheduling problems. Nervousness with the process, speaking time, and presentation advice all got two mentions.

5.3.9 Non-Speaker Attitudes and Perceptions

Like speakers, non-speakers were presented with a set of questions to identify barriers to speaking at hearings. Three-hundred and seventeen submitters answered the question, with the balance of seven non-speakers choosing not to answer. Non-speakers were asked why they had chosen not to speak in a question that presented answers in a multiple-choice format. The question allowed submitters to select one or more option and there was also a catchall 'other' option which encouraged additional written answers. Eighty-seven 'other' comments were gathered.

Table 32 shows the results. The main reason submitters cited for not taking the opportunity to speak was because they felt their written submission was adequate – just over half the submitters recorded this response. However, feeling uncomfortable in the speaking role, and the time a speaking appearance would take, were also barriers cited by around one in five non-speakers respectively.

Table 32: Breakdown of the reasons why submitters chose not to speak

Reason	Response %
You felt your written submission was enough	50.2
You would not be comfortable speaking in public like that	19.9
You didn't have time to appear before Council	19.6
You were unsure what was involved in speaking before Council	11.4
Other	27.4

Base: 317

The 'other' comments field received a further 87 comments and these were analysed with the frequency of mentions shown in Table 33. Two themes dominate responses. The first, mentioned by 26 non-speakers, continues as a recurring theme – that councillors' minds are already made up, and/or submitters' perception that they will not be listened to.

Contrasting with the doubts expressed over the transparency of consultation, 24 submitters noted they were prevented from attending the hearings because of scheduling problems, or being away during the hearings. It is important to note that because submitters could choose more than one answer, some of the 'other' comments may be further explanation of suggested options, while others may be other reasons.

Table 33: Frequency analysis of 'other' comments made by submitters as to why they chose not to speak

Reason	Response (%)
Councillors' minds already decided	8.2
Not available in time allocated	7.6
Other speakers represented my interests	3.2
Process failed/scheduling/awareness	1.5
Not necessary	0.9
Too nervous	0.6
Other	5.4
Total	27.4

Base: 87

5.3.10 Perceptions and Satisfaction Levels

Overall levels of satisfaction

There was a good response to the final set of scales looking at overall perceptions of power, council responsiveness and respondent satisfaction, with 442 submitters answering and only ten choosing not to do so. Table 34 reveals a distinctive negative shift from previous scalar sets that is immediately noticeable. The variability scores reflect the same finding. There are also higher volumes of don't know answers. Satisfaction levels are highest to the statement "overall, you were satisfied you made a submission to council". Conversely, the lowest levels of satisfaction were registered against the statement "The final decision made by council showed they listened to submitters".

Table 34: Rating results investigating overall submitters' perceptions of influence, responsiveness and satisfaction

Question statement	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)	Don't know
You had a chance to influence the Council's decision	67	78	96	**111**	44	46
The final decision made by Council showed they listened to submitters	75	87	89	**95**	40	56
You were satisfied with the letter you received explaining Council's decisions	56	57	109	**125**	58	37
Overall, you were satisfied you made a submission to Council	37	35	59	**166**	112	33

Base: 442

Measure of overall perceptions and satisfaction – location and variability

In this final set of scales, the mean measurements for the first-time in the survey dip below the neutral rating of three. Table 42 (see Appendix O) shows the submitters perception of their chance to influence council, council showing they listened, and the quality of the final feedback letter varied hugely. However, despite low ratings for the first three questions the final overall question on satisfaction returned a more positive result with a much higher average of 3.7. Additionally the variance expressions showed that the ratings were more closely clustered around the mean indicating more a more consistent finding.

Overall positive and negative perceptions – the Net Promoter Score (NPS)

(Note: The NPS is derived by subtracting the percentage sum of the 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' respondents from the 'agree' and 'strongly agree' respondents.)

Table 35 the net promoter scores for the scales on overall respondent satisfaction levels. The results show wide fluctuations between the question statements. Most notable are the very low scores gained for respondent perceptions of their chance to influence council decision-making

and their relative satisfaction with the final council decision, both derived very low scores and in the latter case a negative result. These findings are all the more notable because the overall satisfaction finding was relatively high at just over 50 percent. This showed a relatively even split between submitters who were likely to believe they could contribute to the decision and be listened to, and those that did not. However, a large proportion of the latter submitters still, rather doggedly, felt satisfaction that they made a submission.

Table 35: Net promoter scores for the overall satisfaction levels of submitters

Question statement	Net promoter score NPS %
You had a chance to influence the Council's decision	2.53
The final decision made by Council showed they listened to submitters	-6.99
You were satisfied with the letter you received explaining Council's decisions	17.28
Overall, you were satisfied you made a submission to Council	50.37

What influence did the experience of speaking have on overall satisfaction levels?

The following Table 36 compares satisfaction levels between speaking and non-speaking samples within the submitters group using bi-variate analysis. The findings show that the experience of speaking has limited effect on the perceptions and satisfaction levels of submitters. With the exception of the ‘chance to influence’ questions, all standard deviation differences fall within 0.12 of each other.

Table 36: Comparison of deviation characteristics between speakers and non-speaking submitters

Question statement		Mean	Standard Deviation	CV % Coefficient of variance
You had a chance to influence the Council's decision	**Non-speakers**	2.9	1.264	43.6
	Speakers	3.13	1.259	40.23
	differences	*0.23*	*-0.005*	*-3.37*
The final decision made by Council showed they listened to submitters	**Non-speakers**	2.82	1.279	45.37
	Speakers	2.88	1.291	44.82
	differences	*0.06*	*0.012*	*-0.55*
You were satisfied with the letter you received explaining Council's decisions	**Non-speakers**	3.2	1.243	38.84
	Speakers	3.12	1.25	40.06
	differences	*-0.08*	*0.007*	*1.22*
Overall, you were satisfied you made a submission to Council	**Non-speakers**	3.69	1.212	32.86
	Speakers	3.69	1.232	33.38
	differences	*0*	*0.02*	*0.52*

5.3.11 What Would Improve the Consultation Process?

A key research question to shape this project was identifying potential improvement opportunities in council consultation practice**.** Submitters were asked "What could have improved the consultation process for you?" in a question inviting an open-ended, written answer. Two-hundred and fifty-seven respondents made comment with 195 choosing not to answer the question. The responses are collated based on frequency and are presented in Table 37 arranged in theme areas, and the sub-themes relating to these areas. The comments could be categorised into four main areas: decision-making, information, process, and relationships.

Table 37: Analysis of respondent suggestions for improvement

Theme area	Theme subset	Response (#)
1. Decision-making	Council decision predetermined – respondent with no chance of influencing	54
	Council should make better decisions	20
	Decisions should be made based on the majority's wish	12
	Council doesn't understand, or doesn't try to understand others' priorities	7
	Subtotal	*93*
2. Information	Needs to be better, mixture of too much, too little	29
	Feedback– personal letters disappointing or not received	19
	Feedback– want information on other submitters and a context around the final decision	10
	Subtotal	*58*
3. Process	Hearings issues including scheduling, timing given to speakers and councillors responsiveness during hearings	20
	Hearings– speakers need more time	8
	Submitters who would have like to speak but were not available or timing didn't suit	6
	More pre-consultation (stakeholders)	5
	Subtotal	*39*
4. Positive comments	Consultation was fine	34
5. Relationships	Councillor contact	21
6. Personal	Given myself more time, worked harder to inform myself	3
7. Other	Miscellaneous	9
	Total	***257***

Decision-making issues were mentioned by 93 submitters (36.2 percent), with concerns that Council decisions are predetermined accounting for 54 of those comments. The concerns in this area were strongly related to influence and in these submitters' comments there was a clear perception their council failed to demonstrate suspended judgement. Quotes such as "...since no changes were made to the LTCCP on anything, the whole submission process is a waste of time", and "clearly council has made up its mind on issues before putting them out to the public" were typical.

There was also a strong desire for better, stronger decisions. Better decisions were described in comments like "don't believe Council is looking at its own cost enough" and wanting "a council not hell bent on expensive new buildings". Other submitters in the decision-making theme area felt their council should make decisions based on the majority or the dominant view of submitters. Examples of the sentiments from this group were "don't believe the decisions reflect the community views" and that they would be happy "if Council took notice of all submissions on a majority basis".

The next most mentioned area was information attracting comments from 58 (22.6 percent) submitters. The themes in the information area could be split evenly between "access to information prior to making a submission", and "post-consultation feedback loops". There was a variety of comments in the access to information area noting information was too complex, an example being "more user friendly language– easier for everyday people to understand". However, the call for plain English was sometimes countered by other submitters saying the consultation information was too simplified, with an example being "the summary was superficial". Some felt there should be more promotion of the consultation and there were assorted comments on "better information", "sooner".

Feedback was the other sub-theme in the information area. Submitters reported they had not received any feedback on their submission, or were unimpressed with their feedback letters. Some people said "I did not receive any letters!!" while there were many others who noted "the letter received was difficult to understand" and they would have preferred an individualised response "that answered my questions". Finally, there was a group who were disappointed they

did not get feedback on how their submission and others were taken into account in the final decision-making. As an example, one respondent asked for “a summary of submissions saying this is what people said, how many of them said it, and what the final decision was explaining how council took on board submitters’ views”.

Process issues, dominated by hearings related issues, were the next most common theme. Thirty-four of the 39 comments received on process focused on the hearings with the majority of this group (20 respondents) having issues around the scheduling of the hearings, with timing, particularly day time hearings not suiting them. The length of time allotted to speakers was an area of dissatisfaction, and the physical factors of hearings including heating, and audibility of speakers and councillors was also noted. The number of process comments is significant given only 30 percent of all responding submitters chose to speak.

In the process comments, there were three other sub-categories. A small group of people were disappointed because they were unavailable to speak at the times the schedule offered. When categorising comments, this group appeared to have links to the relationship group noted later in this discussion, but were put in this theme group because the latter were clearer on their desire to establish an active relationship with the councillors. There was another group of submitters (with two identified as community organisations) who desired more pre-consultation opportunities. Finally, there was a group of submitters who wished for more time to prepare their submission.

Despite the question asking how the consultation could make the process better, there was still a significant volume of comment received that supported the processes used by council. Thirty-four submitters (13.2 percent) took the opportunity to comment on their satisfaction with the submissions process, comments ranging from “The process was easy enough…” through to “I think Council did a good job this time”.

Finally, there was a section of submitters who wanted more dialogue with councillors. This group were seeking improved interpersonal communication with Councillors, and made comments like “knowing more about how councillors felt”, and “councillors more available for

public" through to the more convivial desire for a "a gin and tonic with the Councillors afterwards".

5.3.12 Successful Consultation Activities and Approaches

The final survey question looking at the submission process asked submitters "what things did the council do well in the consultation?" This question was the corollary to the previous question which asked what could improve the consultation process. It took the same approach as the previous question with answers being text based and unprompted. There were 262 comments received (57.9 percent of submitters) with 190 submitters choosing not to make comment. This was a similar sized response to the question on opportunities to improve consultation (which received 257 comments) and the remarks fell into similar categories although the order of prominence was different.

Table 38 gives a breakdown of the subject and frequency of themes mentioned. "Information" headed the response analysis with 80 submitters (30.5 percent) citing this factor as a strength of council consultation. In the prior question which had asked about improvement opportunities, information had ranked third most frequent mention with 58 comments.

The 'information' themed comments accrued the most responses, headed by generalist comments about council communication. All information comments were supportive of the communication efforts of their councils. Comments reporting that the council "kept me informed" and "…informed a wide range of people and kept all updated on progress" are examples of the generalist groups.

There was also more specific support for the LTCCP summary produced by council with 10 submitters making comments like "a very good newsletter and media publicity". Within this group, there were also positive comments on the layout and ease of understanding of information. Another smaller group of seven submitters appreciated the summary being mailed to them.

Table 38: What councils did well in the consultation – frequency analysis of comments

Theme area	Theme subset	Response (#)
Information	General feedback– Received good feedback on submissions and outcomes	24
	General statement– Council kept me informed	21
	LTCCP summary– Positive comments about it being easy to understand	11
	LTCCP summary– Positive comments about the summary being mailed out	7
	General– Information on the process was good	5
	General– Overall communications clarity	3
	General– Promotions on the consultation were good	3
	General – Information being transparent and open	2
	Specific – CD ROM a good information source	2
	Specific– Enjoyed attending information presentations	2
	Subtotal	*80*
Process	General consultation process– consulted widely	21
	General – Council listened	17
	Submissions– Making a submission was simple	13
	Hearings– process good	11
	General consultation process – overall was good	9
	Specific– Pre-consultation good	2
	Appreciated the opportunity to make a submission	2
	Subtotal	*75*
Decision-making	Felt Council made good decisions	15
	Other	2
	Remained negative about Council decision-making	*24*
	Subtotal	*41*
Relationships	Councillors attentive at hearings	22
	Welcoming and attentive	13
	Hearings were flexible	4
	Subtotal	*39*
Other	*Negative*	*18*
	Other	8
	Positive	1
	Subtotal	*27*
	Total	262

There was also a cluster of general and specific comments on communications characteristics overall including the promotion, clarity and transparency of communications, and more specifically an appreciation for the CD ROMs, meetings and presentations put on by some councils.

Process comments were the second most frequent area for comment with 75 mentions (28.6 percent). Several themes arose from the process comments. More than 20 respondents felt that councils did well to consult widely and another 17 commended the council for “listening”. Listening became a difficult to firmly identify as some comments seemed to be specifically in relation to the experience of speaking at hearings (these were separated out and included in the relationships area because the experience was more personal). This “listen” group pertained to the most simplistic responses received, like “LISTENED”. Without any further information to help interpretation they were categorised from the perspective of the council at least going through the process of listening.

A further smaller group of 13 submitters reported the submission making process was easy, and two said they appreciated the opportunity to make a submission. Nine submitters made general comments in support of the consultation process. There was also a group of 11 submitters who were supportive of the hearings process making comments like “well organised when people were speaking to submissions”.

In comparison to the question on consultation improvements, process comments ranked second in the comments citing positive aspects of the consultation and received 75 comments; close to twice the 39 comments receive suggesting improvements in this area.

The third most common group of comments was on decision-making, but the group was divided. There were 15 respondents who reported being happy with their council’s final decision, often noting an influence on the outcome. However, diametrically opposed to these submitters was a larger group of 24 submitters who, though the question specified comments on what went well, persisted with negative comments about the process and consultation in general. This negative

group was typified by comments like “nothing!” and “they listened but then ignored me as they are up in the clouds”.

The negative group in the decision-making theme area were similar to a group of 18 submitters who made negative comments that did not appear linked to any theme, “dodge” and “damned little (just like BOPE)” are examples. Collectively these two negative groups made up 42 or around 13 percent of the 262 comments.

Relationships were the final subcategory of comments with 39 submitters (14.89 percent) – these indicating a desire for closer, more personal, communication relationships with the council as opposed to the more impersonal relationships suggested by the decision and information comments. In this group the importance of interpersonal communications became obvious – with comments like “polite” and “Warm room and courteous reception”.

There was a sizeable group of 22 submitters commented positively on councillors being attentive and welcoming at the hearings. This interpersonal communication was assessed with comments like “some Councillors asked pertinent questions and thanked me for my submission” and “two councillors spoke to us afterward thanking us and giving us other options as well”. The attention given to respondents by councillors seemed to be a key source for satisfaction.

When placing comments in categories it was sometimes difficult to make a definition as responses were often very short sentences. To deal with this, categorising the comments was achieved by splitting those with more definitive and clear subjects from those that could be classed as more general comments, for example about “attention” or indeed “dissention”.

5.4 Conclusion

The data collected by the staff interviews delivered a robust portrait of the communication practices used by the participating councils during the 2009 LTCCP consultation process.

Staff interviews on the consultation subject had been conducted before however this thesis provided new information by capturing a wider representation of New Zealand councils, and reflecting their practice in the current legislative/consultative environment.

Similarly, the submitter survey was effective gathering a large body of quantitative and qualitative data with a sample of 452 submitters from the submitter population of ten councils that took part. This thesis added to the body of New Zealand research by effectively capturing current information on the characteristics of submitters and their perceptions and satisfaction levels with the consultation process. The currency of information for both interviews and survey was important as earlier writings had revealed rising trends in consultation expectation (Barton & Shaw, 2001; Cheyne, 2002; Department of Internal Affairs, 2006; Robertson & Rout, 2006), and the impacts of the most recent legislative change—the LGA 2002—had not been the subject of much investigation in New Zealand research before that time.

The staff interviews

The staff interview focused on what councils did to encourage participation in the 2009 LTCCP consultation. The findings showed that the consultation goals varied between councils (divided between process effectiveness, consultation outcome, or a combination of both). However, there was a common core of communication activities used by all participating councils to promote and facilitate the consultation; advertising, media releases and media activity, email contacts, meetings with stakeholder groups, posters and displays, and website information. Councils also undertook a wide variety of additional activities to promote and facilitate dialogue, the scale of which depended largely on resource constraints – a factor commented on in most interviews. For example, while media releases were a core practice, only one council formally monitored media activity, this was in part a response to low resources. Perceived low levels of control over media stories, a noted lack of responsiveness from the media in some areas, and a prioritisation of better opportunities afforded by other communication options also added to this approach.

Nine of the ten councils actively targeted different communities, or communities of interest. Stakeholder relationships were also noted as important and were recognised by all participating councils.

Finally, in the interviews with council staff, it was clear that the consultation process—although quite specifically mandated and constrained by legislation—was in fact approached differently and creatively by each council. Councils used a variety of media and channels to disseminate information and stimulate discussion in the community and although active in communication relationships, and reporting generally positive relationships, staff felt that participation levels—in an overall sense—were generally issues driven. If there was a decision to be made that was unpopular, citizens would exercise their right to 'have a say'. The interviews showed that participating councils felt their effort during the LTCCP consultation reflected their best consultation practices at that time, with the resources available to them.

The survey results

The survey worked well to gather in-depth quantitative and qualitative data and the response level was such that the sample could be considered a statistically accurate portrayal of submitters across the ten participating councils. The submitters' demographic characteristics varied significantly from the general national population with the sample skewing towards older, more highly educated, European, male representatives. Single and couple only households also dominated the sample. Most surprising was the lack of deviation shown in income however, with the sample almost mirroring typical national income levels. The survey showed that a high number of submitters were first-time submitters (41.8 percent) – these people were asked additional questions about why they had not participated in prior council consultations and confirmed time constraints were the dominant reason. First-time submitters were not necessarily prodded into participation by elevated levels of frustration; they were more likely to be motivated by an issue they had an interest in.

Most submitters became aware of the LTCCP consultation through the newspaper or council communication channels. Thereafter the information needed to help make a submission was typically accessed through the councils LTCCP summary and newsletters. Non-council sources of information rated quite low. Following this trend most submitters also used the council submission form when making their submission.

The survey identified that most submitters made comments on multiple issues. The core services of infrastructure and community facilities were the leading concerns commented on with community services and rates affordability the next most common subjects.

Scales were used to quantify satisfaction levels with information sources, the speaking experience and overall perceptions of the consultation experience. Satisfaction with consultation information rated relatively highly across all the indicators of access, ease of understanding, information adequacy and the timeliness. Comparatively, the speaking experience and overall perceptions of the consultation process were judged to be much less satisfying, with submitters feeling decidedly unsatisfied with their opportunities to influence in particular.

Almost a third of submitters also chose to speak to council in support of their submission at hearings. There were five indicators used to test the satisfaction levels of speakers – these included hearing scheduling/timing, information availability on appearing at hearings, the welcome given by councillors, confidence during the speaking experience and the perceived value councillors gave the speakers contribution. Survey participants gave a low rating to the value councillors appeared to give speakers, while ironically the welcome accorded by councillor was rated most highly.

Non-speakers were asked why they chose not to appear at hearing and while half said they felt their submission was enough, one in five reported that they would not have felt comfortable enough to speak and a similar number said the time it would take to attend hearings was a barrier.

The final set of scales revealed much lower levels of satisfaction for submitters' perception of their influence in the decision-making process. Submitters doubted that councillors listened or valued their submissions. Not surprisingly when asked where the consultation process could be improved, respondents cited decision-making as the leading opportunity. Conversely, consultation information and the process itself were cited as strengths in the LTCCP consultation.

While many submitters expressed doubt about the consultation process, there was still a relatively high rating given by submitters for participating in the consultation. Quite simply, while submitters doubted their influence and the outcomes of consultation, most submitters were satisfied that they had taken part. The value of liberty appears tantamount.

CHAPTER SIX – DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

Since its inception more than 150 years ago, local government in New Zealand has continuously evolved to be more responsive to the changing needs of communities (Bush, 1980; Cheyne, 2002). Historically, changes to the shape, size and role of councils have been the favoured strategic approach to improve responsiveness. Legislative change since 1989 has focused on transparency and accountability (Pallot, n.d.), and a participative approach to democratic decision-making has been increasingly required. The LGA 2002 amendments further reinforced the requirement for councils to discuss important decisions with the community, requiring councils to consider consultation in all significant decisions. In this context of increasing reliance on consultation as a method to facilitate responsiveness, this research has investigated the effectiveness of council consultation practices during the development of the 2009 LTCCP.

The discussion chapter is the final step towards making conclusions as to how successful councils were during the 2009 LTCCP consultation process in achieving their purpose, which is to enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, their communities. The discussion approach compares the findings of this research project (i.e. the survey of 452 submitters to the 2009 LTCCP and interviews with the staff leading consultation in the ten participating councils) with the earlier research and theory discovered in the literature review. The discussion identifies where the project findings reflect prior research, where the findings raise questions by being different from other research, and where new knowledge has been gathered. The research presents some general indications of how well councils are meeting their stated purpose as stated in the LGA 2002, but it is important to note that the results of this project are specific to the experiences the ten participating councils, and the submitters who took part in this research.

The research instruments were designed to capture different perspectives of the 2009 LTCCP consultation process, enabling comparison of staff and submitter viewpoints. Interviews with the

staff responsible for planning the 2009 LTCCP consultation were used to investigate the first research sub-question, “From the perspective of council staff, how did councils encourage participation in the 2009 LTCCP consultation?”

The survey of submitters captured a demographic profile of participants in the 2009 LTCCP consultation to answer the second sub-question, “Who were the submitters in the 2009 council LTCCP consultation and what were the submissions about?” Submitters’ perceptions and satisfaction levels were gathered in the final two questions, “What are the barriers and enablers to participation in the LTCCP consultation as perceived by submitters?” and “From the perspective of submitters, what would make consultation better for citizens?”

The chapter starts with a broad discussion of the strategic approach participating councils took to the 2009 LTCCP, comparing the findings with relevant guidelines and research on consultation practices and participative decision-making. Submitters’ characteristics and agendas are covered in the second section followed by a discussion on submitters’ perceptions of the communication processes and interaction during the consultation. The section culminates by examining the submitters’ satisfaction with consultation outcomes. This chapter provides the basis for the conclusions and recommendations presented in Chapter Seven.

6.2 Council Consultation Objectives and Approach

The literature review captured a wide body of comment on the purpose of consultation. At its most simple, legislation requires that a local authority must, in the course of its decision-making process, consider the views and preferences of citizens who are likely to be affected by, or to have an interest in the matter (refer to LGA 2002 Section 78(1)). The subsequent LGA 2002 Sections 82–90 determine baseline requirements for when councils must use the participative approach of consultation to facilitate that consideration. Bush (1980) and Cheyne (2002) say that consultation is a process that allows and encourages councils to be more responsive to community needs and a changing community profile. Indeed the practice of public consultation

is now a pervasive requirement of central and local government legislation (Freeman, 2006; Nash, 2007) for that reason.

The staff interview opened with a broad question on the goals of participating councils in the 2009 LTCCP consultation. The goals would serve to orientate council activity and guide the consultation communication strategy. All councils had a stated goal, but the general aims for the 2009 LTCCP consultation varied. Four councils focussed on an objective of getting the consultation information to reach into the community, two on encouraging feedback or dialogue, and another four a combination of the reach and feedback goals. However, the 'reach' goal in the absence of dialogue, and vice versa, falls short of legislative requirements. Further, there was no mention of the other objectives of consultation and participation as stated by Freeman (2006), Lowndes et al. (2006) and Reid (2005a), such as improving the quality of decisions, solving complex problems, building community trust and understanding, a more inclusive community and active citizenship.

Reach as a general objective is strongly supported by theorists interested in the 'hard to reach' and capturing more representative comment from the community (Brackertz, 2007; Carson, 2008; Cheyne, 2002; Nash, 2007; Zwart et al., 2008). The consultation goal to encourage community dialogue to improve council decisions is also frequently mentioned (Burke, 2004; Lowndes, 2008, 2011; Nash, 2005), and is possibly closer to one of the core drivers of participative democracy.

Conversely, public relations theorists Woerkam and Aarts (2008) observed three styles of communication goals with publics in relation to organisations. First, they noted a process approach with a diversity of channels (e.g. face to face, mediated, one or two sided, using different communications senses) that promotes reach. There was also an outcome-based approach, which focussed on the role of the programmes (e.g. information campaign versus persuasion campaign). Finally, they noted a relationship-building approach where the campaign could be also utilised as a relationship and knowledge building process, with a horizon extending beyond the project in question. Of these goals, the professed aims of councils taking part in this

research project included the first two, being either task or outcome focused. A longer-term view towards strengthening relationships was not mentioned by participants.

Those councils that ascribed to a goal of reach (Western Bay of Plenty, Hawke's Bay Regional, Timaru and Ruapehu) were therefore using an approach, which by itself could be interpreted as a linear one-way approach to communication. This type of approach is criticised by many theorists as a poor way to encourage participative decision-making (Arnstein, 1969; Dozier et al., 1995; Drydyk, 2005; Hirst, 1990).

The balance of councils with a goal of obtaining feedback (Nelson, Tasman, Horizons, Hutt City, Whakatane and Hauraki) demonstrated a two-way view of communication in the LTCCP consultation. The goal of symmetrical dialogue has communication flowing freely in either direction and this approach allows for more effective and symmetrical communication relations with the community (Arnstein, 1969; Cheyne, 2002; Dozier et al., 1995; Forgie, 2001; Pallot, 2001).

Theorists and commentators have also noted several other important goals of consultation that were not mentioned by staff during the interviews. The Auditor-General (2004) states that a core aim of consultation must be to satisfy legislative requirements, while other writers acknowledge this requirement but say it should not be the only goal of consultation (Burke, 2004; Department of Internal Affairs, 2010; Nash, 2007). Freeman (2006) is one of many theorists who suggest that consultation can help solve complex problems and improve the quality of policies and services. On a more social/philosophical level, consultation activity can also act to elevate feelings of citizenship and community inclusivity (Foley & Duck, 2006; Lowndes et al., 2006; Ministry of Social Development, 2001; Zweitzer & Gibson, 2007). Some writers go so far as to argue that the intrinsic act of participation is in itself more important than the outcome. For instance, Reid (2005) reported Harvard's Professor Michael Sandez as saying that it is in the participation of government that citizens are created. Others note that a core purpose of consultation is to allow the expression of liberty (Sharpe as cited in Pallot, n.d.). Similarly, many researchers refer to effective consultation as a method to increase public ownership in decisions (Burke, 2004; Drage, 2004; Forgie, 2001; Nash, 2007), and say that

council/community relationships are strengthened as a result (Comrie, 1999; Lowndes et al. 2006).

On reflection, the participating councils' goals going into the consultation, as presented by staff, seemed to focus on the process level. Goals in the wider social context of council/community relationships as espoused by Dozier et al. (1995), and the empowerment of citizens in order to reach ambitions of social cohesion and self-determination (Arnstein, 1969) were missing. Not surprisingly the operational focus of the ten participating councils appeared to flow into the resources they allocated towards the consultation effort and the subsequent selection of communication activities, as discussed in the next section.

6.2.1 Council Commitment of Resources to Consultation

The principles of consultation outlined in LGA 2002 Section 82(1) note that a local authority has discretion to consider how much effort or resource is appropriate for a consultation. In exercising that discretion, councils are instructed to consider how well the current views and preferences of groups are known, and the nature and significance of the decision, including its likely impact on people who have an interest in, or will be affected by the decision.

The interviews of council staff revealed a variety of approaches to resourcing communication activities for the LTCCP consultation. This result was consistent with earlier research into consultation practice in New Zealand local government. Comrie, in her research of six councils in consultation, had noted that "it was not uncommon to have enthusiastic sections and excellent projects alongside units or activities that displayed little concern for public input" (1999, p. 5). Staff interviews also revealed that some consultations fell short of the British consultation guidelines (British Government, 2008), which specifically require the allocation of adequate resources to consultation activity.

Resource allocation by the participating councils was also influenced by the LTCCP plan's content. Fewer communication activities were dedicated to the consultation process if the proposed LTCCP was perceived as non-controversial by staff. This approach was taken because the potential for public interest in the plan was judged to be lower. Hence, resourcing decisions

were made based on the assumed knowledge of communities' views and preferences. Pallot (n.d.) and Reid (2002) had noted this search for balance between efficiency, participation levels and outcome as a characteristic of many consultation decisions. The staff and operational resources available also contributed to the decision. Staff shortages within the communications or strategic planning unit were mentioned by three councils and to that end, the responsibility for delivery of the LTCCP consultation appeared to lie largely with communications and planning/policy areas. Only Hauraki reported an across-council commitment of resources to the consultation programme. Conversely, one council staff member reported being the only in-house resource dedicated to consultation activity.

Stone (2005) acknowledged the same constraints of organisational silos and staff resourcing in her study of ten Australian councils. However, Stone also noted other factors that limited consultation effectiveness included in-house communication failures, the council's culture of dialogue, and skill deficiencies. On this last point, the requirement for suitably skilled staff to enable effective consultation is cited by many researchers (Community Empowerment Division, 2006; Dozier et al., 1995; Drage, 2008). Skill deficiencies, or any of the other additional issues identified by Stone, were not mentioned by council staff but it should be noted that the interview did not query organisational culture or staff communication lines directly.

Where the LTCCP proposals included contentious changes or developments, consultation efforts were strengthened in an effort to ensure the information reached all affected parties. According to Hawke (2006) and Reid (2005) this is an appropriate response, as poorly executed consultations can damage a council's profile and relationship with the community.

6.2.2 Targeting Audiences

A key reason behind the widening of participative opportunities in the LGA 2002 was the drive for local government to be more responsive to the changing needs of an increasingly diverse community (Bush, 1980; Cheyne, 1997; Drage, 2008; Nash, 2007). The LGA 2002 Section 82(1)(a) determines clear principles for consultation, pointing out that it should be undertaken so that:

> persons who will or may be affected by, or have an interest in the decision or matter should be provided by the local authority with reasonable access to relevant information in a manner and format that is appropriate to the preferences and needs of those persons.

The Act further requires that councils should be active in their encouragement of participation those persons (refer to LGA 2002, Section 82(1)(b)).

Thus, the recognition and targeting of the audiences affected by, or interested in the decision is pivotal to the consultation process, and to the decisions on resourcing already discussed. Correspondingly, reference to making the manner and format of information access appropriate to the preferences and needs of those persons is a clear requirement to look further than common mass media. However, the first step must be to identify those who are affected by, or have an interest in the LTCCP.

The staff interviews revealed nine out of the ten councils used targeting to focus communications towards those affected by, or interested in, the LTCCP proposal. There was wide variation in the audiences targeted. Stakeholders were a consistent target, and given the legislative emphasis on relationships with stakeholders, this finding was in line with sector expectations (Richardson & Winefield, 2007; The Department of Internal Affairs, 2010). Special interest and community groups were also widely targeted. These groups varied depending on the issues under debate, but this result was also expected. Forgie (2001) had similarly found a variety of groups represented in her research on annual plan consultations a decade earlier.

Geography was also used to identify communities of interest spatially. The neighbourhood approach has received much support from researchers (Drage, 2002; Lowndes & Sullivan, 2008; Pratchett, 2004) and geographical targeting is recommended as a good approach to bring relevance to the LTCCP proposals (Department of Internal Affairs, 2010). Additionally, as British researchers Lowndes and Sullivan (2008) mention, geographic areas (wards or townships) that are more remote from the council central hub can feel disconnected from the consultation process, so targeting and then tailoring information fosters closer relationships and understanding.

Commentators argue that the core purpose of local government is to represent to the needs and aspirations of the community, in particular the underrepresented and the vulnerable (Brackertz et al., 2005; Bush, 1980; Cheyne, 2002; Drage, 2008; Lowndes et al., 2006; Nash, 2007). Similarly, a fundamental driver for participative democracy is the facilitation of responsiveness in council decision-making to increasing community diversity (Bush, 1980; Forgie et al., 1999; Reid, 2005). Clearly these 'hard to reach' groups make up a significant part of the community. Statistics New Zealand (2010) census data attests that the demographic groups at the low end of the scale make up a large proportion of the population. For example those with secondary education or no qualification make up 74.71 percent of the population, and those under 40 years of age 56 percent of the population. Therefore, the absence of focus on underrepresented and vulnerable groups was a weakness in the consultation approach of the ten participating councils during the 2009 LTCCP consultation.

In the staff interviews, there was a broad perception that the response to consultation was not typically representative of the community's makeup and needs. The research findings of Carson (2008), Cheyne (1997), Forgie (2001), Jordan (2004) and Lowndes et al.(2006) show that getting responses from only a small section of the population is a common problem facing council consultations. Yet fewer than half of the participating councils actively focussed on hard to reach audiences, and only one council had tracked the profiles of those taking part in previous consultations. Those councils that had targeted the hard to reach mentioned youth, and to a lesser extent ethnic minorities and iwi as audiences they were particularly concerned about. It is acknowledged that some councils may have included iwi in the stakeholder description. Overall though, the audiences mentioned by interviewees were relatively restricted when compared to the large number of 'hard to reach' citizens requiring specific targeting, as identified by researchers such as Brackertz (2007), Carson (2008, 2011), Jameson (1997), Lowndes et al. (2006), Pratchett (2004), and Zwart et al. (2005).

Many hard to reach audiences can be defined based on demographic characteristics (Barton & Shaw, 2001); age (e.g. youth and young adults), ethnic minorities, those less educated or with lower incomes, and household makeup e.g. single parents (Brackertz et al., 2005). There are

other segments that are difficult to engage in consultation, including those with physical disabilities, or who work in particular industries (e.g. sex workers) as well as commuters and shift workers (Brackertz, 2007); the time poor such as parents with young families (Stone, 2005), and citizens who have yet to have their say.

Lowndes et al. (2006) define three areas of influence on participation; the resources available to potential submitters, the consultation 'rules of use' that may confuse or frustrate, and the relationship of potential submitter has with the council. Each of the 'hard to reach' audience may have specific barriers that discourage their participation, and these are discussed more fully in Section 6.4.3. However, the discussion next looks at the communication activities employed by councils involved in the research, before moving on to examining the profiles of submitters who are the focus of these tactics.

6.2.3 Communication Activities

During the research implementation process, a comparison of the different consultation approaches of councils and subsequent submitter satisfaction levels was planned. However, the number of submitter survey responses received across each council varied to such an extent that an accurate comparison between councils could not be made. The discussion on communication activities used in the LTCCP consultation therefore focuses on the general communication methods used by councils.

Councils in this research project undertook a wide variety of communication activities. This finding echoes New Zealand Audit's review of the 2009 LTCCP (Department of Internal Affairs, 2010). The breadth of consultation action confirmed that councils were actively trying to encourage citizen participation in the 2009 LTCCP consultation, as required by the LGA 2002. While the interviews indicated that the goals of consultation were relatively simple, and the audiences targeted were limited, the effort put into the communication activities by councils indicated that the process was about engaging people in a discussion that should have mattered to them. Ultimately, increasing participation was the goal of every tactic.

Council commitment to community and stakeholder participation was also noted by Burke (2004, p. 7) in his earlier review of local government's response to the requirements of the LGA 2002, where he noted "there is a genuine desire and commitment to involve local communities in discussion and debate about the future". Thus, the variety of tactics suggests a cumulative approach to communication. Writers agree that a combination of different communication approaches can work to increase the frequency of messages, and has a better chance of meeting the media preferences of audiences (Bachman et al., 2010; Heath, 2001; Windahl et al., 1992). A combination of approaches is particularly effective in a consultation scenario because of the diversity of groups involved.

However, as Rogers (1983) argues, effort does not necessarily convert to effectiveness, and due regard to the contribution each activity makes to the communication process should be made during selection. Bearing in mind the role that each communication activity may have, the discussion will now review the core communications tactics employed by all councils. There were seven: advertising, media releases and media activity, email contacts, printed summaries, meetings with stakeholder groups, posters and displays, and website information.

The core communication activities varied in reach, ability to convey information and potential ability to influence and encourage participation, but were primarily designed to raise awareness and provide information. As such, the core communication activities aligned with the first steps in the diffusion of innovation theory of communication (Rogers, 1983, cited by Windahl et al., 1992).

Advertising

Advertising, through the local newspaper or radio (or both) was used by all councils to raise awareness of the consultation. Advertising, in the case of newspapers, included both paid space in the body of the newspaper and adverts in public notices. There is a range of opinion on the effectiveness of advertising, particularly in relation to the way it was used in the LTCCP consultation. Heath (2001) comments that control aspects of advertising are valuable because content is controlled by the advertiser (in this case the councils), as is the timing of message

release. Indeed control is one of the strengths of advertising over public relations, though costs can counter this benefit (Tymson & Lazar, 2002).

In this research project, newspaper advertising was expected as it is the traditional method of notification for local government and councils were, and are still, legally required to publicly notify the consultation opening (see LGA 2002, Section 83(1)(e)). The additional use of radio, and where radio picked up media releases, would seem useful to connect with those in the community who are less likely to read print media, for instance youth, as Brackertz (2007) advises. However, Stern (2011) notes an overall trend that radio, once the favourite medium of youth, has lost its prominence in the last decade to television and the internet.

The readership of newspapers, like radio listenership, has been trending downwards for many years both within New Zealand (ACNielsen, 2011) and internationally (Allen, 2009; Greenslade, 2009). The Economist (2011) notes that the audience for newspapers is not only dwindling, but also aging. In a similar trend to that affecting radio, younger newspaper readers, in particular, are now turning to television and online sources of news.

In the face of declining daily newspaper readership, it is interesting to ponder the effectiveness of newspaper notifications when the public notices section is used. This is a traditional method of advertising for local government. Public notices are required by legislation because the newspaper channel was deemed to have the best reach, but the trends outlined above indicate this is unlikely to be the case in the future. Council practices of regular direct-mail communication (as indicated in the mailout of the 2009 LTCCP summaries by most councils) may be a more effective approach to notification, because it would improve reach. The Communities and Local Government (2006) research project in Britain would support this suggestion, as the project found that citizen satisfaction with their councils was positively influenced by the amount of communication from councils, although some of this may have been face to face.

The research of Stern (2010) and AC Neilsen (2011) therefore indicates that radio and newspapers will continue to become less effective as a mechanism to raise awareness. However, the submitter survey conducted in this project captured a good snapshot of the effectiveness of

these channels in the 2009 LTCCP consultation, and showed newspapers to be effective in raising awareness of the consultation. Radio was not. The results are discussed in more detail in Section 6.4.1.

The news media

Reviewing mediated communication, there was an obvious emphasis on newspaper activity, but three councils also employed radio news talkback sessions to engage the public and Hawke's Bay Regional Council also worked with the local television channel to promote the issues in their consultation. Using these additional channels would have likely improved reach, but radio and television are not so suited to delivering detailed information as print is because of their temporality (O'Hair et al., 2008).

Activity with local news media (releases and briefings) was evident in all councils, although only one council formally tracked media coverage to monitor its effectiveness, and that was limited to the local newspapers. This lack of monitoring was surprising as research findings (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006; Department of Internal Affairs, 2006; McGregor et al., 2002) confirm the community relies on local newspaper media as a major source of information about council. Nevertheless, as with advertising, the issues of declining readership and fragmentation of media (especially radio) threaten the effectiveness of this approach.

Council staff also noted that the lack of 'control' they could exert over newspaper articles influenced the amount of time they dedicated to media relations. Unlike advertising, councils have little power over the final story news media choose to run, and Crozier (2004) and Moloney (2006) would agree that in general the pickup of media releases can vary according to sensationalistic treatment of an issue or the media's own political agenda. In addition, the media may have their attention diverted because of other more newsworthy news stories (as in Western Bay of Plenty's case), or they may simply have no interest (as the Hauraki District Council staff member reported).

McGregor et al. (2002) and Stern (2011) both attribute some of this perceived lack of media interest as a response to dwindling resources in newsrooms. As reader/listeners and advertising

shrink, newsrooms follow suit and with fewer staff, the newspaper cannot be expected to remain the single source of information for the community. Additionally, Barton and Shaw (2001) suggest media coverage during a consultation period depends on the relationship a council has with media before the consultation. They warn against exclusively focusing on dailies, saying that "coverage in local papers and giveaways is at least as important as in the major daily, especially in rural areas" (p. 39).

The National Newspaper Association (2010) also notes that the readership of community newspaper is on the rise, and the reach of these free local rags is also attractive. Barton and Shaw (2001) also strongly advocate the combination of advertising with media releases to mitigate the potential damage caused by inaccurate and sensationalistic media coverage. McGregor et al. (2002) feel newspapers will continue to take a leading role in local government news, and join Barton and Shaw (2001) in advocating for more resource dedicated to the cultivation of media relationships. McGregor et al. (2002, p. 100) cite Bush who asserts that though the media's role might "be performed indifferently and intermittently… it remains the nearest thing to a watchdog on permanent duty that the community can call upon".

However, as communication systems theorists Eunson (2008) and Foulger (2004) note there are a myriad of other influences or 'noise' in the external environment. Culture, family and friends, lobby groups, other demographic influences including education and income are just some of the factors that can influence an individual's receptiveness to messages and stories in the media, and therefore impact on the effectiveness of council communications in the media.

Many communication models, particularly Foulger's (2004) Ecological Model of Communication which deals specifically with mediated communication, illustrate that council staff should be reluctant to assume anything more than that the local news media had some influence, and should allocate resources accordingly. The Foulger model illustrates the complexity of the interaction of language, medium, and message in any communication process, reflecting the socially constructed aspects of each element, and the relationship of participants to language medium and message, and to each other.

Printed summary

A summary of the key information contained in the proposed LTCCP is required by the LGA 2002 special consultation requirements in Section 83 (a)(ii), and plays a key role in delivering the consultation information to citizens in a manner and format that adequately informs without being overwhelming and acting as a barrier to participation. The print medium—like the newspaper— is preferred by older citizens (Eunson, 2008). For councils, the strength of a printed summary is in the control exerted over the messages included when compared to newspaper stories, and the potential for designing an attractive and compelling piece of visual communication (Halseth & Booth, 2003). When direct mailed out to citizens households in a push-type approach (as most councils did), the reach of a printed summary surpasses that of the daily newspapers, and is only paralleled by community newspapers (Barton & Shaw, 2001; Freeman, 2006). Printed summaries also allow better control of 'noise', where in newspapers other non-council stories compete for the reader's attention. The printed summary is discussed further in Section 6.4 because of its prominence is survey results.

Displays and posters

Displays and posters were used by all councils to raise awareness and interest in the consultation. This tactic was used to raise awareness and provide limited 'how to' information and, depending on the placement of the information, is an effective method for targeting communities of interest particularly those defined geographically (Barton & Shaw, 2001). Advertising, media activity, and signs and posters were all examples of 'push' communication (Eunson, 2008) where councils actively pushed messages and information out to citizens. Email distribution lists provided an additional electronic channel that achieved the same 'push', though as Malhotra (1999) argues, these lists are more effective because they allow direct communication with the receiver, and have the value of control, timing and cost-effectiveness.

Websites

Websites were also used by all councils as a repository of information and in some cases to enable online submissions. Unlike the four 'push' activities discussed so far, the website does rely on the citizen visiting the site and as such is a 'pull' communication mechanism (Eunson, 2008) – unless there is web functionality activated that feeds information to people who

nominate themselves as interested parties (e.g. rss feeds, e-zine subscriptions and Facebook). Research by an Auckland AUT University team confirms growing numbers of citizens have access to the web, but while there is a higher proportion of younger people using the internet, the demographic profiles of users skew towards males, those with higher incomes and higher levels of education (Smith et al., 2011). This research project also found a strong relationship between internet use for access to consultation information and the demographic characteristics of income, education, and age. Those on low incomes (see Appendix I), or with lower education levels (see Appendix J), or older submitters (see Appendix H) were less likely to use the internet. Since the beginning of this project the use of social media has skyrocketed (Bittle et al., 2009; Dyer, 2010; Smith et al., 2011), yet in 2009 staff participants made no mention of social media being used by councils.

Emails

Contrasting with the four core communication activities already discussed (advertising, media relations, displays and posters, and the council website), emails lists were a communication based on a prior relationship. While having the strengths of timing, control and allowing feedback (Eunson (2008), email lists have weaknesses as method of communication because they are relatively lean and asynchronous (O'Hair et al., 2008). Also as Himstreet and Baty (1984) note mediated communications typically have less influence than face-to-face, although the strength of email is the immediate opportunity for feedback, as opposed to a paper-based written approach. Therefore, as an approach to notification and information provision, emails would be generally effective, particularly in the case of stakeholder and partner relationships, where the strengths of email communication would be further enhanced by additional communication activities to reinforce and contextualise messages, as suggested in the two-step flow model (Windahl et al., 1992).

Meetings

Public meetings were favoured by all councils, despite anticipated low attendances. General public meetings are typically seen as unattractive by the community because of the inconvenience of the timing, and their lack of perceived influence (Department of Internal Affairs, 2010). On reflection, it seemed that general public meetings were employed as much as

mechanism to demonstrate the openness of the councils' communications systems, as they were to deliver actual effective communication experience. O'Hair et al. (2008) would recommend meetings as a strong channel of communication because of the rich, multi-directional and synchronous dialogue, and the Lievrouw and Finn model of communication identifies meetings as an excellent chance for councils to lessen the physical and psychological distance between citizens and councils and therefore have some influence (Eunson, 2008). However, attending public meetings requires a considerable investment of time by citizens (Stone, 2005); the time was identified by first-time submitters as the leading barrier to participation. Thus, this research found that the effectiveness of meetings to encourage dialogue and directly improve council/community relationships was low in practice, because of low attendance. However, meetings appeared an important part of establishing an open and encouraging profile of councils.

Overall the breadth and variation of tactics employed by councils in this project parallel recommendations by Windahl et al.(1992) and Chaffee and Metzger (2001) for the use of multiple channels and media to create effective communication campaigns. Each council employed a combination of between nine and 16 separate communication activities. It is interesting to note the dominance of early stage communication activities. Some writers, for instance Barton and Shaw (2001) and Drydyk (2005) strongly advocate an emphasis on communication to generate broad awareness. However, reinforcement and feedback (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999; Community Empowerment Division, 2006; Department of Internal Affairs, 2007) and implementation communication activities (Rogers, 1983, cited in Windahl et al., 1992) are also important. In the participating councils, these communication activities are minimal.

While the discussion has focused on the efforts to push information out to citizens, Table 39 summarises the mix of tactics used by participating councils, relating them to the five stages in Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation model as described in Windahl et al. (1992). Feedback communication activities, that explain the final council decision and contextualise the submitters' comments within the decision, appear to be a weak link in the communication plans on this evidence. Submitters' comments similarly point to feedback as a key area for improvement, and their perceptions of the effectiveness of feedback communication are discussed more fully in Section 6.5.

Table 39: Consultation activity - Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation Model (1983) analysis

Communication tactic	Awareness	Information	Influence	Implementation	Reinforcement/ feedback
Advertising (paper and/or radio)	●	●	●		
Council dedicated expos	●	●	●	●	
Dummy rates projection		●			
Final letter to submitters					●
Facility tours (bus)	●	●	●		
Focus groups/workshops	●	●	●		
Email contacts (stakeholders)	●	●	●	●	
Media releases, briefings	●	●	●		●
Newsletters (periodic)	●	●	●	●	●
Newspaper space	●	●	●		
Posters and displays	●				
Public meetings	●	●	●		
Radio talkback	●	●	●		
School engagement activities	●	●	●	●	
Speaker series	●	●	●		
Stakeholder Meetings	●	●	●		
Printed summary	●	●	●	●	
Mini local summaries	●	●	●	●	
Tables/stalls in public places	●	●	●	●	
Television interviews	●	●	●		
Website information/submissions	●	●	●	●	●
Web forum	●	●	●	●	

The LGA 2002 places hefty significance on the need to get information out to people who may be affected by, or have an interest in the matter being consulted on. However, the consultation principles also require a feedback loop to explain the councils' decisions as the result of the consultation (see Section 82 (1)(f)). Commentators on the legislative change over the last thirty years have emphasised transparency as a key requirement of local government reform (Cheyne, 2002; Drage, 2002; Nash, 2007; Reid, 2005). A feedback loop to submitters is an essential part of this effort to be more transparent (Barton & Shaw, 2001; Cook, 2006; Freeman, 2006). Similarly, communication theorists, particularly those using a systems approach, have long

emphasised the importance of two-way communication for improved understanding, ownership and positive relationships (Bishop, 2006; Dance, 1970; Eunson, 2008; Windahl et al., 1992).

Other council consultation activities

Table 14 summarised the variety of communication activities used during the LTCCP consultation. The seven channels common to all participating councils have been discussed. Yet participating councils also employed a variety of additional creative approaches in an effort to capture the attention of the community, and improve opportunities for two-way communication. Efforts like Hauraki's facility tours and the Regional Expo organised by Hawke's Bay provided richer contexts for information exchange and general relationship building. These approaches find support in the writings of relational theorists. Himstreet and Baty (1984) note interpersonal approaches to be most effective, and Foley and Duck (2006) label community relations work like tours and expos as an investment in long-term relationships.

Other councils reported using focus groups in the pre-consultation stage with similar aims of awareness raising and relationship building. Nevertheless, while providing a richer communication environment, the interpersonal approach of the tours, expo, focus groups and speaker series were resource-hungry activities and lacked the reach of the core communications activities (with the possible exception of the expo where no attendance figure were gathered). Additionally, these activities relied on an element of interest from the community and writers on the 'hard to reach' would suggest that in most cases community relations activities are likely to attract the attention of those citizens who are already demonstrating some level of engagement (Brackertz, 2007; Zwart et al., 2005).

Nelson City Council was one of the few councils that targeted audiences with low historical participation rates. It used secondary school visits to target youth. Staff visited secondary schools organising lunchtime displays with a simplified summary of the plan, specifically developed for the younger audience. This interpersonal approach was also proactive in going out to meet the audience, rather than relying on attracting an audience's attention. In addition, Nelson City Council used the monthly newsletters of community organisations to discuss issues relevant to the interests of the organisations distribution. This approach used formal community

networks to achieve both closer relationships with the community organisations and their members as encouraged in the two-step flow approach of transmissions theorists (Windahl, et al., 1992). It also capitalised on the communication relationship already established by the community organisation to have more of a chance to influence perceptions, as suggested by Rogers and Bhowmil (1970) in their theory of homophily.

Similarly, focus groups and the speaker series, while generally effective according to Freeman (2006), lack the reach of the mass communication approaches. The council expo idea is likely to improve reach as it can cater for much higher numbers. However, all additional channels discussed by the participants require active participation i.e. citizens have to be aware and respond to the engagement opportunity. Unfortunately, as Brackertz et al. (2007) and Forgie (2001) say time-poor citizens and those with little interest in council activity are unlikely to be motivated by the opportunity to attend these activities.

There is an obvious trade-off between the reach of mass-communication-style approaches and the richness and potential for influence provided by some of the additional communication activities undertaken by councils during consultation. The richer engagement opportunities (e.g. focus groups, expos, bus tours) are resource intensive, and require considerable commitment from the council. Additionally, they are unlikely to be affective in engaging the 'hard to reach'. However, traditional mass communication does not provide a simple solution either, because, as Chaffee and Metzger (2001), Stern (2011) and The Economist (2011) observe, the effectiveness of mass communication channels is waning in light of technological developments.

The media relations work of councils along with the use of websites, web forums and email acknowledges the contribution of technology to communication process (i.e. communication is not confined to person to person) as identified by Foulger's communication model (2004). It is important to consider O'Hair et al.'s observation that media is never neutral. Thus, council messages are transformed by the media channel used, and noise is anything that interferes with communication.

6.2.4 Conclusion

The councils showed considerable commitment to the process of consultation, but staff resourcing was drawn largely from the planning and communication teams. This silo approach to consultation appeared linked to the process orientated goals councils had for consultation (i.e. goals of reach, encouraging feedback or both). Hauraki was the only council to demonstrate a wider cross-council approach. As a result, and as suggested by Stone (2005), the opportunities in consultation communication for the wider gains of organisation learning would have been unlikely.

The identification of audiences that might have an interest in, or be affected by the LTCCP was largely undertaken on the basis of interest. Typical 'hard to reach' audiences e.g. the time-poor, youth, ethnic minorities or those with lower educations, were not common target audiences and this would appear a significant weakness of the consultation planning of participating councils. As Brackertz et al. (2005) and Carston (2008, 2011) note 'hard to reach' audiences make up a significant portion of the community, and have different agendas from those more likely to participate. Therefore, the process of consultation was unlike to be result in the capture of representative comment.

However, the communication activities undertaken by participating councils, many despite limited resources, showed considerable innovation and commitment. Seven core communication tactics were common to all consultation programmes: advertising; media releases and media activity; email contacts; printed summaries; meetings with stakeholder groups; posters and displays; and website information. All councils also undertook additional consultation activities, and these generally focussed on delivering communication through rich channels that encouraged dialogue and stronger council/community relationships, even if the latter outcome was not a specified goal.

The discussion now moves to review submitter characteristics and agendas to assess what the community response to the consultation goals, targeting and activities.

6.3 Submitters' Characteristics and Agendas

This section begins by discussing the submitter engagement levels before moving to comment on the survey findings on the demographic characteristics of submitters. The characteristics can have an impact on consultation and community engagement (Community Empowerment Division, 2006; Stone, 2005) and the data gathered in response to the second research sub-question "Who made submissions to council LTCCP consultation and what were the submissions about?" provided a clear quantitative breakdown of submitter characteristics and agendas. The discussion focuses on the findings show submitters' characteristics varied from those predicted in the results of earlier research. Similarly, the submission topics are discussed in an overall sense, and then comparisons are made across the demographic cohorts.

6.3.1 Submitters' Engagement Levels

Participating councils reported a wide variation in submission response levels in the LTCCP process (refer to Table 6). Nevertheless, there was a general trend of increasing submitter numbers observed and this was echoed in the findings of New Zealand Audit (2010) and Nash (2007), Cheyne (2002) and Freeman (2006).

The variation in engagement levels was also predicted by New Zealand researchers (such as Cheyne, 2002; Drage, 2008; Nash, 2007), and was partly explained as the outcome of differing kinds of participating councils (e.g. regional compared to territorial entities), size, and location (rural as compared to urban). In New Zealand, the size of a constituency has been found to influence engagement levels with smaller rural communities generally displaying higher engagement levels because of stronger links between the representatives and constituents (Department for Internal Affairs, 2010; Drage, 2006; Freeman, 2006).

In addition to the influence of size on participation levels, this research project identified a notable difference between the engagement levels of participating regional councils and territorial/unitary entities. The two participating regional councils were larger than other

councils, but both registered markedly lower participation rates (0.06 percent) despite being particularly proactive with extensive engagement activities conducted during consultation (see the Consultation activity matrix in Table 14). The result was nevertheless consistent with Robertson and Rout's (2006) research on the perceptions of local government, which noted low levels of understanding of the role and responsibility of regional councils. Less specific to regional councils, but nonetheless relevant to this discussion is the body of research that identified knowledge of the subject as a major influence on participation (Australian Government, 2008; Lowndes & Sullivan, 2008; Nash, 2007).

Staff from the regional councils also noted lower levels of engagement were typical. The Hawke's Bay regional council communication manager felt that low levels of engagement may relate to low levels of awareness, saying "we have good relationship with stakeholders, but with the wider community, particularly the urban community, I would characterise our relationship as one of low awareness levels".

In the interviews council staff generally said that participation levels for the 2009 LTCCP were typical of normal engagement levels, although those in Tasman and Whakatane were judged as significantly elevated by controversial issues). The four councils with high submission levels (Nelson City, Western Bay of Plenty, Tasman and Whakatane District Councils) attributed higher levels of submissions to closer relationships with the community and their comments find support in both theory and research writing. Grunig and Hunt (1984) noted that good public relations efforts rely strongly on a participative culture and shared expectation. Other writers have identified good council/community relationships, or social capital, as a leading influence on participation levels by many researchers (Chandler, 2001; Community Empowerment Divison DCLG, 2006; Lowndes et al., 2006; Lowndes, 2004; Freeman, 2006; Pallot, n.d). However Lowndes et al. (2006) and Norris (2011) note resources (i.e. the constituents' education, income and civic skills) and the rules of engagement have a stronger influence on participation levels than social capital. These factors are further discussed in Section 6.4.3 and 6.4.4.

When discussing general participation levels, a common response made by staff was that there were occasional issue-driven spikes in their consultation submission numbers. Controversy and

controversial single-topic issues, in particular, were reported to elevate participation levels. Nash (2007) and Pratchett (2004) contend that participation levels are also linked to issue knowledge. Thus controversy and the consequence—increased media coverage—can serve to increase public knowledge levels (McGregor et al., 2002). Many consultation guidelines also indicate simplicity of issue (e.g. a single-issue consultation) is easier to understand and thus encourages participation (Australian Government, 2008; British Government).

Clearly the 2009 LTCCP, and for that matter most significant strategic council plans (for instance the Resource Management Plan), involves a highly complex, multi-issue discussion. In addition, council staff reported a tendency for councils to defer decisions requiring consultation in the six months leading up to the LTCCP and for efficiency include them in the LTCCP consultation. This approach is contrary to the international consultation guidelines (Australian Government, 2008; British Government) and finds no support with writers on consultation who further advocate for simplicity (Forgie et al., 1999; Freeman, 2006; Reddell & Woolcock, 2004).

Submission levels to the councils participating in this research strongly suggest inconsistent representation of citizen opinions. In most cases, submitter numbers were very low and therefore on a statistical basis could not be assumed as representative of a community. The impact of council size, type and relationship with the community has been discussed in this section. However, there are many other factors that exert influence on engagement levels. Before discussing some of these influences, it is useful to further understand the characteristics of citizens who take part in consultations, and clarify those in the community are likely to remain silent. Submitter demographic characteristics are discussed in the following section.

6.3.2 Submitters' Characteristics

Public consultation as an activity to enable participation in decision-making has become a pervasive and legislated requirement in local government in the last two decades (Cheyne, 2002; Freeman, 2006; Nash, 2007). There is now a rising expectation in the New Zealand community to 'have a say' in local decisions (Department of Internal Affairs, 2006; Robertson & Rout, 2006), as there is in the wider western world (Lowndes, 2004; Norris, 2011; Sullivan, 2004). Countering this apparent rising individual desire for involvement, is the withdrawal of citizens

from political activity that has been lamented by democratic theorists (Beitz, 1999; Norris, 2011).

New Zealand and international research has consistently found that submitters to local government consultations were unlikely to be representative of their respective communities (Brackertz, 2007; Cheyne et al., n.d.; Community Empowerment Division, 2006; Department of Internal Affairs, 2010; Forgie, 2001; Lowndes, 2004). In New Zealand, there has been little research conducted since the LGA 2002 to examine whether the availability of more extensive consultation opportunities, as defined by that legislation, has improved the representation of community needs. Thus, the submitter survey asked questions on gender, age, income, education, household makeup and ethnicity to quantify the different participation levels exhibited by New Zealand demographic segments in the current cultural and legislative context.

Gender

The gender balance of submitters (57.2 percent male c.f. 42.8 percent female) revealed a significant swing away from the general population profile (48 percent male c.f. 52 percent female). This finding was consistent with previous research in New Zealand with Forgie (2001) finding a higher representation of men in submitter numbers and Drage (2006) noted this trend in participation and in representation in council governance and council management. Lowndes et al. (2004) had identified a similar result in their British research. Sheridan's (2007) comments on gender in communication suggest the hierarchical power men typically enjoy in business, the community and in their families would flow through into submitter behaviours—and numbers—with men more likely to feel entitled and comfortable submitting to consultations. Sheridan's prediction would also translate to an expectation that men are more likely to feel confident speaking at council hearings, and this proved to be the case with men outnumbering women appearing at the LTCCP hearings by two to one.

Lowndes and Sullivan (2004) also found that men typically have better civic skills and so are therefore more likely to take part in consultations. There were a number of further results in this research project which are consistent with this contention (for additional details refer to the gender cross-tabulations, see Appendix G):

- A significantly larger proportion of men (21.2 percent) made a written submission other than the council submission form compared to only 12.3 percent of women. This indicates more confidence in putting comments into writing for council consideration. As a result, fewer men (50.2 percent) used their council's submission form as compared to 54.7 percent of women.
- When giving reasons for not having submitted before, 28 percent of first-time female submitters said they were unsure how to go about making a submission, a smaller proportion of men (23.5 percent) found this to be a problem.
- Of those who did speak before council, women reported feeling less comfortable with the experience with an average satisfaction rating 3.69, this compared to a 4.03 average for male speakers.
- For submitters who chose not to also speak in support of their submission, only 14.6 percent of the male non-speakers said it was because they would not be comfortable speaking before council. Conversely, 26.6 percent of female submitters reported this as the reason why they did not appear.

Thus, confidence and civic skills appear to be factors that are contributing to lower representation by women in the LTCCP council consultation, though women were proportionately more aware of consultation opportunities. Education levels, had been suggested in other research as a strong influence to participation (Lowndes, 2004), but a comparison of education levels between gender revealed similar education profiles.

Overall when comparing the characteristic of gender, female submitters typically trended back towards the national demographic profile. Women submitters were typically younger than their male counterparts, reported a lower household income (33.3 percent in the under $30,000 bracket as compared with 21.7 percent of men), and were more ethnically diverse (particularly from 'other' nationalities).

The implications of the gender findings are interesting when considering the makeup of the typical council management and governance body which remains dominated by men (Drage, 2008), and will be discussed further in terms of their impact on submitters' agendas, as Nash

(2007) asserts that councils agendas are typically dominated by technical, rationalistic discussions.

Age

The findings, as mentioned above, showed that older people were more likely to make submissions (see Figure 6) in comparison to the census profile for this group. This finding was similar to the New Zealand research findings of Forgie (2001) and Cheyne (1997). These writers say the reasons for the dominance of older submitters include having the time to devote to a submission, and the development of civic skills with life experience (Cheyne, 1997; Department of Internal Affairs, 2006; Forgie, 2001; Lowndes & Sullivan, 2004). Interestingly, analysis of the responses from the dominant 60 – 84 year old age cohort in this research showed 'lack of time' to be the leading reason why first-time submitters from this group had not made comment before. Thirty three percent of first-time submitters from the 60-84 year cohort gave it as a reason, as compared to 30 percent in the overall findings (see Figure 11)

There are few recent New Zealand studies that provide further information about the nature and agenda of the 60-84 year age group. However, looking at the findings in this research project, the prominent results include the relatively low income level of the group, and a proportionally high level of concern for rates affordability. Over half the aged submitters commented on affordability in their submissions, and they were conversely less concerned on the leading agenda issues of community facilities and infrastructure.

Where to dominance of older citizens in consultation was predicted by other research findings, so too was the participation of youth. New Zealand researchers Cheyne (1997), Robertson and Rout (2006), Forgie (2001) and Jordan (2004) all found low numbers of younger citizens taking part in council consultations. Lowndes et al. (2006) explain this finding by suggesting that civic skills in this cohort have yet to be developed, yet knowledge of the submission process was not identified as an issue for younger first-time submitters in this research. Nor was lack of interest, as suggested by the Department of Internal Affairs (2006). Time was identified as the leading barrier for participation in younger cohorts, although it must be acknowledge that the numbers represented in this research were low.

Ethnicity

The results showed that the ethnicity of submitters was significantly skewed towards those of European descent. Intercultural communication research in this country had predicted this finding, suggesting minority groups would also be less likely to participate (Jameson, 1997). Ethnic minorities have been shown to have very low levels of engagement in local government consultations in New Zealand research, of particular concern are the three largest ethnic groupings in New Zealand; Māori (Cheyne & Tawhai, 2007; Hayward, 1999), Asian (Drage, 2008) and Pacific Island peoples (Jameson, 1997). However, the findings in this research may have also been affected by the research sample, which did not recruit in the major metropolitan cities where Pacific Island and Asian peoples in particular show a strong tendency to cluster (ACNielson, 2009). Therefore, the findings on participation levels of minority ethnicities in this project – particularly Pacific Island and Asian people – cannot be considered a strong indication of the wider representation levels of ethnicities in consultation activities throughout the country.

Income

Perhaps one of the most surprising results of the survey was the income profile of submitters. Prior research had found that submitters were more likely to come from high income brackets (Carson, 2007; Forgie, 2001; Lowndes & Sullivan, 2008). However, the survey results from this study almost mirror the income levels in the general population. The results were surprising given the high proportion of educated submitters, because higher qualifications are normally a strong predictor of higher income levels (Carson, 2007; Lowndes & Sullivan, 2004), but the education levels of the submitters could well be countered by the high number of retired people taking part in consultation. People over 65 typically have a lower income level than other age groups (Nash, 2007).

Nevertheless, the finding on income levels of participants was important because affordability of rates was a rated the third most frequently mentioned theme for submissions, with one in three submitter mentioning the issue. At a simple statistical level, respondent submissions should therefore be roughly representative of wider concerns on affordability and sensitivity to rising rate levels.

Education levels

The survey results (see Figure 8) strongly supported indications in other research that submitters were likely to be better educated (Forgie, 2001; Lowndes et al., 2006). Lowndes et al. go one step further declaring education as the demographic characteristic with the strongest influence on participation. Those with tertiary qualifications made up over two thirds of the survey respondents, yet make up only one quarter of the general population. The implications of educated cohorts being over-represented in the consultation process further supports the likelihood of a positivist, rationalist approach to decision-making by local government (Nash, 2007) and a skewing of typical submitter agendas away from the actual community concerns. For example, Robertson and Rout (2006) found that citizens with lower levels of education were less likely to have concerns about the environment and much more likely to comment on affordability.

In attempting to understand the barriers to less educated submitters participating, cross-tabulations were conducted (see Appendix J). When asked the question, "As a first-time submitter, how would you have described yourself before making a submission?" first-time submitters with no educational qualifications proved much more likely to indicate they had previously been uninterested in council consultations. Conversely, the leading reason given by first-time submitters with tertiary education qualifications was lacking the time to participate.

However, those with no qualifications made up a larger proportion of first-time submitters therefore the trend of the educated dominating submissions may be changing. Linked to this finding, is that result that those with no qualifications were much more likely to become aware of the consultation through social networks, thus it would appear the two-step flow model and networking approaches advocated by Windahl et al. (1992) and other transmission theorists (Lewis & Slade, 1994; O'Hair et al., 2008) would be useful channels to communicate through to those less educated.

Those with lower educations were also more likely to use the council's submission form. Brackertz (2007) had noted that those with lower education often find the challenge of a full written submission more difficult, than those with higher education. Thus, the tick-box like

approach appears to help the less educated to participate, although as the Department of Internal Affairs (2010) found tick-box submission forms appear to constrain wider comment from submitters. Also, very few submitters with lower levels of education took the opportunity to speak to council in the consultation hearings.

Lowndes et al. (2006) additionally found that citizens with lower levels of education can often find consultation information not sufficiently relevant or too complex to understand. This research found similar results, with satisfaction findings across all the information indicators (access, ease of understanding, adequacy, timing and the submission form) lowest with those submitters with no qualifications. Those submitters with degrees or higher qualifications gave the information indicators the highest satisfaction ratings. However, in perceptions of influence and overall satisfaction, there was little variation between the education cohorts.

Household makeup

Councils throughout New Zealand have a key role in supporting the health and growth of communities (Cheyne, 2002). Therefore, it was of concern to see the very low numbers of submitters with families (and even lower numbers of solo parents). Additionally, the first-time submitter subsample did not reveal a trend towards better representation (i.e. a closer parallel to the census profile in the characteristics) as there is in which other demographic areas, such as gender (see Appendix G) and lower levels of education (see Appendix J). Submissions were dominated by ‘couples only’ and ‘single person households’. Brackertz (2007) had found similar results in Australian studies and attributed this result to the constraints of those with families having little spare time to commit to a consultation. This is a significant portion of the population (43.69 percent), many of whom are disadvantaged, have their attention captured by other issues (Brackertz, 2007; Brackertz et al., 2005; Stone, 2005). This finding indicates that the LTCCP consultations largely failed to engage with families.

Representation of individual, business or community group interests

Submissions made representing individual interests were made by four out of every five participants. However, there was an apparent cross-over as a quarter of the individual submitters also presented on behalf of another entity’s interests. The results did not ascertain if the

participant made multiple submissions, or if a single submission was made which represented both sets of interests. However, it is clear that business or community group representation is proportionately a smaller set of submissions. Earlier research conducted by Forgie (2001) had found business and community groups dominating submitter numbers. However, Nash (2007) noted a rising expectation of participation (especially amongst generation x and y, i.e. those born from around 1960 through to around 2000) associated with a shift in culture from the values of group and community wellbeing, to individual rights. The implication of this liberalist swing is that individuals are likely to produce a higher proportion of submissions.

Thus, Forgie's 2001 study found a much higher proportion of community groups and business. Jordan's (2004) study identified a shift towards more individual submissions and this research captured a result that showed that trend seemed to be continuing. The LGA 2002 requirement for consultation summaries and simple forms for submitting appears to have supported this trend, and removed some of the barriers for individuals with lesser civic skills (Lowndes et al., 2006), as individuals reported much higher levels of usage of consultation forms (see Appendix N).

First-time submitters

Submitters were also asked if they had previous experience of council consultation processes. This question allowed further investigation of perceived barriers to making submissions. The rationale behind using first-time submitters was that this group could accurately identify what had been barriers to previous participation were because of the recency of the initial submitting experience. It also allowed the changing profile of submitters to be tracked. This research found almost 42 percent of submitters were doing so for the first time. In comparison, the research of Forgie (2001) and Jordan (2006) also found relatively high proportions of first-time submitters at around 33 percent. Linked to this result, the staff interviews confirmed rising submission numbers as did Audit New Zealand (2010) in their assessment of the 2009 consultation as discussed in Section 6.3.1 above. The findings collectively suggest that communication efforts of councils are contributing to rising interest and submission numbers, although there were many other influences likely to have also promoted submission volumes, for example the contentiousness of issues, as noted by councils; improving social capital of the councils and a wider array of submission making channels (Lowndes et al., 2006), or extension of the time

allocated to consultation (Barton & Shaw, 2001). However, more importantly, analysis of the first-time submitters indicates they are more likely to be more representative of the typical community profile, being proportionately made up of higher numbers of women, younger submitters, those with lower educations, and lower household incomes. This is an important finding as many researchers have lamented that a rise in submitter numbers does not necessarily mean an improvement in representation (Brackertz, 2007; Carson, 2008; Zwart et al., 2005). As Brackertz (2007) succinctly noted, most councils are just hearing more from the same type of people. The findings of this research give grounds for cautious optimism that the views of Brackertz about consultation in Australia may not hold true in New Zealand, or in the very least that there is some improvement being witnessed.

However, the New Zealand Audit (2010) review of the 2009 LTCCP consultation did reveal that many councillors still believed that consultation was dominated by repeat submitters or "squeaky wheels" (Department of Internal Affairs, 2010). This perception affects the value councillors attribute to submission comment (Drage, 2002; Nash, 2007). Yet only one council in this research reported tracking any submitter characteristics. If more councils were to track the profile of their submitters, this information may provide councillors improved confidence in the consultation process, particularly where a trend towards representation can be witnessed.

In summary, the demographic characteristics of the survey respondents revealed significant skewing away from demographic profiles as identified in the 2006 census. Submitters in this research project were generally older, those with higher levels of education, people of European ethnicity, and men. These findings were predicted by prior research both in New Zealand and internationally.

However, this project found the income levels of submitters were very similar to those of the general population. To that end, in the New Zealand context, income did not appear to constrain participation in the 2009 LTCCP consultation as was suggested by earlier New Zealand research (Forgie, 2001) and by leading international researchers (Lowndes et al., 2006; Pattie et al., 2004).

Additionally this research identified an increase in numbers making a submission, as compared to earlier research (Forgie, 2001). Perhaps linked with this finding, the relatively high level of first-time submitters noted in earlier research (Forgie, 2001; Jordan, 2006) appears to be increasing. Finally, while the generally older profile of participants would influence the finding on household makeup, the survey's findings that very few family households, particularly single parent households participated in the LTCCP consultation should be of concern to councils. Conversely couples without children and single person households were over-represented when compared with the general population makeup. This is an important finding not just because this sizeable group is underrepresented, but also because the council decisions are likely to have significant impacts on this segment of the community.

6.3.3 Submitters' Agendas

Submitter agendas (the topics on which they made submissions) encompassed a wide spread of issues with no area dominating. In addition, most submitters reported that they commented on more than one issue (see Figure 13). This indicated that they had attained a broad level of awareness of consultation issues, well beyond that of a single issue. Tasman District Council's consultation responses illustrated this point with the majority of submitters using the single-issue submission form provided by a recycling lobby, but taking the opportunity to list additional issues.

The core council services of infrastructure and facility provision predictably led the issue count, both being the subject of around three out of every five respondent's submissions. Yet community services and affordability were also commented on by nearly half of the submitters selecting each of these issues. Environmental issues, rating and finance policies were next ranked, both these areas still attracting high levels of interest with around two out of every five submitters. Transport registered only marginally less interest. As a reflection of general awareness levels, the results are very similar to the Department of Internal Affairs' (2006) findings on knowledge of council services. This in turn reinforces the arguments of Lowndes et al. (2006), and Nash (2007) that participation relates to issue knowledge.

In their review of the 2009 LTCCP submissions, Audit New Zealand noted that submissions were usually about local issues, including requests for service or alterations of particular service (Department of Internal Affairs, 2010). This finding supports theorists Lowndes et al. (2006) and Lowndes and Sullivan (2008), who emphasise the connection people have with local issues and the relevance of those issues, which then leads to higher levels of participation.

There was congruence between council-identified agendas and those of submitters. This was a finding that would suggest the success of the Audit New Zealand 2009 requirement for councils to clearly identify and communicate key issues as part of the public consultation process. Audit New Zealand labelled this approach the 'right debate', and the comments of Nash (2007) that council communication can influence the agenda setting of submitters, and the wider community would seem to align with this approach.

Audit New Zealand's 'right debate' approach was taken to encourage a focused discussion on the most difficult and important decisions facing each council, and to clarify and prioritise the issues put before communities (Department of Internal Affairs, 2010). The focus on key issues often flowed through to the design of many council consultation forms, many of which specifically requested feedback on these key issues. Audit New Zealand's subsequent review of the 2009 LTCCP consultation then agreed with Nash's (2007) comments. It also noted that the councils that had used submission forms based on a tick-box approach tended to receive submissions focused on the material in the boxes. Conversely, the submission forms with opportunity for 'open-ended' questions tended to elicit a more comprehensive range of feedback (Department of Internal Affairs, 2010).

The wide spread of issues addressed by submitters indicates a widening understanding of council's role, and perhaps a widening expectation. The writings of Cheyne (2002) and Local Government New Zealand (2006) similarly tracked an expanding council remit as central government activity has progressively devolved to local government level. Thus, while the core services of infrastructure and community facilities head submitters' agendas, environmental issues (including transport concerns and recycling issues in community services) are now also prominent. However, Nash (2007) had noted that educated submitters were more likely to

comment on environmental issues. Nash observed the rising concern for environmental issues in current popular culture, and the findings in this research that younger submitters were more likely to make comment on environmental issues would appear to support his comment.

Reid (2005b) also suggested that the widening of councils' remit as a result of the LGA 2002 also indicated a rising expectation for council activities to extend over additional spheres of activity. The findings in the submitter survey would appear to support Reid's contention, with business and the economy an example of one such area, and cultural concerns another. Economic development is a relatively new activity for most councils (Local Government New Zealand, 2006) yet one in five submitters made comment on business and the economy (although only 8.1 percent of submitters specifically represented business interests). A similar result was noted for cultural concerns, with 14.3 percent of submitters commenting in this area, although the ethnic profiles of submitters were narrow and mostly European. So, while Robertson and Rout (2006) and The Department of Internal Affairs (2007) argued that lack of awareness of council roles and responsibility limits participation, the topics identified by submitters in this research indicated that there is a wide knowledge of the new responsibilities of Local Government amongst the submitters at least.

However, the relatively low number of submissions on rating levels seems surprising taking into account the context of a difficult economic climate in 2009, the emphasis on the affordability of rates as a point of discussion by government agencies (Local Government New Zealand, 2006; NZ Local Government, 2005) and the inevitable focus on rates in the news media (McGregor et al., 2002). Also, this research found that submitters from demographic groups sensitive to affordability of rates were present, if the profile of submitters when compared to the New Zealand census profile is an indicator. Other British research (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006) also identified affordability as a high priority, with 'value for money' in rates noted as a leading driver to citizen/ratepayer satisfaction.

6.3.4 Conclusion

Analysis of the response levels and the anecdotal history of submitter activity in participating councils revealed engagement levels varied and were influenced by the size and type of the

council. Most marked were the very low engagement levels in the LTCCP of the two regional councils, despite being active and innovative in their attempts to encourage citizen participation.

The demographic profile of the participants in the 2009 LTCCP consultation across the ten participating councils was revealed as largely consistent with the prior research findings, in New Zealand and in Australia and the United Kingdom, that submitters are more likely to be male, older, educated and European. However, there were signs that the status quo is changing with a high proportion of first-time submitters in the survey, and within this group there was a tendency towards more representative characteristics. Women, younger citizens and those with lower education were present in higher numbers among first-time submitters that among those who had already made submissions. Interestingly in this research, the income profile of submitters matched that of the national census.

The analysis of agendas (topics on which participants made submissions) revealed that there is a widening understanding of council roles with submitters commenting across a range of concerns. Concerns for the newer, less localised issues e.g. the environment and business economy were surprisingly frequent. This could be explained, at least partly, by proportionately higher numbers of educated submitters. There was also strong evidence that the 'right debate' approach by councils designed to emphasise and direct submitter comment to high priority issues was effective and reflected in the results of submitter agendas.

6.4 Communication Processes and Interaction

The discussion to date has reviewed the approach of participating councils to the 2009 LTCCP consultation. The subsequent submitter response to the 2009 LTCCP consultation was analysed to identify demographic characteristics typical for that consultation and context. The agenda focus of submissions was also compared to that of the participating councils. This section now moves to discuss the relative effectiveness of communication tactics and channels in the consultation – as identified by submitters – and how these relate to prior research findings.

Although the need to be more responsive to community diversity was an overriding reason for the move towards a more participative democracy by local government, the previous section confirmed that submitters are not representative the demographic profile of communities. However, the experiences of first-time submitters were investigated as a way to identify current barriers to participation in consultation in the New Zealand local government context. This is critical to understanding which council communication activities worked for submitters and which did not.

6.4.1 Communication Sources for Raising Awareness and Providing Information

Awareness-raising communication activities

Findings from a number of researchers suggested a lack of awareness or knowledge (in this case, of the LTCCP consultation) is a major barrier to participation (Brackertz, 2007; Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006; Lowndes et al., 2006; Robertson & Rout, 2006). Communication theorists like Rogers (1983) and Windahl et al. (1992) identify awareness-raising as the crucial first step in a communication process. Therefore, identifying how submitters found out about the consultation is an important first step to detect initial barriers and enablers to consultation participation.

The survey results show newspapers and the council LTCCP summary mail-out to be the most successful methods for raising awareness of the consultation (refer to Table 17), with both sources being selected by around 40 percent of submitters. It must be noted that the survey asked broadly only about the 'local newspaper' as a source of information, therefore the notification could have been an advertisement in the public notices, letters to the editor, or news stories produced by the newspaper about consultation issues.

All councils used both the local newspaper and LTCCP summary as communication approaches. The council summary mail-out would have a greater reach into the community than the newspaper, and direct council communications are particularly effective as identified by the Department Communities and Local Government (2006) national research in the United

Kingdom, yet newspaper coverage prior to that release of the summary was found to be equally effective in raising awareness.

Researchers identify the role of mass media in communication campaigns as one of awareness raising and information delivery (Windahl et al., 1992). Mass media activity accounts for notifying just over 45 percent of the submitters and also contributes indirectly through social networks, as would direct communication methods (Eunson, 2008). Nevertheless, the wider de-massification of mass communication channels, as noted by Chaffee and Metzger (2001) and Moloney (2006), threatens the effectiveness of the news media as a channel for councils to communicate to their communities. One would argue the public expectation for greater interactivity (Chandler, 2001; Foley & Duck, 2006) would also contribute to this.

There is a significant body of research noting that the media has a huge influence on public opinion (Chaffee, 1986; Crozier, 2004; Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006; McGregor et al., 2002), and newspapers dominated news media channels as the most effective way to raise awareness of the consultation despite falling readership (ACNielsen, 2011; Allen,2011; The Economist, 2011). McGregor et al. (2002) note that newspapers have historically been the media source most committed to covering local government activity. They warn that falling readership has had a knock-on effect and shrunk newsroom staffing, so newspapers can no longer be regarded as an effective single source of news and information for communities.

While every council was active with media releases throughout the consultation, the overall attention paid to the media, as indicated in the low levels of media monitoring, and the lack of focus on the media as a target audience, indicates that councils' focus in consultation planning has shifted to a greater or lesser extent towards direct communication channels. Chaffee and Metzger (2001) would interpret this as a reflection of the demassification of communication, the loss of control over communication through fragmentation of channels, and the influence of technology. There is further discussion of this observation in Section 6.4.3 which looks at the barriers and enablers to participation. However, the effectiveness of media coverage, particularly

in raising awareness in the early stages of the consultation (as indicated by the submitter survey results) indicates a clearer focus on media as an audience may have been beneficial for councils.

Tracking news coverage is an essential feedback loop for any organisation to assess effectiveness of media relations activity, monitor lobby group activity, and to gather insights into the influence of the news media (Eunson, 2006; Heath, 2001). The typical lack of media scanning by councils would also restrict their ability to respond to community and media discussion in a timely way (Johnstone & Zawawi, 2003).

Around one in five submitters also said they found out about the consultation through social contacts. However, unlike media and direct communications, this channel is noted for its greater influence on a person's attitudes and subsequent behaviours (Bandura, 1986) and it is likely that additional opinions were reinforced or developed in the same contact. The cross-tabulations of first-time submitters (see Appendix M) support this contention showing first-time submitters are more likely to became aware of the consultation through another person (22.2 percent of first-time submitters compared with 15.2 percent of repeat submitters).

This result also corresponds with communication theorists who point to a network approach being effective for sectors in the community that are more difficult to reach through news media and print communications (Brackertz, 2007; Moloney, 2006; Windahl et al., 1992). Rogers' (1983) also notes that 'laggards' and the 'late majority' are more likely to be influenced to take up a new innovation, in this case making a submission, by social contacts.

Advertising, a core communication tactic used by all participating councils (and required in newspapers by legislation), was less successful as an awareness raising tool being noted by under five percent of submitters as the source of their first information about the consultation. This finding aligned with recent research showing that public notices have a low readership (National Newspaper Association, 2010). Nevertheless, public notices do achieve other objectives beyond that of notification, most specifically constituting a public record of local government activity (The Office of the Auditor-General, 1998). Despite this fact, while public notices may have been an effective method of public notification historically, the findings of this project and other

international research (LG Communications, 2011) indicate this does not now appear to be the case. This finding has wider ramifications for council communication, particularly for lower profile consultations (e.g. reviews of bylaws) where public notice advertisements may form a dominant part of notifying communications.

Radio was selected by just under five percent of submitters as their first source of information. This result confirms that new technologies and changing lifestyles are contributing to decreasing listener numbers (ACNielsen, 2011a). Youth audiences in the community have historically had radio as their preferred medium, but this group also follows the trend of dwindling listenership (Stern, 2011). Youth are a target audience for councils and recognised as having typically low levels of participation in local government consultations (Forgie, 2001; Cheyne, 2002; Jordan, 2004). Where radio was previously an effective way to communicate with this group, it must now become increasingly ineffective. Additionally the fragmentation of radio stations is creating a scattered environment that makes wide reach more expensive to achieve (Barton & Shaw, 2001). Again, unfortunately, the survey did not distinguish between news items on the radio or advertisements. Several of the participating councils reported advertising the consultation with radio stations and the results (in line with trends reported by Barton and Shaw, and Stern) show that this advertising money may not have been well spent.

Apart from the direct mail out of the LTCCP summary noted above, the survey results showed the other core council-to- submitter communication channels (i.e. web/online, posters and advertising, and council contact) appeared to be less effective in the notification role. Each channel registered a result of under five percent. Arguably these channels serve to add frequency to the councils' messages as a reinforcing measure (Eunson, 2008), but make a more significant contribution to the information stages of the communication process.

Overall, print channels (either in the media or via direct council communication) proved most effective in raising the awareness levels of those who made submissions. The preference of print communication evident in this research is likely to be linked to the high proportion of older submitters, particularly those over 60, that dominated the respondent sample. The older cohorts

typically prefer print media (Neal, 2002; The Economist, 2011), with that preference clearly evident in the age cross-tabulations (see Appendix H).

Another way to analyse the effectiveness of notification tactics is to analyse the communication activity of council pushing information out to the citizens. Windahl et al. (1992) observed the effectiveness of communication channels that push messages out to receivers. Thus, the submitter surveys revealed a considerable level of passive receipt of information in the early notification stages. Without the councils actively sending out material and going out to the community—the LTCCP summaries being a case in point—consultation awareness levels would likely be much lower. This contention is reinforced by around 16 percent of first-time submitters in this research who reported they were unaware of previous council consultations (see Figure 11). Similarly, a nationwide Department of Internal Affairs (2006) study found that only one in three citizens reported any contact with their local council and only around one in three of the people who reported contact said that they had made a submission. This translates to around 11 percent of the population having been active in making submissions at that time.

While this research is specific to the 2009 LTCCP consultation, it is appropriate to relate these findings to wider consultation practice. The need for councils to be active in pushing out consultation notification is apparent, if for no other reason than the low levels of engagement reported in the Department of Internal Affairs (2006) survey and the impact that local government has on the everyday lives of citizens (Drage J. , 2008; Reid, 2005a). Yet in ordinary consultation, as opposed to consultations conducted under special consultative provisions, the same level of communication with citizens is not required. This inconsistency must surely contribute to perceptions that councils lack transparency. The combination of lack of engagement and lack of awareness of consultation (Department of Internal Affairs, 2006) must in part be the result of the less important consultations being characterised by lower, less effective, levels of active push-type communication by councils. Thus, while councils are concerned with consultation fatigue (Department of Internal Affairs, 2010; Australian Government, 2008), the community felt it was important to have the opportunity to make a submission ((Robertson & Rout, 2006), typically believes that there should be more consultation, yet were unaware of many

of the opportunities (Department of Internal Affairs, 2006). This perception must in part the outcome of less effective communication for lower level consultations.

Lower communication activity rates are also likely to affect the community's perceptions of the transparency and commitment councils have to participative decision-making (Brackertz, 2007). The low levels of awareness by the Department of Internal Affairs (2006) in particular would suggest that notification communication activity is a crucial consideration in consultation practice. It is signalled as such in the Local Government Act 2002, yet the requirement of a public notice in the newspaper as the key notification practice is unlikely to meet the needs of citizens currently, and is certainly less likely to do so in the future.

Information sources

Information sources for submitters once they had found out about the consultation proved to be very different from the awareness-raising channels. The survey results also showed that submitters often got their information from multiple sources (615 responses given by the 452 submitters). The LGA 2002 requires consultation summaries to be produced and the combination of these summaries and council newsletters, both distributed through direct mail, dominated submitters' responses about information channels, with seven in every ten submitters receiving information this way (see Table 17).

Eunson (2008) and Stern (2011) write of the rising use of information pickup via electronic channels and this is reflect both in council practice—all councils had used their websites to present consultation information—and in the levels of use with nearly one in four submitters actively accessing council websites. As the findings of Burke (2004) and Pew Internet (2012) suggest, younger submitters dominated the use of electronic sources of information (see Appendix H).

The research of Smith et al. (2001) on the general demographic characteristics of internet usage in this country suggested a user profile of younger, European, male, educated, with higher incomes. However, while submitters in this research on consultation were more likely to be male, women submitters were found to be more likely to the web for information (see Appendix

G), in contrast with the findings of Smith et al. Nevertheless, with the exception of age and gender, the Smith et al. findings on internet usage are similar to the skewed demographic profile of submitters (e.g. European, educated). This is important because while Smith et al. and this research would support using the internet as a channel to engage younger people, for some of the other groups underrepresented in consultation i.e. those with lower education, or ethnic minorities, the channel would appear to reinforce the over-representation already occurring.

However, internet activity has some strength in terms of Rogers' (1983) adoption process. Website access requires relatively low activation by receivers, but many submitters also showed that they were willing to get active using other channels to gather information, rather than passively receiving the information. These channels e.g. council offices (21 percent), libraries (4 percent), accessing the full LTCCP document (1.5 percent), council meetings (1.1 percent) and hearing from councillors (1.1 percent) would require considerably more effort from citizens. Yet, when combined with websites, active channels of information sourcing were used by more than half of the submitters. This finding showed that submitters were prepared to get active in search of more information once aware of the consultation. It also challenges statements by early commentators on participative decision-making, who criticised submitters for lack of intellectual rigor and effort (Crozier et al., 1975; Schumpeter, 1950, cited in Pallot, n.d.) while supporting later commentators who note the valuable contribution of knowledge and commitment submitters can make to council decisions (Cheyne, 1997; Freeman, 2006; Lowndes, 2004).

It is valid to note that not all sources may have been available to all submitters. For example one in four submitters reported accessing their council's website. While all participating councils have websites, and the interviews confirmed all councils used this channel to present information on the LTCCP, not all submitters had easy access to this service. New Zealand has 85.4 percent of the population with internet access in the home or at work (Internet World Stats, 2011), one of the highest internet penetration rates in the world, but the metropolitan centres dominate this finding. Rural areas have much lower user rates (Statistics New Zealand, 2009), and participating councils in this research like Tasman, Western Bay of Plenty, and Central Hawkes Bay would experience these limitations. Similarly, the option of accessing council offices and staff would also have limitations for rural councils, with potential submitters living in outlying areas finding

it more difficult to access council offices that are more centrally located. Yet both Drage (2008) and Robertson and Rout (2006) reported that New Zealand rural communities have higher engagement levels than urban communities.

In further contrasts, newspapers, which featured highly as a source of consultation notification, were only nominated by 2.7 percent of submitters as a source for information on the 2009 LTCCP consultation (see Table 19). This finding was surprising, as all councils, with the exception of Hutt City, reported considerable paper media activity during the consultation. It is surprising also because theorists note media as a key channel for both notification and information delivery (McGregor et al., 2002; Windahl et al., 1992). However, according to the interviews of staff, coverage varied in accuracy depending on the issue, the council's public relations effort, and the history of the issues discussed in the LTCCP.

Social networks as sources of information also received a similar low result when comparing these as awareness raising measures against information sources. One in five participants become aware of the LTCCP consultation through social networks, but more extensive information sharing through social networks was not reported. Only 6.6 percent of submitters said they received information on the LTCCP from family or a community organisation.

Research confirms that many lobby groups actively target the media, particularly newspapers to promote their cause ((McGregor et al., 2002), so this finding when coupled with the newspaper results calls into question the effect of lobby groups on submitter comment. This research also indicated that lobby groups are not typically used as a source of information, either directly or indirectly. Although the Auditor-General (2007) recognises the role of lobby groups to promote debate on council and community agendas in best practice guidelines, Comrie (1999) earlier noted there is little New Zealand research available to identify the influence of these interests on local government consultation.

6.4.2 Satisfaction Levels with the LTCCP Information

The LGA 2002 requires the LTCCP proposal to include all salient information for citizens to make informed comment during the submission process. Section 82 (1)(a) specifies that the

community should be “provided by the local authority with reasonable access to relevant information in a manner and format that is appropriate to the preferences and needs of those persons”.

The communication requirements in local government consultation are similar to the recommendations of communication theorists (such as Bishop, 2006; Freeman, 2006; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000) who identify access, relevancy, timing and ease of understanding as vital characteristics of effective messages in the communication process. The submitter survey based questions on the legal requirements of consultation to assess communication quality on the basis of the key factors: ease of understanding; adequacy; accessibility; and timing.

Ease of understanding consultation information

Forgie (2001) found that information provided by the council during consultation was one of the strengths of council consultation processes, and most submitters in this research project echoed this finding. However, around one in five respondents still rated consultation information negatively (see Table 29) and cross-tabulations of the responses with demographic data pointed to underlying issues. The cross-tabulation of education levels (see Appendix J) confirmed that those with low levels of education found the consultation information more difficult to understand. Simplification or clarification would likely occur through the use of social networks, as suggested by Chaffee (1986) and Windahl et al. (1992), who had earlier found that those with lower education levels were more likely to rely on interpersonal communication than written communication channels for information.

The negative impact on the potential for participation for those with lower levels of education is further supported by the result on how submitters became aware of the LTCCP, where more than one in three submitters with low levels of education reported finding out about the consultation from another person. The less educated submitters also gave lower ratings to the adequacy of the consultation information provided, feeling less informed than other more educated cohorts.

Brackertz (2007) and Stone (2005) have reported similar issues in Australia. These writers link lower education levels to less active reading habits, and argue it is therefore harder to reach this

group through common written communication channels. British researchers Lowndes and Sullivan (2008), in particular, recognise personal resources (i.e. education, income and civic skills) as strongly influencing participation, but they concede that councils have little influence in the short term over these issues. Communication of LTCCP information, however, can clearly recognise and go some way towards addressing the information needs of less educated citizens. The use of a summary as required by the LGA 2002 for special consultations recognises the complexity of the issues typically being discussed. The summary is therefore required as a bridge to bringing the issues to the community. The use of plain English is recommended to overcome some of these issues, though in more complex issues the subject itself may be the cause of confusion (Bishop, 2006). Barton and Shaw (2001) join Bishop (2006) in also emphasising the need for consultation information to be kept as simple as possible in the wider consultation scenario.

Yet there are tensions in the simplification of information, specifically where citizens may feel the information has been dumbed down, or in some cases omitted (Birch, 2002). This research identified that the information being dumbed down, or inadequate was an issue for some (see Table 29). This perception contributes to the enduring perception of lack of transparency in local government (Pallot, n.d.; Reid, 2002), which in itself was a key influence to the changes brought by in the LGA 2002. It would therefore appear that the act of summarising a complex proposal has the inherent risk of homogenising a document that is trying to cover a wide range of issues. This is the reason why the Audit Office encouraged the 'right debate' approach to ensure that clarity and priority was given to the leading issues in consultation communication (Department of Internal Affairs, 2010).

Adequacy of consultation information

The adequacy of information was a concern for around one in four submitters (see Table 27) who felt that they were inadequately informed to make comment. Information was the second most prevalent theme noted by submitters as an area for improvement later in the survey (see Table 37). Nearly a third of those commenting on consultation information noted concerns about information adequacy and doubts on the transparency of information.

One area commented on was the adequacy of the initial information that went out for consultation and discussion. For some it was too complex and for others too simple. Cheyne (2002) and Nash's (2007) early findings would suggest that the result reflects wide-ranging needs and characteristics of the submitting audience. It is to be expected that the broad array of residents in terms of civic and social experience, education and simple reading and writing capabilities, would translate into a scenario where some citizens would need more support and information than others. Windahl et al. (1992) note this as the likely outcome in many mass communication processes.

6.4.3 Barriers to Making Submissions

Barriers to previous participation

First-time submitters were asked to identify what had held them back from participating earlier. The survey also investigated what communication tactics encouraged submissions by first-time submitters as well as experienced submitters. Correspondingly, identifying the characteristics of first-time submitters provided further data to assess whether submitter profiles are changing. In the findings, Section 5.3.2 discussed the demographic makeup of submitters and importantly revealed that the characteristics of first-timers are trending back towards the national profile. There was no other recent research identified in New Zealand to support this finding, although it was notable that the proportion of first-time submitters was higher in this research than in Forgie (2001) or Jordan's (2004) work.

First-time submitters allowed a unique retrospective view of the barriers that had prevented participation. While the sample of first-time submitters in this research could not be assumed to represent the wider population of non-participating citizens, the sample is useful in identifying the characteristics of those previously non-participating citizens who might be most likely to start to make submissions. Rogers' (1983) defined people in respect of their likelihood to adopt a new 'innovation', describing a continuum of innovators, early adopters, early majority, the late majority and laggards according to their predisposition to change (with innovators being most likely to change and laggards least). In this research project, it is reasonable to project that irrespective of where the first-time submitters were on the bell curve of adoption, the barriers

identified are relevant to communication planning for further change, and that within the context of the consultation, they proved most likely to change. The relevance of this model to the process of consultation lies in the ability for communication efforts to influence citizens. Thus, if the Department of Internal Affairs (2006) results can be relied on, only around 11 percent of all citizens have made a submission. Therefore, in Rogers' model the early adopters and early majority are the target groups councils should look to influence. Importantly, Chaffee (1986) notes the characteristics of early adopters and early majority, saying that they can be influenced by media and direct communications.

Moving from suggesting an approach to encourage change to the message contained in that approach, the leading barrier to participation for nearly one in three first-time submitters was finding the time to make a submission. Australian researcher Brackertz (2007) agrees that time is a major constraint, and identifies the 'time-poor' as a leading group of 'hard to reach' citizens. Lowndes et al. (2006) also notes time as a significant barrier to many, but labels it as a resource for potential submitters, placing time in a wider category of 'resources' alongside education and civic skills.

Research suggests that submitters' time concerns are the result of a number of factors. Citizens may have many activities competing for their time and attention (Eunson, 2008), or they may have a perception that making a submission is an involved, elaborate process that takes time (Jordan, 2004). Consultation topics therefore need to be perceived as a high priority to motivate submissions, or need to be specifically relevant to an audience (Barton & Shaw, 2001).

Clearly letters or report-styled submissions take considerably longer than using a simple survey-like format for making comment. Comparing methods of submission used by first-time submitters to those used by experienced submitters reveals that submission forms are favoured by first-timers (see Appendix M) and therefore appear to encourage their participation. Few first-time submitters made free-form written submissions as compared to repeat submitters (11.2 percent compared with 25.1 percent). First-time submitters also had on average lower education levels, so the submission method findings build towards Lowndes et al.'s (2006) assertions that lower education and civic skills constrain participation. Thus, any action that would lessen the

time a submission might take, or lower the perceived time needed, would therefore act to remove barriers. Referring to Rogers' diffusion of innovation theory (1983), simple clear 'how to' instructions would alleviate time concern, and help distil community interest and focus (Community Empowerment Division, 2006)

Rogers (1983) also notes that implementation information is a vital step in the process to encourage new adopters (in this case, submitters), and the results suggest that this notification information is sometimes lacking. One in four first-time submitters said that their lack of confidence or their knowledge about how to make a submission had prevented them from participating in the past. Implementation knowledge is therefore an important requirement for councils to factor into their consultation programmes to encourage participation, as Windahl et al. (1992) contend it is a stage often omitted by communication managers.

In the case of the 2009 LTCCP consultation, the provision of the submission form with the summary document in direct mail appears to have been effective in lessening the issue of lack of knowledge about making a submission. The summary document was also required by New Zealand Audit to include explanation of the consultation process and channels for making a submission. Details of the different submission methods available or the direct provision of the submission form (as used by 70 percent of all submitters) was designed to help citizens who felt unsure how to make a submission. Chaffee (1986) also states that notifications and newspaper stories in the news media are typically useful for awareness and information, but the content is unlikely to act to address 'how to' concerns. The direct-mail summary can be seen as addressing these 'how to' concerns.

One in five first-time submitters had been aware of council consultations prior to making their first submission, but said they had not been sufficiently interested. Therefore this group, up until the time they made their first submission, would appear to represent some of the three quarters of all citizens that Robertson and Rout's (2006) research identified as having little or no involvement with council. Rogers (1983) would suggest these submitters are in the 'influence' stage of communication, where awareness and information provision has occurred, but where information priority and relevancy has not been clarified. Networks and social contacts are

important in the influencing stage (Brackertz, 2007; Ministry of Social Development, 2008). Of note at this point in the discussion is the exemplary work of the Tasman District Council in producing the 'Seventeen Settlement' LTCCP summary documents. These summaries, with content tailored to reflect the proposals for each specific settlement, were an effort to improve citizens' perception of the relevance of the LTCCP and a subsequent wide knowledge of the issues as demonstrated by submitters' comments was noted in the Tasman staff member's interview. Barton and Shaw (2001) would suggest the 'Seventeen Settlement' summaries would have acted to reduce the complexity of the consultation information, making the LTCCP topics local and therefore relevant.

The smaller proportion (one in seven) of first-time submitters who reported being unaware of council consultations before they made their first submission was discussed in the section on information awareness (see Section 6.4.1). Additionally, previous research had suggested cynicism and distrust of the process is a significant barrier to participation (Cheyne, 2002; Halseth & Booth, 2003; Nash, 2007), with some theorists distilling the problem to one of power differentials and the perceived likelihood of the potential to influence decision-making (Arnstein, 1969; Kweit & Kweit, 2007; Oliver, 2000). While cynicism and distrust did surface in comments by submitters throughout the survey, first-time submitters did not note this as a major barrier to their participation, although it is acknowledged that a 'cynicism or distrust' option was not given directly to first-time submitters in question 3a. However, six first-time submitters did note the concern through the 'other' option.

First-time submitters – reasons for participating for the first-time

While the barriers to making a submission were typically process-orientated (shortage of time, not understanding how to submit, or being unaware of consultation opportunities), when it came time to get stirred into action, three out of five first-time submitters were motivated by a specific issue or concern (e.g. recycling, dog bylaws, aquatics centre, or pensioner housing). First-time submitters were less likely to comment on general topics e.g. the environment or economy (see Table 22). The issue submitted on appeared to be more motivating if there was direct relevance to the submitters' interest. Relevance of the subject links directly back to the legislative

requirement of identifying target audiences that might be affected by, or have an interest in the LTCCP proposal content.

However, two out of five first-time submitters were motivated to take part by drivers that were not related to specific issues, including broad philosophical grounds of citizenship and participation, and 'rules of use' reasons noted by Lowndes et al. (2006). Almost half this group (18 percent of all first-time submitters) said they wanted to exercise their democratic right to comment or have a voice. Pallot (n.d.) argues that liberty is an essential outcome of participative decision-making and many other researchers attest to the importance citizens attach to having the right to 'have a say' (Birch, 2002; Hirst, 1990; Lowndes & Sullivan, 2008; Nash, 2007; Robertson & Rout, 2006). Having a democratic voice is clearly important to people, but on its own does not fully explain the change from non-participation to taking part.

There was a sizeable group of submitters commenting that they had the 'opportunity'. These comments point to a perception that they had not had the opportunity previously, perhaps linking to prior perceptions of not having enough time or alternatively perhaps not being aware of council consultations. The earlier discussion pointed to the success of the summary and form mail-outs as lessening time concerns, potential changes in the submitters circumstances, or at the very least that the submitters had become aware with the increased efforts by council. This result supports that conclusion.

A general theme of dissatisfaction pervaded the responses of those who were not motivated by specific issues. Seven percent of first-time submitters spoke outright of their disappointment with their council's general performance and noted this as the reason for their participation. While this finding aligned in an overall sense with Robertson and Rout's (2006) findings on general satisfaction with local government, it did not fully explain why a first-time submitter would make the change and participate for the first time. An additional analysis of the levels of emotion expressed in the first-time submitter responses was conducted[1] – on the basis that previous non-

[1] The analysis coded comments on the basis of the level of emotion apparent. There were three categories: Highly emotional = overt anger or disappointment evident in the words used in the comment; Some emotion= some levels of disappointment and emotion expressed; Reasoned interest = a more cerebral and intellectual interest shown.

submitters (particularly those groups reporting no time and those not interested) may have become so dissatisfied that their levels of dissatisfaction outweighed other previous barriers that had prevented participation.

Close to one in five first-time submitters appeared highly emotional in their response to the question on motivations for submitting. Another 38 percent had some emotion in their response indicating the submission was made at least partly as an emotional response to the proposal. However, the balance (37.4 percent) of submitters' appeared to be intellectually engaged but not emotional. These findings indicate that dissatisfaction levels do contribute to motivate over half all first-time submitters, and the finding further supports the comments of council staff in the interviews and Department of Internal Affairs (2010) comments that higher submission levels are often driven by controversial issues.

6.4.4 What Communication Tactics Supported Participation?

Pre-consultation

In general, the staff interviews revealed the councils dedicated considerable time and resource to the LTCCP consultation. For many councils pre-consultation activity extended the communication programme on LTCCP subjects out to over a year in length. Pre-consultation activity is not required by legislation, but it was nevertheless often a lengthy, resource-consuming process. Communication tactics in pre-consultation were varied but predominantly focussed on interpersonal, and group communications, that fostered dialogue (Burke, 2004; Comrie, 1999; Freeman, 2006) e.g. expos, meetings/presentations, and speaker series.

Research suggests a number of outcomes result from pre-consultation activity. The rich interactive communications would raise awareness of council consultations – an issue identified by the Department of Internal Affairs research (2006) and Local Government New Zealand research (Robertson & Rout, 2006). Pre-consultation activities would also serve to strengthen council/community relationships, and in doing so encourage participation as noted by leading theorists Lowndes et al. (2006) and Pratchett (2004). Freeman (2006) and Stone (2005) particularly emphasise that communication activity to enhance citizen understanding of the

complex issues in most council strategies or plans takes time and requires a cumulative multi-faceted approach.

Heath (2001) and Moloney (2006) support pre-consultation activities as a means of raising the consultation issues in the public and media agenda. While there was no New Zealand research found that quantitatively measured the influence of media coverage on consultation participation, theorists agree on general impacts of media coverage. At the very least, pre-consultation improves the frequency of message, an important consideration in awareness raising activities as noted by Eunson (2008), and pre-consultation can also provide an array of contexts and channels for delivering the message in different ways (Foulger, 2004). Pre-consultation also presents the opportunity to network with minority groups and agencies in a timely, effective way to allow for their contribution (Brackertz, 2007; Zwart et al., 2005). Windahl et al. (1992), Pattie et al. (2004) and Pratchett (2004) are some of the researchers who suggest the use of interpersonal and group activities in pre-consultation is an effective activity to access community networks to raise awareness and interest in the consultation, and Windahl et al. suggests using opinion leaders to engage stakeholder groups.

The submitter survey, however, appears to contradict the assumption made by researchers about the efficacy of pre-consultation as an approach to enable and encourage submissions. The submitter responses to the questions on notification sources (raising awareness) and information sources once they were aware of the consultation made very little mention of additional information activity outside the media, the council summaries and newsletters and the council website.

Similarly, mentions of pre-consultation activity did not show through in the open-ended questions for comments on the strengths or weaknesses of consultation practice (see Table 38). Thus, while the pre-consultation activities should be a richer, positive communication experience (as outlined by Brackertz, 2007; Eunson, 2008; Pattie et al., 2004; Pratchett, 2004; and Windahl et al., 1992), it seems that a significant contribution of pre-consultation activity to encourage representative feedback from the community is not apparent.

Length of consultation

Four of the councils chose to extend the time allocated to the consultation period to longer that the one calendar month required by the LGA 2002 for special consultative processes. Representatives from these councils explained that this was primarily to give community groups extra time, and that they felt the legislation was just a baseline requirement and recognised some target groups have special needs. The length of consultation is often a contested dynamic of the process (Local Government Commission, 2002) and guidelines released by governments and agencies are unanimous that consultations should allow enough time for potential participants to become aware, gather information and develop a submission (Australian Government, 2008; British Government, 2008; Gramberge, 2001). The additional time is especially important to enable community groups and iwi to effectively contribute. Community groups report a growing consultation burden and they have meeting cycles which sometimes require longer than the statutory month (Comrie, 1999).

Staff from those councils that did not extend the consultation period noted that they felt their pre-consultation activity had, at the very least, alerted the community. They felt stakeholders knew well in advance of the upcoming consultation, and this knowledge allowed them adequate time to prepare.

From the perspective of the submitters involved in this study, the amount of time given to make a submission was the factor in the consultation process that they rated most highly for satisfaction. Nevertheless, there may still be an opportunity for councils to make an improvement by extending the time allowed for consultation because ultimately there were around one in seven submitters who felt negatively about the time allowed.

Importantly, businesses and community organisations make up a disproportionately high level of submitters dissatisfied with the time allowed for consultation (see Appendix N). Businesses and community organisations are more likely to make their own written submissions, and need to access additional information (the results show that businesses and community organisations made proportionately more visits to council offices for additional information (also shown in appendix N). Many community organisations and boards only meet monthly, which would

suggest the month turnaround for submissions is inadequate or difficult for them to meet depending on when the meeting cycle occurs (Comrie, 1999; Freeman, 2006).

Lowndes et al. (2006) ‘rules of use’ rationale recommends councils should focus on process considerations, like the length of time allowed for consultation. This recommendation is made particularly because process considerations are within the control of councils, as opposed to the more general influences of education influences, income and the longer-term influences of social capital. This consideration also has a strong case because of the importance to councils of good dialogue and relationships with business and community organisations (Freeman, 2006; Reid, 2002).

Submission methods and channels

The communication channels used to raise awareness and provide information have been discussed in earlier sections (see Section 6.4.1) from both the submitters’ or users’ perspective, in terms of success, and the perspective of council staff, in terms of tactics employed. This section will focus on the feedback and dialogue during the consultation process. Windahl et al. (1992) describes implementation and information systems as of utmost importance. Three sections in the submitter survey gathered information on the methods for making a submission. There was a quantitative analysis of the submission methods used a free text question asking submitters if they would have preferred alternative ways of making a submission (see Table 26), and a scalar question on the adequacy of the submission form provided by council (see Table 25). In addition, some submitters also chose to discuss this area of the submission experience when responding to questions on the opportunities for improvement (see Table 37) and when commenting on the successful components of the consultation (see Table 38).

The survey revealed a strong preference for print submission methods with three out of four submitters making hard copy submissions (see table 16). Although the research of Bachman et al. (2011) and Smith et al. (2011) shows that the use of electronic channels of communication is undoubtedly growing, it is interesting to note that technology played a relatively small part in the consultation process for the 2009 LTCCP. Only 13 percent of submitters participating used council website forms, with a further 7.4 percent using email. No submitters in this research

identified using a text to make or submission, or suggested this channel or method of submission. However, Jordan (2004) had investigated the potential of the telephone text-messaging channel and revealed support from younger citizens, but a lack of interest and some levels of disapproval from councillors and management.

Electronic channels barely registered as sources for participating submitters becoming aware of the LTCCP consultation, with only 3.3 percent of submitters reporting this as a source. For information sources once awareness was raised, however, council websites were used by nearly one in four submitters. The additional 13 percent of submitters using the council website to make a submission show websites are now being used as an interactive channel for communication from citizen to council, rather than predominantly as an information source as has occurred in the recent past (Jordan, 2004; Queensland Government, 2011). This finding is a leading trend noted in other research on council consultation and dialogue.

Other submission channels were investigated in the survey to identify potential opportunities to remove barriers for participation, but the question asking whether participants would like to use texts to submit elicited only a low response with 13 percent answering (see Table 26). This finding indicated that the majority of submitters found the channels currently offered for making a submission were satisfactory. Only a small group of eleven submitters commented that they wanted “face to face” submissions, seemingly desiring a richer communication environment and immediate feedback loop with face to face delivery suggested by Himstreet and Baty (1984) as the most effective in their categories of communication. This suggestion also infers the desire for a closer communication relationship between parties, both physically and possibly psychologically. Bruning and Ledingham (1999) suggest that relationship quality of council and the community is affected by measures of trust, openness, involvement, investments, and commitment.

Similarly, Hon and Grunig’s (1999) measures of the effectiveness of organisation-public relationships used five dimensions: trust, satisfaction, commitment, communal relationship, and exchange relationship. Hon and Grunig (1999) defined public relations theory as encompassing

both communication-based relationships (which are symbolic), and behavioural relationships (which are based on actions and events).

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The results on submission channels reflect the influence of council generated communication channels, especially the council tick-box submission forms. A question arising from this finding is how many of the submitters would have participated if the forms had not been directly available (either paper or online), as is the case in many council consultations. Few consultations receive the levels of support and resource of the LTCCP, which enables the Council to send out a summary and submission form to the community. Therefore, when looking at consultation practices in general, the variable levels of communication and encouragement directed at lower level consultations would be likely to contribute to the community's poor perception of council's decision-making and lack of transparency (Robertson & Rout, 2006).

All councils in this research project supported participation by providing formatted submission forms. Council-provided submission forms, either electronic or paper based made up close to two thirds of all submissions. In comparison, free-form written submissions by letter or email made up just over one in four submitters. Audit New Zealand findings on council-provided submission forms investigated the content/subject matter of submissions, but made no comment on the impact these forms had on encouraging participation (Department of Internal Affairs, 2010). However, the findings of this study strongly point to formatted submission forms—whether paper or electronic—having the capability to remove barriers to participation for citizens. The finding supports the recommendations of Cook (2006), Freeman (2006) and Lowndes et al. (2006) to adapt processes to lessen the level of civic skills required to participate. Additionally, formatted forms from other sources would appear to provide a time-saving approach for submitters, though lobby group forms were mentioned by only a small number of submitters (3.7 percent) as their method for making a submission.

Cook (2006) suggested that submissions forms should target key issues for discussions, very much like the recommendation of Audit New Zealand for the right debate. Cook suggested that submitters should be asked about priorities, preferences and issues, rather than solutions. This

approach should therefore deliver useful, targeted information to councillors, and the more specific focus is easier for submitters to respond to.

Submission forms, like any questionnaire, must be flexible enough to cater for any comments if they are to remove the barriers for participation (Malhotra, 1999). Submitters using the council supplied submission forms were asked to rate the adequacy of the submission form. While there was a reasonable overall satisfaction level indicated with around 63 percent feeling positively about the forms, there was still one in seven submitters who expressed dissatisfaction to a great or lesser extent with the form. This perception was interesting because the use of formatted submission forms was not required, and submission forms allow comment on any subject (the forms are the subject of a pre-consultation review by Audit New Zealand).

Additionally comments responding to the question on potential improvements in the process indicated that some submitters had a perception that the submission form constrained comment. The Audit New Zealand LTCCP investigation observed that submitters using the forms did generally limit their comments to the areas asked for (Department of Internal Affairs, 2010). The forms allows more effective analysis for councillor consideration, and they attempt to remove or lessen some of the barriers noted by first-time submitters, yet these very strengths are perceived by other submitters as controlling and manipulative (Nash, 2007). Foley and Duck (2006) provide further explanation suggesting that forms can be perceived as a high level of control in a relationship, not as assistance in participation.

The opportunity to speak at the hearings

Almost one-third of all submitters chose to speak in front of their councils as part of their submission. Forgie (2001) had earlier found that the experience of speaking appeared to positively influence overall satisfaction levels, but in this research the speakers reported the same satisfaction levels with the consultation experience as those submitters who chose not to speak.

A cross-tabulation between speakers and non-speakers (see Appendix L) revealed little difference in the ages of both groups. Most speakers were men as suggested in earlier research

by Nash (2007) and Drage (2001), with the impact of this representation further supporting a likely engineering, physical infrastructure council agenda.

A relatively high proportion of speakers represented community interests, although the levels had decreased from Forgie's (2001) findings. In this research, a higher proportion of submitters were addressing individual interests, a trend noted by Nash (2007) in his discussion on the now prevalent culture of individualism. Forgie had earlier explained the higher proportion of speakers representing community groups as reflecting those in positions where civic skills were a requirement, and Lowndes et al. (2006) would strongly support this comment as they believe that low civic skills are as a major barrier to participation.

Submitter perceptions of the interpersonal experience of interacting with council showed the experience was generally a positive one with high ratings for the welcome speakers received from their councils. This finding appeared to reflect improvement in the general approach of councils to the hearings because Forgie (2001) had earlier identified the hearings as a major opportunity for improvement. In contrast, this study reflects reasonable satisfaction levels.

However, while there was reasonable with the experience of the hearings, issues with hearing scheduling surprisingly accounted for a significant volume of the process suggestions for overall improvements (see Table 37). Concerns about councillor responsiveness, the timing of the hearings, and the time allocated to speakers were typical issues, and this area is one for careful consideration by councils. As Lowndes et al. (2006) note in their discussion on 'rules of use' in council consultation, the process of consultation is full of barriers outside council control, therefore the consultation hearings appear to present an immediately achievable opportunity for process improvement.

Seventy one percent of submitters in this research project chose not to speak at the submission hearings, with half this group noting they were satisfied that their written submission adequately expressed their opinion. The balance of reasons revealed a mixture of resource, rules of use and relationships reasons as suggested by Lowndes et al. (2006). Having the time to attend was a barrier for around one in five non-speaking submitters, and the timing of the hearings another. A

similar proportion reported not feeling confident enough to speak in the hearings, while one in ten submitters were unsure of the process. Of the latter two barriers, civic skills are clearly proven to be a major barrier to potential participants. Physically, the interaction between council and submitters in the hearings is a rich communications context, although the formal setting clearly presents the psychological power differential with the council (Oliver, 2000), and this was a leading reason why many submitters chose not to speak.

An additional theme of submitters doubting their personal ability to influence the council was found when analysing open-ended responses of participants. Submitters commented that they felt the council had already made up its mind. The comments paralleled some of the sentiments expressed by those who spoke to their submissions. Importantly, in both cases the perception was unprompted, indicating that it was a strong and consistent concern and one uninfluenced by suggestions of choice option (Malhotra, 1999). This perception would seem to be in line with the earlier Local Government findings of Robertson and Rout (2006) where people expressed doubts that councillors made decisions in the best interests of the community and often had the feeling that council decisions were ineffective.

6.4.5 Conclusion

The discussion on the communication processes and interaction favoured by participating councils showed that the emphasis for council consultation planning appeared to be on the awareness and information aspects of the communication process. While these areas met with reasonable satisfaction from submitters, in terms of effectiveness, the public notice approach to notifying the community may not be effective (although it is noted that the submitters may have categorised a public notice as local newspaper rather than advertising in their option selection). Radio advertising and radio activity and general achieved little cut-through. These findings will prompt a rethink of resource allocation by New Zealand councils, as suggested by LG Communications (2011) in Britain.

The findings confirmed what research had previously found, that first-time submitters, particularly those with low education levels were more likely to be influenced by social contacts into making a submission. First-time submitters said that lack of time and lack of ‘how to’

information were the leading barriers stopping them from submitting in the past. These findings were particularly useful as Lowndes et al. (2006) attest the ‘rules of use’ while less influential than resources (e.g. education and time), are at least more able to be controlled and improved by councils.

Schedule timing was a main reason why some non-speakers did not present to the council. However, (unlike the findings from Forgie (2001), the speaking experience did not appear to link to increased feeling of satisfaction for while speakers in the survey. While they felt they had a better chance to influence the decision, they recorded the same levels of satisfaction as those that did not speak.

6.5 Consultation Outcomes

6.5.1 Submitters' Perceptions of Influence and Councils' Decisions

The final set of scales asked for submitters’ perceptions of their influence on the council decisions (see Table 34). The results revealed that submitters were considerably less satisfied with their chance to influence council policy and with council decision-making, than they were with the consultation process itself and their experiences of council interaction.

The average ratings of responses to the statements “you had a chance to influence the council’s decision” and “the final decision made by council showed they listened to submitters” fell for the first and only time in the research to mean scores below a neutral rating. Additionally, the measures of variability showed that the issues of influence and council decision-making had a polarising effect with a wide spread of ratings.

On the subject of influencing decisions, Forgie (2001) in her early research on annual plan consultation revealed that two thirds of submitters felt council attached ‘some’ importance to submissions with over two thirds saying ‘some. In this research, submitters were split three ways; just under a third felt they had no influence, just over a third felt they did and one in three didn’t know. By contrast, findings from Britain on the subject of influence were less positive,

with two thirds of submitters feeling their submissions had no influence (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006).

In this research, submitters felt more negatively about the statement that the final decisions showed councils had listened to submitters than the statement on the chance to influence. This result appears to reveal that submitters doubted that councils were committed to process of consultation. The concern that decisions made by council are predetermined emerged with this issue making up almost a third of all the comments on the decision process. Thus, while the LGA 2002 is specific that council's must enter any consultation with an open mind (refer to LGA 2002 Section 82 (1)(e)), it is clear from the weight of submitter comment that this remains an issue. This finding was supported by previous research in the local government context by Cheyne (2002), Forgie (2001) and Nash (2007).

The Audit Office conducted a review of the 2009 LTCCP decisions (2010) and found that there were often relatively major changes noted between the draft and final LTCCP. However, the Audit Office report stopped short of saying these changes were as a result of consultation, saying only that they possibly were. While changes were made, the Audit New Zealand finding did also note that significant changes to the projected financial figures were not typically made. Therefore the consultation process resulted in outcomes that in the main adjusted the timing of projects, or made minor deletions or additions. Some examples from the report directly relevant to the participating councils in this research include:

- reinstating operational spending in areas such as pest control (e.g. Horizons Regional Council;
- deferring decisions on some projects (e.g. Whakatane District).
- deciding to undertake further studies or develop strategies to address points raised by submissions (e.g. Hauraki District);
- extending time frames for the introduction of major funding changes to give more time for adjustment (e.g. Horizons Regional Council);

So, while submitters were divided over their perceptions of influence, the councils were shown by the Audit report to have changed the LTCCP proposal after the consultation process. This comparison suggests that the feedback loop to contextualise submitter comment and outline or explain the final decision is not fully effective. Presumably, if feedback had been effective the changes made by councils as a result of submissions would have been evident to submitters. Forgie (2001) also recommended that feedback on the final decisions was important, both specifically to submitters and to the wider public. The British Government consultation guidelines (2008) give particular emphasis to communicating the changes to proposals made as a result of consultation. Nash (2007) notes the same emphasis is not given in New Zealand guidelines. Thus, while notifying letters to submitters are requirements of the LGA 2002, the legislation stops short of being specific on the content except to say that submitters should be provided with information on, and the reasoning behind, the final decisions. A description of the wider body of submitter comment and the actual changes made as a result of consultation, as required by the British consultation guidelines (2008) is not specified or required. Submitters confirmed clear contextualised feedback as a priority for improving consultation. One submitter summed the requirement up succinctly requesting "a summary of submissions saying this is what people said, how many of them said it, and what was the final decision explaining how council took on board submitter views".

Other researchers have identified difficulties with integrating community agendas into decision-making as the reason for low satisfaction levels with decision-making. Nash's 2007 thesis dealt specifically with the issue and he attributed problems with consultation outcomes at least partially to lack of guidelines for making decisions, and for managing the expectations of the community in consultations. Halseth and Booth (2003) contend that the levels of disappointment in decision-making also arise from the variety of expectations that groups and individuals take into the consultation process. Quite apart from submitters having different ideas of ideal consultation outcomes, they also have different views of participation (Arnstein, 1969; Cheyne, 1997). When the consultation result varies from their expectations, it is natural that submitters are disappointed. Therefore, careful management of submitters' or citizens' expectation of consultation outcomes appears to be an important contributor to their overall satisfaction levels. Additionally, comprehensive communication of the same information to the wider public

reinforces the commitment of council to the process and the integrity of the participative approach (Barton & Shaw, 2001; Forgie, 2001)

Using the framework of justice ethics, submitters' perceptions of consultation fairness can be regarded as being influenced by process, interactions, and outcomes (Beauchamp & Bowie, 1997). Forgie's (2001) recommendations for improvement in consultation practices noted three areas for consultation improvement: advice of the outcome; fostering a positive attitude to consultation; and improving the speakers' experience. The feedback letter and subsequent stories to reflect consultations contribution to the final decisions were suggestions on how the outcome might be advised. Forgie noted that fostering a positive attitude to consultation could be achieved by showing that consultation is entered into with an open mind, and making changes as a result of submitter comment. A positive experience of the interaction between council and the submitter was suggested to improve the speaker/hearing experience. The results of this 2009 LTCCP consultation research indicate that speakers were more likely to think they could influence the council's decision, but unlike Forgie's findings, speakers reported the same overall satisfaction levels as non-speakers.

Influence is assessed during interactions, feedback, and the subsequent decisions made (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999). While the findings (particularly in the first-time submitters responses) and research confirmed the concept of 'having a say' was in itself an important expression of liberty (Pallot, n.d.; Robertson & Rout, 2006), the desire to participate in decision-making must also extend to having an influence and at least perceiving acknowledgement of one's contribution (Forgie, 2001).

6.5.2 Council Community Relationships

The submitter survey results, despite uncovering relatively negative perceptions of influence and council decision-making, did confirm that 63 percent of submitters felt positive about taking part in the consultation process. Forgie's (2001) earlier research had asked if submitters felt that their participation had been worthwhile, and had revealed 88 percent of submitters felt their submission was of at least some value. Because of different scales and wording the results cannot

be compared directly, although both generally reinforce the findings of Robertson and Rout (2006) that the opportunity to participate is given high importance by most citizens.

This overall perception of participation, and the integrity of consultation processes and outcomes, has an impact on on-going council community relationships (Freeman, 2006; Nash, 2007). Overall, council staff in the interviews reported cautiously positive relationships with their community. There was, however, a split between those reporting good relationships, which they attributed to their council's responsiveness, and those who perceived the relationship between their council and community to be more volatile, depending on council decisions.

Those who reported good relationships gave examples of actions that encouraged these relationships, including making changes in response to feedback, getting out to meetings and events, admitting to mistakes, and encouraging dialogue with citizens (e.g. the Mayor having an open door policy). These activities closely align to theories of social capital that suggest "patterns of formal and informal sociability build up relations of trust and reciprocity" (Lowndes et al., 2006, p. 541). Lowndes et al. described a virtuous cycle to explain the strengthening nature of social capital. Here, positive interrelationships are self-reinforcing and accumulate over time to ultimately become part of the culture of an area. However, Putman (1993) suggests that the virtuous cycle can also act in reverse with long-term destructive cycles where behaviours and poor relationships breed doubt, distrust, dissent and stagnation.

A core contention of social capital theory is that positive or negative relationships develop over a long period of time. The councils that reported positive relationships did not specify the length of time they had enjoyed these relationships, but there was a strong indication in their responses that consistency in council decisions had helped build the perceived trust. A number of factors contribute to consistency, including continuity of personnel (both management and politicians), where over time a clear, shared set of expectations is developed (Community Empowerment Division, 2006; Stone, 2005). Putman (1993) argues that social capital builds over a long period of time and, such is the scale of time required, there is very little that can change relationships in the short term. This observation is particularly relevant when considering the significant changes

councils can undergo each triennial cycle (Gramberge, 2001). However, each action and interaction, adds cumulatively to the overall council community relationship.

With relational patterns purportedly developing over many years, it is interesting to consider them in light of the LGNZ findings on citizens' perceptions of local government (Robertson & Rout, 2006). Robertson and Rout's findings bring social capital considerations into the current New Zealand context, exposing a vein of distrust in communities that express doubts that councillors could be relied on to make the best decisions. Half those surveyed reported feeling neutral or negative about councillors' decision-making. Linked to doubts about decision-making, over half the submitters said councils waste money on unnecessary things. This scale of questioning the integrity and priorities of councillors must surely translate into potentially volatile relationships. Similar findings were reported in British local government research (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006) and where councils have not had a history of making good decisions, the theories on social capital would suggest that community trust and reciprocity would take a long time to rebuild (Lowndes et al., 2006).

It is also worth revisiting the earlier discussion on submission levels to consider whether a good relationship with the community translates into high participation levels during consultation. 'Bureaucracy' was mentioned specifically by one staff member as a barrier to a good relationship with the community. Lowndes et al. (2006) label 'rules of use' as the bureaucratic consultation processes that support or hinder citizen participation. Similarly, ethics theorists Beauchamp and Bowie (1997) identify interaction or relationships as one of three ways citizens' judge fairness in any process experienced.

It is hard to separate the evaluation of relationships from participation levels in consultation. Yet, though connected, the two considerations are not the same thing. High levels of participation do not necessarily mean a positive relationship, rather a culture of participation, supporting communication processes, and shared expectations do (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). However, controversial proposals may galvanise people into participation as discussed Section 6.3.1, and suggested by research from the Department of Internal Affairs (2010). Also, as Lowndes et al. (2006) note, while participation levels are influenced by social capital, the influence of the

resources available to the submitters (e.g. income, time, civic skills) and the ‘rules of use’ that govern participation in the consultation process are stronger.

As an overall generalisation, repeat submitters in this research tended to have lower overall satisfaction levels than first-time submitters, and the vast majority of those participating in the LTCCP consultation were making submissions against their council’s proposals. While the latter comment is to be expected ((Department of Internal Affairs, 2010), the lower satisfaction levels may also align to enduring perceptions of lack of influence, and the consultation process seemingly reinforcing these perceptions, rather than taking the opportunity to clearly and directly to submitters the decisions, the impact of submissions and the reasons for the decisions.

6.5.3 Conclusion

The subject of consultation outcomes, the potential to influence decisions, revealed an area in the consultation process that was least satisfying for submitters in the survey. The results indicated that there was general doubt that they had had an influence on the council’s final decisions. Yet the Department of Internal Affairs (2010) audits indicated that changes had been made by councils after the consultation, and many changes listed were from within the ranks of the participating councils. This indicates that feedback mechanisms, both to the community and to submitters, appear to have failed to effectively communicate what submitters said, what the decisions were, and why those decisions were made. Writings from sources as widespread as public relations, policy and ethics agree that satisfaction is influenced by interaction, process and outcome. The survey results gave a clear indication that the outcome of the consultation – i.e. the final decisions made, was perceived as unsatisfactory by many submitters. Communication of the outcome must therefore be a priority focus in order to improve satisfaction levels of submitters, and the wider community.

Section 6.5 discussed consultation outcomes and submitters’ perception of their influence and the final decision made by council. It was the final area of the research project to be discussed and the thesis now progresses to the final chapter of conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER SEVEN – CONCLUSION

Increasing numbers of New Zealand citizens expect to be able to participate in local government decision-making (Department of Internal Affairs, 2006; Robertson & Rout, 2006). Theorists and researchers also support participative decision-making, and say that participative processes can support decision-making to adequately reflect the increasing community diversity (Cheyne, 1997; Freeman, 2006; Lowndes, 2004; Pallot, n.d; Pattie et al., 2004). Yet, while public participation in council decision-making was first legislated for in 1989, it has only been in the recent LGA 2002 amendments that consultation has become a wider requirement of the significant decisions councils must make (Reid, 2005b).

As a result of the LGA 2002 and the requirements of other legislation pertaining to council services, councils must now commit substantial resources to consultation practices (Barton & Shaw, 2001; Birch, 2002; Burke, 2004; Cheyne, 2002; Forgie, 2001). Accordingly the cost of consultation to councils, coupled with the need to meet legislative requirements and public expectations, means the importance of designing and implementing an effective consultation process continues to rise (Cook, 2006; Hawkes, 2006; Reid, 2005a). All the while, the consultation process must be effective in delivering strong representative comment that councillors can feel confident they can factor into their final considerations and decisions (Carson, 2008; Cheyne, 1997; Department of Internal Affairs, 2010; Richardson & Winefield, 2007).

This final chapter opens with a brief summary of the project findings in relation to the research questions. Consideration of the research limitations follows, before the conclusions and recommendations are presented. The chapter closes with suggestions for further research and concluding comments.

It must be noted that the study focused on the 2009 LTCCP consultation and while the recommendations of this research may be applicable to wider council consultation practice, the

following conclusions are specific to the participating councils, their constituencies, and the communication practices employed for the 2009 LTCCP consultation process.

7.1 Summary of Research Findings

This research project had the aim of assessing how well ten councils from across New Zealand fulfilled their purpose to "enable democratic decision-making and action, by and on behalf of communities" as outlined in the LGA 2002. Four research sub-questions were used to answer the overall aim. The questions and related findings are as follows:

1. From the perspective of council staff, how did councils encourage participation in the 2009 LTCCP consultation?

Interviews of staff leading the consultation process in participating councils revealed a keen desire and commitment to involve local communities in dialogue about their short and long-term futures. Councils also displayed considerable innovation and effort in their consultation activities with a wide variety of tactics employed. However, there were seven core communication activities favoured by all: advertising, media releases and media activity, posters and displays, a printed summary, email contacts, meetings with stakeholder groups, and website information. The core consultation activities, with the exception of meetings with stakeholders were largely asymmetric in nature. However, all councils also employed a variety of other richer channels and methods to engage their publics. Social media was not at that time employed in the communication programmes of the participating councils.

2. Who were the submitters in the 2009 council LTCCP consultation and what were the submissions about?

A survey of submitters revealed that their demographic characteristics varied significantly from the general national population with the sample skewing towards older, more highly educated, European, and male citizens. Sole person and couple-only households also dominated the sample. However, this research project found that submitters' profiles deviated very little from national income profiles, in contrast to prior findings of Lowndes et al. (2006). The survey also

revealed a higher number of first-time submitters (41.8 percent) than previous New Zealand research (Forgie, 2001; Jordan, 2004).

Submitters in this research typically commented on multiple issues, covering a broad range of concerns. The breadth of topics indicated a wide understanding and interest in council services, and the volume of attention directed at the newer, less localised council services (e.g. the environment and business economy) was surprising as Robertson and Rout (2006) had earlier found that the wider role of local government was not well understood. This was explained, at least partly, by proportionately higher numbers of educated submitters. There was also strong evidence that the 'right debate' approach used by councils to emphasise and direct submitter comment to high priority issues was effective.

3. What are the barriers and enablers to participation in the LTCCP consultation as perceived by submitters?

First-time submitters in this project confirmed that they had not participated in prior council consultations primarily because of time constraints. Being unsure of the submission process and being not interested were the other leading reasons for non-participation. This finding contrasted with the wider Department of Internal Affairs (2007) research that identified lack of interest and lack of awareness were leading barriers to participation. In terms of what drove submitters to participate, the survey showed they were likely to be motivated by an issue, although one in five said it was important for them to have their say.

4. From the perspective of submitters, what would make consultation better for citizens?

Submitters, in general, were largely satisfied with their experience of consultation. However, the least satisfying part of the consultation process was the final decisions made by council. Submitters often doubted their chance to influence their council's decisions, either as individuals or as submitters in general. Many submitters felt councils did not 'listen' and this fed into a perception that decisions were predetermined. Yet the Department of Internal Affairs (2010) audit indicated that the participating councils did make changes post consultation. The poor perceptions of consultation outcomes were also linked to feedback, another major area noted for improvement. Feedback letters at the end of the process were criticised for timing issues, and

failing to explain the decisions in a way that was relevant to the submitters' interests. The speaker hearings also attracted a high proportion of the suggestions for process improvements, with dissatisfaction largely focussing on the scheduling of hearings and speaker availability.

7.2 Limitations of the Study

Recruitment of participating councils

While all local government authorities (i.e. regional, territorial and unitary bodies) were invited to take part, the recruitment process did not capture councils from the major metropolitan cities in New Zealand (e.g. the Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch or Hamilton areas). Metropolitan councils generally have lower levels of engagement (Department of Internal Affairs, 2006; Drage, 2008; Robertson & Rout, 2006), and greater ethnic diversity (Statistics New Zealand, 2010). Inclusion of a larger city would have enriched the findings and strengthened the conclusions and recommendations from the study.

Recruitment of a wider variety of participating councils may have been more successful if the requests had been made earlier in the council consultation planning process. Some councils (e.g. Palmerston North, Papakura and Northland Regional) indicated interest, but staff said they were too far advanced in their planning process to commit to taking part in the study. Thus, the recruitment of participating councils, which started in February 2009, would have possibly been more effective starting in November 2008. However, the participating councils represented a wide geographic spread, in contrast to previous research on council consultation practice conducted by Cheyne (1997), Comrie (1999), Forgie (2001), Jordan (2004), and Nash (2007), that was dominated by central North Island councils. This research also involved higher numbers of councils than these studies, and included a good mixture of regional and territorial, rural and urban entities.

Recruitment of submitters – the survey implementation

The initial survey recruitment was conducted through electronic channels. This approach was selected because it lessened the administrative workload of participating councils, and similarly

lowered the administration requirement of the research process. However, the subsequent paper-based survey approaches used in three participating councils (this was a backup approach taken because the email recruitment process had been inadvertently overlooked by those councils) yielded better response rates. It seems probable that a paper survey form with the final feedback letter would have been a more effective method of respondent recruitment. A better result may have enabled comparison between participating councils in relation to the effectiveness of the varying consultation approaches employed.

Investigating letters to submitters

The results revealed that a primary area of dissatisfaction for submitters with the consultation experience lay with the outcomes of the consultation. Submitters were typically unsure of their influence in the final decision. This perception related to the impact submitters perceived they had as individuals, and also the overall affect submitters had on the council decisions. An analysis of the approach and contents of the final feedback letter to submitters would have helped to clarify the reasons for the submitters' dissatisfaction.

7.3 Conclusion and Recommendations

The research confirmed a rising expectation in communities to 'have a say', and this has translated into more individuals taking part in consultation. However, a principle purpose of any consultation process is to facilitate council responsiveness to community needs, and this goal was not met in the 2009 LTCCP as submitters were not representative of the community and therefore unlikely to represent the diversity of community interests. The research did show that the first-time submitters were more representative of the demographic characteristics of the broader population than has been shown to be the case in other research. Nevertheless, those who responded to the survey had the dominant characteristics of being likely to be male, European, with a higher education, living as couples without children or in sole person households. The findings were largely consistent with the previous research of Cheyne (1997), Forgie (2001), Jordan (2004) and Nash (2007), and revealed that current consultation practices are not capturing the range of community issues and priorities that must exist in diverse communities.

Nevertheless, participating councils continue to invest considerable time and effort in consultation efforts and this research was able to identify the barriers and enablers to participation in the 2009 LTCCP consultation, and prioritise several opportunities for improvement as a result. The balance of this section discusses the resulting conclusions and recommendations and covers audience targeting practices, removing barriers to participation, improving the submission experience, satisfaction with consultation outcomes and perceptions of influence.

7.3.1 Approaches to Targeting Audiences

Nine out of the ten participating councils used targeting to reach important communities of interest and stakeholder groups when trying to communicate with those affected by, or with an interest in the LTCCP proposal (as directed by the LGA 2002). However, the councils undertook very limited targeting of 'hard to reach' groups and this was a significant weakness in consultation planning.

Submission numbers continue to rise, as confirmed in the Department of Internal Affairs' (2010) audit, and in the interviews conducted for this research. However, the demographic profile of submitters revealed in this project reinforces Zwart et al's. (2005) assertions that increasing participation levels cannot be interpreted as an indicator of increasing consultation effectiveness. The central aim of consultation is to improve the representation of community concerns, yet the findings showed that the participating councils were likely to be hearing from the same type of people. As a result, the agendas highlighted as important by submitter comment were unlikely to be representative of the wider community because, as Cheyne (1997), Lowndes et al. (2006) and Nash (2007) note, different demographic groups have different agendas.

Targeting recommendations

Successful targeting of underrepresented demographic groups in particular would improve representation (Brackertz, 2007; Brackertz et al., 2005; Cheyne, 1997; Nash, 2007). Drawing from the submitters' demographic profiles, and combining the reasons given by first-time submitters for not previously participating with the suggestions of Brackertz (2007), Brackertz et

al. (2005), Lowndes et al. (2006) and Stone (2006), the most important hard to reach audiences that councils should target are:

- the time poor (families with young children, solo parents).
- youth and young adults.
- those with lesser civic skills (typically socio-economic groups with lower education levels and literacy).

Alternatively, or additionally, improved representation could be achieved through a deliberative top down approach to gathering comment, as recommended by Carston (2008, 2011).

Of final note, ethnic minorities are also suggested as hard to reach groups by many researchers including Brackertz (2007), Cheyne and Tawhai (2007), Jameson (1997) and Lowndes et al. (2006). However, this project did not fully investigate ethnicity because the participating councils had much lower levels of ethnic diversity than many councils in New Zealand. As a result, the sample populations of the participating councils were too different from the national profile to be able to make a relevant comparison.

7.3.2 Barriers to Participation

The leading barriers to participation in council consultations as identified by first-time submitters were time, the knowledge to make a submission, and lack of interest. These barriers supported Rogers' (1983) contention that the steps of 'how to' information and 'influence' in the communication process are often overlooked by communication planners. An earlier finding that lack of awareness is a significant barrier to participation (Community Empowerment Division, 2006) was not supported by the findings in this project, which revealed that councils were generally doing a good job of getting consultation information out into the community. The Department of Internal Affairs' (2010) research echoed this assessment.

The findings on the barriers to participation for those previously unengaged (i.e. the first-time submitters) were important because they point to some relatively easy and immediate opportunities to improve representation in council consultations for communication planners.

Recommendations – reducing barriers

Direct-mail communication through council newsletters was shown to be particularly effective in the information stage. Therefore, increased usage and frequency of push-type direct communication would enable:

- a stronger emphasis on 'how to' information, particularly 'how to make a submission' texts
- more emphasis on the ease of making submissions to overcome 'time' concerns.
- more regular contact with citizens to establish a consistent vehicle for information to help overcome waning news media readership, and the general lack of involvement councils have with the community, especially regional councils.
- the expanded use of survey-style submission forms for all consultations (these were shown to be preferred by first-time submitters) and more consistent presentation of these forms in other lesser consultations to reinforce transparency and ease of interaction.
- an increased presence of online and social media activity would provide more opportunities for interaction with the 'hard to reach' particularly the time poor, and youth.

7.3.3 Improving the Submission Experience

The information gathered to answer the question on the barriers to making submissions focused on citizens who had previously been unengaged by council consultation processes. There are also those citizens who take part in council consultations, then become disengaged because of dissatisfaction with the process or outcomes. Therefore, the survey findings on submitters' satisfaction with the consultation process, interaction, outcomes and perceptions of influence are important indicators of the effectiveness of consultation communication.

Public relations theorists, policy and ethics writers are in accord that satisfaction is influenced by communication interaction, process and outcome (Broom et al., 1997; Bruning & Ledingham, 1999; Covey, 1992; Dozier et al., 1995; Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Halseth & Booth, 2003; Hon & Grunig, 1999; Sweitzer & Gibson, 2007). Of those three areas, the submitter survey gave a clear indication that the outcome of the LTCCP consultation in participating councils was the least satisfying aspect of the consultation experience, and therefore must be a priority area for improvement.

The research findings point to feedback mechanisms, both to submitters and the wider community, as failing to convey and/or explain the context and reasoning behind decisions. Feedback must therefore be a priority for improvement in council consultation practices. Nevertheless, on the basis of submitter feedback, the consultation process when broken down into the three areas of fairness that contribute to satisfaction (i.e. interaction, process and outcomes), as suggested by Sweitzer and Gibson (2007), offers a basis for making recommendations for improvement.

Recommendations – the consultation process

- Councils should make every effort to extend the time allowed for consultation to six weeks to better meet the needs of community groups.
- More flexibility in the scheduling of hearings would allow for the various needs of submitters (e.g. for workers have a hearing at night, for larger authorities move the hearings around the district to make it easier for submitters to attend). This would improve representation in the hearings, which currently appears to further limit the diversity of people who take part in the consultation process.

Recommendations – interaction and outcomes, including perceptions of influence

Feedback processes need to more effectively reflect submitters' influence and explain decisions, not simply communicate them. As Sweitzer and Gibson (2007) note explanations play an integral role in improving perceptions of communication/decision-making fairness. Therefore, to improve submitters' perceptions of the fairness and transparency of decisions, and the value of the submission process and overall relationship, the feedback letter to submitters and community communication should include:

- the wider context of submitters' comment.
- the changes council made as a result of submissions.
- the reasons for councils' decisions.

Recommendations – resource allocation

The research findings on the effectiveness of communication activities and channels also suggest some additional recommendations on resource allocation for communication activity for council management to consider. The perceptions and responsiveness of participating councils to the news media and lobby groups was low key in this research project, despite research findings that the news media remain a strong influence on overall satisfaction with council performance (Crozier, 2004; Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006; McGregor et al., 2002). Local daily and community newspapers are critical news media channels for local government and with the news media industry in major change, this research suggests:

- councils should direct more focus to the active management of media relationships.

According to the submitter survey, advertising (including public notices) and radio channels achieved minimal success raising awareness levels or providing information on the consultation to the wider public, or targeted audiences. As a result of this finding, this research recommends:

- councils should review advertising activity for effectiveness.

Most participating councils conducted significant pre-consultation activity to raise awareness and community understanding of the LTCCP issues. Consultation theory strongly supports pre-consultation communication activity (Barton & Shaw, 2001; Burke, 2004; Cook, 2006; Freeman, 2006), yet the submitter survey in this research barely registered a mention of pre-consultation initiatives. If judged purely on the survey finding, pre-consultation did not achieve its goals of awareness and information delivery, though it is acknowledged that pre-consultation may have achieved other outcomes including improved council/community and stakeholder relationships for those participating. However, overall it would be appropriate for councils to:

- reconsider the balance of pre-consultation activity resourcing with the allocation of resources to other parts of the consultation process, particularly the post-consultation feedback process.

Pragmatically, while council consultation practices are improving representation, large parts of the community remain unengaged. This continuing weakness in the consultation process suggests councils should consider:

- tracking submitter profiles (so councils at least know who they are hearing from).
- the use of an additional and concurrent deliberative approach (e.g. community panels) to capture representative comment as suggested by Brackertz (2007), Carston (2008, 2011), Cheyne (1997) and Zwart et al. (2008). This approach would deliver more accurate information to better support council decision-making.

Finally, councils reported simple process-orientated goals for their consultations. A focus on the process factors of consultation is emphasised in the LGA 2002, but recognition of what consultation contributes to council/community relationships (including improved citizenship, stronger decisions and ownership of those decisions) was noticeably absent in staff interviews. Perhaps, as a result of the narrower process emphasis, staff resourcing for the consultation process was generally drawn from the planning/strategy and communication areas of the council staff. This silo approach led to other sections of council having limited involvement in the consultation and opportunities for sharing and reinforcing messages (as suggested by Comrie (1999) and Stone (2005)) were lost. Therefore, this research recommends:

- a cross-council approach to consultation.

A cross council approach would more effectively focus organisational attention on consultation as a key process to achieve the purpose of council, as defined in the LGA 2002, which is to "enable democratic decision-making and action, by and on behalf of communities".

7.4 Future Directions

This research project captured a large amount of quantitative and qualitative data for analysis from the ten participating local authorities to answer the research question "How successful were councils in the 2009 Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) consultation process in enabling democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, their communities?" Determining the relative effectiveness of each council's communication approach to the 2009 LTCCP was not possible within the scope of this study, but there were four opportunities that arose out of this project that should be considered for future research.

How effective is the collation of submissions for councillors' consideration in the decision-making process?

Submission numbers are rising (Department of Internal Affairs, 2010) and there are growing numbers of individuals taking part in council consultations (Nash, 2007). As a result, the task of assimilating submitter comment and factoring it (in a transparent way) into the final decision is increasingly difficult for councillors. An investigation into the way in which submissions are collated and presented for councillors' consideration would provide crucial answers on how the tail-end of the consultation process might be improved to better support council decision-making, and the resulting communication of final decisions to submitters, stakeholders and the wider community.

Which submissions successfully influence council decisions, and why?

Nash (2007) reviewed the types of agendas that gain the attention of council, and this research revealed submitters' perceptions of influence. However, further investigation into the content of submissions, the influence of speakers, and submitters' characteristics in relation to the decisions made by councils would provide a better understanding of the actual influence of submitters and the consultation process on council decisions**.**

How do councils capture the changes to a proposal as the result of consultation? How do councils then explain their decisions to submitters, stakeholders and the community?

Feedback is an essential part of a symmetrical communication relationship. The LGA 2002 requires a feedback letter to be sent to all submitters, and the publication of the final decisions made as a result of special consultation, in this case the 2009 LTCCP. Yet, in this research, feedback was highlighted as an area that submitters were largely unsatisfied with. An examination of the timing and content of feedback letters, and the public communication of consultation outcomes would be useful to establish how this part of the communication process could be improved.

What are the issues, concerns and agendas of non-participants?

This research limited its scope to those citizens who had taken part in the 2009 LTCCP consultation process of the ten participating councils. First-time submitters in the submitter

sample were used to help identify the characteristics of unengaged citizens. However, further research on the communication behaviours of unengaged and disengaged citizens would provide a more accurate picture of the barriers, attitudes and agendas of people who do not participate in council consultation.

7.5 Concluding Comments

The purpose of local government in New Zealand is to enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities. To support the purpose, and reflecting the increasing diversity in communities, public consultation has been widely drafted into local government legislation (particularly over the last two decades) as a mechanism to facilitate councils' responsiveness.

Using the 2009 LTCCP consultation process as a basis for investigation, this research project assessed how successful ten participating councils were in enabling democratic local decision-making. The councils were innovative and proactive in their efforts to encourage consultation participation, and submission numbers were rising. However, the research found that the consultation practices employed did not manage to gather representative comment to support council responsiveness. Many 'hard to reach' groups (e.g. youth or those with lower education levels) remained largely unengaged. Therefore, the central aim of consultation was not achieved.

Compounding the apparent failure of consultation to capture representative comment, other researchers have revealed that citizens have a growing expectation to be able to participate in council decision-making (Cheyne, 2002; Department of Internal Affairs, 2006; Robertson and Rout, 2006). In response, councils are increasingly using public consultation to discuss issues with their communities. Councils seem to be caught in an updraft of expectation, forced to use a communication tool that seems ill-designed for its purpose. However, consultation undeniably delivers other important outcomes including improved council-community relationships, enhanced social cohesion, and increased feelings of citizenship (Birch, 2002; Cheyne, 2002;

Lowndes et al., 2006). Indeed, submitters in this research while being on balance unsatisfied with the outcomes of consultation, were generally satisfied they had participated and ‘had their say’. Nevertheless, if the central aim of consultation is to gather representative comment, then improvements to the communication processes employed must be made.

The findings of this research demand a rethink of resource allocation and communication emphasis, yet as Barton and Shaw (2001) and Reid (2005b) caution, the design of a consultation/communication programme will always require a fine balance between efficiency and effectiveness. Ultimately, perhaps a more pragmatic solution for under-resourced, overstretched councils is a research-based deliberative approach to capturing representative feedback advocated by Brackertz (2007), Cheyne (1997), Carston (2008, 2011) and Zwart et al. (2005). While not an alternative to legislatively required consultation, the addition of a deliberative approach to democratic decision-making would complement the other outcomes of consultation and provide the necessary representative comment to advance councils’ responsiveness.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Recruiting Email to Communication Managers

From: Penny Bloomberg [mailto:penny.bloomberg@ncc.govt.nz]
Sent: Friday, 20 February 2009 11:45 a.m.
To: Commscouncil
Subject: Submitter contributions in Council consultations– would your Council be interested in being part of a study... please read on....

What's it all about?

I often field comments that consultations just hear from a vocal minority, I want to conduct a national study on the upcoming LTCCP consultations looking at the proportion of first-time submitters, their experiences and perceptions, and what Council consultation methods worked well to get them to enter the consultation fray. This is for my Masters' thesis.

What would it involve if you said YES my council wants to be a part!

My plan is simple. Each Council would need to put an additional question on your submission form. The exact wording would be supplied but essentially there would be a question asking

Q. Would you be interested in taking part in an email survey (to be conducted in July) looking at submitter satisfaction?

We would also need to capture their email address. I would talk to each council about how we would capture the data on submissions so that I could come up with a distribution list for the survey. Later in the year, after the consultation is complete, I would interview each participating Communications Manager to capture the tactics and tools used in the LTCCP consultation.

What you would get out of participating?

For the price of a bit of space on your submission form, and some time on the phone with me, I would write a report for each participating council outlining your council's results (as well as the national one). For any of you looking to assess your consultation success, this report would be valuable and perhaps save time and effort for you in other monitoring activities.

Time is short

I am in discussions with Local Government New Zealand and the Local Government Commission about the study, but while the actual survey activity won't happen until July, the sourcing of participants needs to happen in March/April. Please let me know if you are interested in taking part. If you have any queries and/or additional thoughts please give me a ring.

regards

Penny Bloomberg
Manager Public Communications
Nelson City Council
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www.nelsoncitycouncil.co.nz
Civic House, Trafalgar Street
P O Box 645, Nelson

Appendix B – Semi-Structured Interview for Council Staff

Interview of the Council staff

Council: _____

Staff Member: _____

Designation: _____

Date: _____

Questions for Council staff:

1. What were your Council's objectives going into this consultation? Were they any different from other consultations you have conducted in the past?
2. How long was the consultation period?
3. Was the Council active before the consultation opened raising awareness of the consultation in the community consciousness?
4. Did the methods and activities used to engage the community differ from previous consultation activity?
5. What specific audiences did Councils target in communications? How?
6. How much resource does your council usually put into consultation activity?
7. What was your perception of media activity covering the consultation and key agendas? Did you track coverage? What impact did media activity have on your response rates and the issues discussed, if any?
8. Comparing this consultation with previous consultation, how would you describe community response? (obtain a records of previous consultation figures if available)
9. Where there any community or lobby groups who were active in the community and in the media during the consultation? If so, please describe them, their activity and agendas. E.g. Residents/ratepayers Associations, Business Chambers, Grey Power?
10. Looking at your submitters, do you have any figures on first-time submitters from prior consultations?
11. Describe the relationship between Council and the community?
12. What did the Council consider where the main agendas to discuss with the community during consultation? (i.e. the key platforms as encouraged by the Audit office)

Appendix C – Paper Survey Form

Feedback Survey Form

Long Term Council Community Plan

How did you find the recent consultation on your Council's Long Term Council Community Plan? Here's a chance to give feedback. The survey should take you between 5 – 15 minutes to complete, and your responses will provide information on how consultation processes might be improved.

Please send to

Confidentiality: Your responses will be treated as confidential and used only for the purposes of this research.

1. Where did you first read or hear about this consultation on the Long Term Plan?
   - ○ Local newspaper ○ Radio ○ From another person
   - ○ Poster or advertising ○ Council website ○ Council Summary sent by post
   - ○ Other, specify .....

2. Once you found out about the consultation, where did you get information on the consultation from? (tick as many as apply)
   - ○ Council newsletter ○ Council Summary sent by post ○ Council website
   - ○ Council offices/staff ○ Council Library ○ Other, specify .....

3. Have you made a submission to any Council consultation before?
   - ○ Yes ○ No, this is my first submission

If answered 'No' please answer questions 3a.1 and 3a.2.

3a. 1. As a first time submitter, how would you have described yourself before making this submission?
   - ○ Unaware of Council consultations
   - ○ Aware of Council consultations, but just not interested
   - ○ Interested in some consultations but somehow just never had the time
   - ○ Interested in making a submission but not sure how to go about it
   - ○ Other, please comment .....

3a. 2. What made you make a submission for the first time?
   Comment .....

4. Please tick your method of submission
   - ○ Consultation form (paper) ○ A form on the Council website
   - ○ By written submission (other than the council form)
   - ○ On a form sent from another interest group
   - ○ Text ○ By email
   - ○ Other, please specify .....

5. Please list any other way you would have liked to have made a submission, but that was unavailable to you?
   Comment .....

6. When you were working on your submission, did you feel

	Strongly disagree		*Neutral*		*Strongly Agree*	*Don't Know*
The consultation information was **easy to understand**	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5	○6
Information for the consultation was **easy to access**	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5	○6
There was adequate information available to **feel well informed**	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5	○6
There was **plenty of time to prepare** your submission	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5	○6
If you used a **Council submission form**, was it **easy to use**	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5	○6

Comment .....

continued >>

7. What issues did you want Council to consider in the plan? (tick as many as apply)

- ○ Infrastructure (e.g. water, sewage, stormwater, roading, waste disposal, footpaths)
- ○ Community facilities (e.g.swimming pools, parks and gardens, sporting venues etc)
- ○ Community Services (e.g. waste collection, recycling, libraries etc)
- ○ Cost/affordability of rates ○ Environmental issues
- ○ Business and the economy ○ Rating, revenue and finance policies
- ○ Cultural issues ○ Transport (buses, trains, cycling, walking) ○ Other, specify _____

8. Did you speak at the hearings? ○ Yes ○ No

8a.1. If yes, did you feel

	Strongly disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree	Don't Know
You were advised of the hearing schedule in **plenty of time**	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5	○6
You had/received **enough information** to **know what to expect**	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5	○6
You were **made welcome** in the hearing	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5	○6
Councillors **valued** your presentation	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5	○6
You were **comfortable speaking** before Council	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5	○6

8b.1. If no, was this because

- ○ You didn't have time to appear before Council? ○ You felt your written submission was enough?
- ○ You were not comfortable speaking in public like that? ○ You were not sure what was involved?
- ○ Other _____

9. At the end of the whole submission process, did you feel

	Strongly disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree	Don't Know
You had a **chance to influence** the Council's decision	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5	○6
The final decisions made by Council showed **they listened** to submitters	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5	○6
You were **satisfied with the letter** you received explaining Council's decisions	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5	○6
Overall, you were satisfied you made a submission to Council	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5	○6

Comment _____

10. What would have improved the consultation process for you? _____

_____

11. What did the Council do well during the consultation? _____

_____

12. Did you represent

○ Yourself ○ Business ○ A community organization ○ Other, specify _____

This final section gathers information about submitter characteristics:

14. Gender ○ Male ○ Female

15. Age ○ under 20 ○ 20-39 ○ 40-59 ○ 60-84 ○ over 85

16. Ethnicity ○ European ○ Maori ○ Pacific ○ Asian ○ Other, please specify

17. What is your income?

○ < $30,0000 ○ $30,000 - $50,000 ○ $50,000 - $70,000 ○ $70,000 - $100,000 ○ > $100,000

18. What education levels have your achieved?

○ none ○ 5th, or 6th form or bursary at secondary school

○ Basic, intermediate or advanced vocational certificates ○ Bachelor or higher degree

19. In your household, are you

○ a one person household ○ a couple only ○ a couple with children

○ single parent with children ○ household of unrelated people ○ other _____

Thank-you for your comments

Appendix D – Screen Breakdown for Online Survey

Screen One: Getting information

Question #1. Where did you first read or hear about the consultation on the Long Term Plan

Question #2. Once you found out about the consultation, where did you get information on the proposed Plan from?

Question #3. Have you made a submission to any Council consultation before?

Screen two: First-time submitters (delivered only to first-time submitters – use skip logic)

Question #4. As a first-time submitter, how would you have described yourself before making this submission?

Question #5. What made you make a submission for the first-time?

Screen three: Making a submission

Question #6. Please tick your method of submission. Note, not all these options may have been available to you.

Question #7. Please list any other way you would have liked to have made a submission, but that was unavailable to you.

Question #8. When you were working on your submission, did you feel ...

Screen four: Community issues and interests

Question #9. What issues did you want Council to consider in the Plan?

Question #10. Did you speak at the hearings?

Screen five: Experiences at Council hearings

Question #11. As a speaker did you feel …

Screen six: Questions for submitters who chose not to speak at the Council hearings

Question #12. Why did you choose not to speak?

Screen seven: Overall perceptions

Question #13. At the end of the whole submissions process, did you feel...

Question #14. What could have improved the consultation process for you?

Question #15. What did the Council do well during the consultation?

Question #16. Did you represent....

Question #17. Which Council did you make your submission to?

Screen eight: Submitter characteristics

Question #18. Please indicate your gender.

Question #19. Your age?

Question #20. Your ethnicity?

Question #21. Your household income?

Question #22. Your highest education level attained?

Question #23. Is your household a...

Appendix E – Email To Participating Councils Outlining Process

From: Penny Bloomberg

Sent: Friday, 10 July 2009 6:37 p.m.

To: Participating Councils

Subject: LTCCP Submitter Satisfaction survey

Attachments: Submitter online survey.doc

Good evening all,

I have been trying to ring each of my participating Councils throughout this week and have only managed to get to four, so for the rest of you where this email is the first contact in a while–my apologies.

This email is to update you all on where I am at, to give you a chance to critique the draft survey (just in case there is something in there that doesn't fit with your Council), and to start the ball rolling in terms of requests of information from you.

1. The draft survey has been developed and I attach a copy for your feedback.
2. I am presently setting the survey up on SurveyMonkey (a great little application) for those Councils who are using online functionality.
3. Some of you have elected to use a paper based approach to survey. Once the survey is finalised I will forward to you a nice Indesign – formatted A4 version for you to distribute to your submitters.
4. Now, I am mindful that our present approach for most council was to encourage online participation on your submission form. Submitters that used other methods of submission may have been unaware of the opportunity to provide feedback via the survey. I'd like to talk to you about the options we have should you like to offer the survey to this group (hope I am not being confusing there).
5. So, what I need from you in the next few days, if possible, is
    - A list of your submitters who have indicated that they wish to do the online survey (Pauline, thanks I already have yours).
    - Any feedback on the draft survey
6. Once I finalise the survey and get hold of your submitter lists I can e-mail out the link to the survey. For those of you sending out a paper survey, that will happen at the same time.

Once I get everything sorted I would like to talk to each of you about your perceptions of the process (successes, failures, etc). I figure that will happen in 3 – 4 weeks – don't want it to be too late though so that you forget the ordeal.

Best regards

Penny Bloomberg

Manager Public Communications

Nelson City Council

03 546 0223 or 027 6005 889

Appendix F – Email Introduction of Survey to Submitters

Note: Each council completed the LTCCP consultation at a different time. This required a separate email distribution list to be made up for each council where the email approach to recruitment was used. The below record shows the email to Hutt City Council's submitters.

Sent: Wednesday, 29 July 2009 7:36 p.m.
To: Hutt City Council Submitters to the LTCCP
Subject: Re: Your chance to give feedback on how you found the consultation process for the Hutt City Council LTCCP
Hello,

Recently you made a submission to the Hutt City Council's public consultation on the 2009-2019 Long Term Council Community Plan. Thanks for indicating you are interested in giving feedback on how you found the process.

So how satisfied were you with the submission process? Was it easy to make a submission? Did you feel positive about the process– or frustrated with the results or other issues you may have encountered along the way?

Your answers to all these questions will help your Council improve consultation processes.

The following link takes you to the online survey ……..
www.surveymonkey.com/LTCCP_submitter_feedback

The survey is easy to complete and will take you between 5 and 15 minutes to complete, depending on how much you have to say.

Your response will be private and used solely for the purposes of this survey, similarly your comments will be anonymous in resulting reports.

Council conducts an increasing number of public consultations in response to community expectations and legislative requirements. With more resources used, more people taking part and often tough decisions to be made, it is important that submitters are satisfied …. so your feedback is valuable.

If you have any questions on this survey, please feel free to email me.

Thank you for taking part.

Penny Bloomberg
Researcher with Hutt City Council
Hutt City Council I 30 Laings Road I Private Bag 31-912 I Lower Hutt
Ph +64 4 570-6838 Fax: +64 4 569-4290 I Website: www.huttcity.govt.nz

Appendix G – Cross-Tabulation of Gender Findings

	Question statement	Male	Female
Q1.	Where did you first read or hear about the consultation on the Long Term Plan	%	%
	Local newspaper	40.2	43.0
	Radio	3.7	6.1
	From another person	16.6	20.1
	Poster or advertising	3.3	5.0
	Council's website	1.7	5.6
	Council summary sent by post	42.3	35.8
	Other	12.0	11.7
Q2.	Once you found out about the consultation, where did you get information on the proposed Plan from?	%	%
	Council newsletter	28.6	24.0
	Council summary sent by post	45.6	41.3
	Council website	17.0	29.6
	Council offices/staff	21.6	22.3
	Council library	4.6	3.9
	Other	13.6	18.4
Q3.	Have you made a submission to any Council consultation before?	%	%
	First-time submitter	40.7	45.8
Q4.	As a first-time submitter, how would you have described yourself before making a submission?	%	%
	You were unaware of council consultations	16.3	17.1
	Just not interested	22.4	15.9
	Interested but didn't have the time	30.6	26.8
	Interested but not sure how to go about making a submission	23.5	28
	Other	13.3	15.9
Q6.	Method of submission	%	%
	Consultation form (paper)	50.2	54.7
	website form	10.4	15.1
	Written submission (other than council form)	21.2	12.3
	On another form sent to me by another interest group	3.7	4.5
Q8.	Consultation information	Mean	Mean
	Consultation information was easy to understand	3.48	3.64
	Consultation information was easy to access	3.42	3.62
	Adequate to feel well informed	3.29	3.43
	There was plenty of time to make the submission	3.71	3.75

	If you used the council submission form was it easy to use?	3.62	3.7
Q9.	What issues did you want the council to consider	%	%
	Infrastructure	59.8	55.3
	Community facilities	55.2	60.3
	Community services	44.4	55.3
	Cost affordability	50.2	45.8
	Environmental Issues	36.5	44.1
	Business and the economy	20.7	20.7
	Rating revenue and finance policies	44.4	31.1
	Cultural issues	10.8	18.4
	Transport	32.4	38.5
	Other		
Q10	Did you speak at the hearings	%	%
	Yes	32.0	22.3
Q11.	As a speaker did you feel	Mean	Mean
	You were advised of the hearing in plenty of time	4.17	4.09
	You received enough information to know what to expect	3.69	3.87
	You were made welcome at the hearing	3.96	4.00
	Councillors valued your presentation	3.46	3.27
	You felt comfortable speaking before Council	4.03	3.69
Q12.	Why did you choose not to speak	%	%
	You didn't have the time to appear	22.6	15.8
	You felt your written submission was enough	51.2	49.6
	You would not be comfortable speaking in public like that	16.6	26.6
	You were unsure of what was involved in speaking before council	11.6	10.8
	Other		
Q13.	At the end of the whole consultation process did you feel…	Mean	Mean
	You had a chance to influence the council decision	2.85	3.10
	The final decision made by council showed they listened to submitters	2.62	3.09
	You were satisfied with the letter you received explaining the council's decisions	3.02	3.41
	Overall you were satisfied you made a submission to council	3.52	3.90
Q16.	Representation	%	%
	Individual	79.3	79.9
	Business interests	7.9	8.9
	Community organisation	17.8	19.6
	Other	12	10.1
Q18.	Gender	%	%
		57.4	42.6

Q19.	Age	%	%
	Under 20	0.4	0.6
	20-39	9.8	12.5
	40-60	37	43.8
	60-85	51.9	42
	Over 85	0.9	1.1
Q20.	Ethnicity	%	%
	European	90	80.6
	Māori	5.7	11.8
	Pacific Island	0	1.2
	Asian	2.2	0
	Other	2.2	6.5
Q21.	Household income	%	%
	Under $30,000	21.7	33.3
	$30,000-$50,000	21.3	15.6
	$50,000 - $70,000	17.4	17.7
	$70,000 - $100,000	15.5	16.3
	Over $100,000	24.2	17.0
Q22.	Education	%	%
	None	5.7	6.3
	Secondary level	32.2	29.7
	A basic, intermediate or advanced vocational certificate	18.8	20.6
	Degree or higher	42.4	43.4
Q23.	Household makeup	%	%
	Single	11.1	23.7
	Couple only	57.9	51.4
	Couple with children	25.5	16.8
	Solo parent	2.6	1.7
	Other	3.6	5.2

Appendix H – Cross-Tabulation of Age Findings

	Question statements	< 20 years	20-39 years	40-59 years	60-84 years	> 85 years
Q1.	Where did you first read or hear about the consultation on the Long Term Plan	%	%	%	%	%
	Local newspaper	50.0	21.3	34.9	50.3	75.0
	Radio	0	4.3	5.3	4.1	0.0
	From another person	50.0	31.9	22.5	12.2	25.0
	Poster or advertising	50.0	4.3	4.1	2.5	0.0
	Council's website	50.0	2.1	3.6	2.5	0.0
	Council summary sent by post	0	38.3	38.3	40.1	25.0
	Other	0.0	12.8	12.4	11.7	0.0
Q2.	Once you found out about the consultation, where did you get information on the proposed Plan from?	%	%	%	%	%
	Council newsletter	50.0	17.0	21.9	33.5	25.9
	Council summary sent by post	0.0	44.7	43.8	44.7	25.0
	Council website	100.0	38.3	26.0	15.7	0
	Council offices/staff	50.0	21.3	21.9	22.3	0.0
	Council library	0.0	0.0	3.6	5.6	25.0
	Other	0.0	14.9	16.6	14.7	25.9
Q3.	Have you made a submission to any Council consultation before?	%	%	%	%	%
	First-time submitter	100	51.1	37.9	44.2	75
Q4.	As a first-time submitter, how would you have described yourself before making a submission?	%	%	%	%	%
	You were unaware of council consultations	0	25	14.1	17.2	0
	Just not interested	0	25	25	13.8	66.7
	Interested but didn't have the time	50	20.8	25	33.3	0
	Interested but not sure how to go about making a submission	0	25	29.7	23	33.3
	Other	50	8.3	17.2	13.8	0
Q6.	Method of submission	%	%	%	%	%
	Consultation form (paper)	50	38.3	53.8	52.8	75
	website form	50	23.4	13.6	9.1	0

	Written submission (other than council form)	0	19.1	16.6	18.3	25
	On another form sent to me by another interest group	0	2.1	2.4	6.1	0
	Email	0	6.4	9.5	5.6	0
	Other	0	10.6	4.1	8.1	0
Q8.	Consultation information	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
	Consultation information was easy to understand	4	3.49	3.56	3.54	3.33
	Consultation information was easy to access	4	3.67	3.5	3.46	3.33
	Adequate to feel well informed	4	3.22	3.3	3.37	4.67
	There was plenty of time to make the submission	3.5	3.72	3.63	3.8	4.67
	If you used the council submission form was it easy to use?	4	3.6	3.59	3.68	3.33
Q9.	What issues did you want the council to consider	%	%	%	%	%
	Infrastructure	50	70.2	53.3	56.9	50
	Community facilities	50	66	56.2	55.8	25
	Community services	100	59.6	43.2	49.2	50
	Cost affordability	50	42.6	42	53.8	50
	Environmental Issues	100	55.3	41.4	35	0
	Business and the economy	50	23.4	22.5	18.8	0
	Rating revenue and finance policies	50	36.2	30.8	47.7	25
	Cultural issues	50	21.3	11.8	15.2	0
	Transport	50	44.7	35.5	31.5	25
	Other	50	6.4	15.4	21.3	50
Q10.	Did you speak at the hearings	%	%	%	%	%
	Yes	0	27.7	27.2	28.4	0
Q11.	As a speaker did you feel	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
	You were advised of the hearing in plenty of time	na	3.69	4.1	4.3	na
	You received enough information to know what to expect	na	3	3.96	4.06	na
	You were made welcome at the hearing	na	3.58	4.09	4.04	na
	Councillors valued your presentation	na	3	3.53	3.45	na
	You felt comfortable speaking before Council	na	3.08	3.93	4.11	na
Q12.	Why did you choose not to speak	%	%	%	%	%
	You didn't have the time to appear	50	23.5	26.8	13.5	0
	You felt your written submission was enough	50	38.2	45.5	56.7	100
	You would not be comfortable speaking in public	50	20.6	19.5	19.1	50

	like that					
	You were unsure of what was involved in speaking before council	0	14.7	13.8	7.8	25
	Other	50	26.5	26.8	27.7	0
Q13.	At the end of the whole consultation process did you feel	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
	You had a chance to influence the council's decision	3.5	2.93	2.95	2.95	3.5
	The final decision made by council showed they listened to submitters	4	2.8	2.74	2.9	3.75
	You were satisfied with the letter you received explaining the councils decisions	4	3.09	3.06	3.33	3
	Overall you were satisfied you made a submission to council	4	3.53	3.56	3.86	3.75
Q16.	Representation	%	%	%	%	%
	Individual	50	63.8	75.7	85.8	100
	Business interests	0	17	11.2	4.6	0
	Community organisation	50	19.1	20.7	16.8	0
	Other	0	10.6	9.5	12.7	0
Q18.	Gender	%	%	%	%	%
	Male	50	51.1	53	62.2	50
	Female	50	48.9	47	37.8	50
Q20.	Ethnicity	%	%	%	%	%
	European	50	75	82.3	91.7	100
	Māori	0	18.2	10.1	5.2	0
	Pacific Island	0	0	1.3	0	0
	Asian	50	0	1.9	0.5	0
	Other	0	6.8	4.4	2.6	0
Q21.	Household income	%	%	%	%	%
	Under $30,000	0	9.5	14.5	40.9	66.7
	$30,000-$49,999	0	16.7	11.6	25.7	0
	$50,000 - $69,999	0	19	16.7	18.1	0
	$70,000 - $100,000	100	19	21.7	8.8	33.3
	Over $100,000	0	35.7	35.5	6.4	0
Q22.	Education	%	%	%	%	%
	None	0	4.4	3.1	8.4	25

	Secondary	100	15.6	27	38.2	25
	A basic, intermediate or advanced vocational certificate	0	11.1	18.4	22.5	50
	Degree or higher	0	68.9	51.5	30.9	0
Q23.	Household status	%	%	%	%	%
	Single only	0	13	12.4	19.6	50
	Couple only	0	43.5	38.5	72.2	25
	Couple with children	50	37	41.6	2.6	0
	Single parent with children	50	2.2	3.7	1	0
	Other	0	4.3	3.7	4.6	25

Appendix I – Cross-Tabulation of Income Levels

	Question statement	<$30,000	$30,000-$49,999	$50,000 - $69.999	$70,000-$99,999	>$100,000
Q1.	Where did you first read or hear about the consultation on the Long Term Plan	%	%	%	%	%
	Local newspaper	45.4	53.6	37.7	46.4	28.6
	Radio	9.3	2.9	4.8	5.4	0.0
	From another person	16.5	8.7	22.2	16.1	20.8
	Poster or advertising	5.2	1.4	6.3	0.0	2.6
	Council's website	3.1	0.0	4..8	5.4	3.9
	Council summary sent by post	40.2	40.6	39.7	37.5	45.5
	Other	11.3	15.9	11.1	10.7	7.8
.Q2.	Once you found out about the consultation, where did you get information on the proposed Plan from?	%	%	%	%	%
	Council newsletter	36.1	23.2	23.8	17.9	19.5
	Council summary sent by post	47.4	50.7	44.4	39.3	42.9
	Council website	10.3	21.7	30.2	28.6	33.8
	Council offices/staff	18.6	36.2	11.1	25.0	18.2
	Council library	6.2	4.3	1.6	3.6	0.0
	Other	17.5	13.0	23.8	8.9	15.6
Q3.	Have you made a submission to any Council consultation before?	%	%	%	%	%
	First-time submitter	46.4	34.8	46	41.1	33.8
Q4.	As a first-time submitter, how would you have described yourself before making a submission?	%	%	%	%	%
	You were unaware of council consultations	20	25	0	8.7	15.4
	Just not interested	13.3	12.5	13.8	21.7	26.9
	Interested but didn't have the time	24.4	33.3	31	60.9	19.2
	Interested but not sure how to go about making a submission	26.7	33.3	31	60.9	19.2
	Other	20	4.2	27.6	0	15.4
Q8.	Consultation information	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
	Consultation information was easy to understand	3.39	3.37	3.63	3.76	3.79
	Consultation information was easy to access	3.36	3.48	3.52	3.8	3.72
	Adequate to feel well informed	3.3	3.18	3.34	3.45	3.51
	There was plenty of time to make the submission	3.64	3.61	3.8	3.94	3.82
	If you used the council submission form was it easy to use?	3.55	3.6	3.82	3.95	3.73
Q9.	What issues did you want the council to consider	%	%	%	%	%
	Infrastructure	60.8	52.2	49.2	62.5	64.9

	Question statement	<$30,000	$30,000-$49,999	$50,000 - $69.999	$70,000-$99,999	>$100,000
	Community facilities	55.7	62.3	49.2	57.1	62.2
	Community services	55.7	46.4	36.5	51.8	49.4
	Cost affordability	59.8	50.7	39.7	37.5	37.4
	Environmental Issues	40.2	26.1	31.7	55.4	49.4
	Business and the economy	20.6	70.2	19	28.6	23.4
	Rating revenue and finance policies	50.5	43.5	30.2	23.2	37.7
	Cultural issues	24.7	11.6	6.3	7.1	15.6
	Transport	35.1	30.4	33.3	35.7	37.7
	Other	16.5	23.2	22.2	19.6	11.7
Q10.	Did you speak at the hearings	%	%	%	%	%
	Yes	26.8	27.5	23.8	28.6	32.5
Q11.	As a speaker did you feel	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
	You were advised of the hearing in plenty of time	3.96	4.17	4.38	4.25	4.04
	You received enough information to know what to expect	3.62	3.76	4	3.38	3.64
	You were made welcome at the hearing	3.81	4.12	4	4.13	3.92
	Councillors valued your presentation	3.24	3.13	3	3.93	3.8
	You felt comfortable speaking before Council	3.81	4.17	3.87	4.25	3.68
Q12.	Why did you choose not to speak	%	%	%	%	%
	You didn't have the time to appear	14.1	18	27.1	30	21.2
	You felt your written submission was enough	49.3	50	50	50	51.9
	You would not be comfortable speaking in public like that	31	22	16.7	12.5	15.4
	You were unsure of what was involved in speaking before council	21.1	2	12.5	10	9.6
	Other	26.8	22	29.2	25	28.8
Q13.	At the end of the whole consultation process did you feel	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
	You had a chance to influence the councils' decision	2.86	2.97	2.88	3.24	3.19
	The final decision made by council showed they listened to submitters	2.74	2.69	2.81	3.33	2.88
	You were satisfied with the letter you received explaining the councils decisions	3.1	2.94	3.2	3.58	3.3
	Overall you were satisfied you made a submission to council	3.69	3.59	3.8	3.94	3.68
Q16.	Representation	%	%	%	%	%
	Individual	88.7	85.5	84.1	82.1	74
	Business interests	1	4.3	7.9	12.5	15.6
	Community organisation	13.4	15.9	19	14.3	18.2
	Other	15.5	10.1	16.3	10.7	6.5
Q18.	Gender	%	%	%	%	%

	Question statement	<$30,000	$30,000-$49,999	$50,000 - $69.999	$70,000-$99,999	>$100,000
	Male	47.9	65.7	58.1	57.1	66.7
	Female	52.1	34.3	41.9	42.9	33.3
Q19.	Age	%	%	%	%	%
	Under 20	0	0	0	1.8	0
	20-39	4.2	10.4	12.9	14.5	20
	40-60	20.8	23.9	37.1	54.5	65.3
	60-85	72.9	65.7	50	27.3	14.7
	Over 85	2.1	0	0	1.8	0
Q20.	Ethnicity	%	%	%	%	%
	European	80.4	82.1	92.1	92.3	86.7
	Māori	16.3	7.5	4.8	3.8	6.7
	Pacific Island	0	1.5	0	0	1.3
	Asian	0	4.5	0	1.9	0
	Other	3.3	4.5	3.2	1.9	5.3
Q22.	Education	%	%	%	%	%
	None	9.4	8.8	0	3.6	0
	Secondary	40.6	41.2	35.5	19.6	22.4
	Basic, intermediate or advanced vocational certificate	26	17.6	29	12.5	14.5
	Degree or higher	24	32.4	35.5	64.3	63.2
Q23.	Household makeup	%	%	%	%	%
	Single	40	5.8	7.9	10.7	2.6
	Couple only	46.3	78.3	57.1	57.1	45.5
	Couple with children	6.3	5.8	28.6	30.4	48.1
	Solo parent	3.2	1.4	4.8	1.8	2.6
	Other	4.2	8.7	1.6	0	1.3

Appendix J – Cross-Tabulation of Education Levels

	Question statement	None	Fifth, sixth or bursary at secondary school	A basic, intermediate or advanced vocational certificate	Bachelor or higher degree
Q1.	Where did you first read or hear about the consultation on the Long Term Plan	%	%	%	%
	Local newspaper	33.3	51.5	50.6	32.4
	Radio	0.0	9.2	4.9	2.2
	From another person	37.5	21.5	8.6	19.0
	Poster or advertising	8.3	6.2	2.5	2.2
	Council's website	0.0	1.5	2.5	5.6
	Council summary sent by post	33.3	34.6	46.9	38.3
	Other	4.2	9.2	11.1	15.1
Q2.	Once you found out about the consultation, where did you get information on the proposed Plan from?	%	%	%	%
	Council newsletter	29.2	30.8	32.1	20.1
	Council summary sent by post	41.7	43.1	44.4	43.6
	Council website	8.3	16.2	22.2	29.1
	Council offices/staff	41.7	22.3	16.0	21.8
	Council library	8.3	3.8	1.2	5.6
	Other	8.3	18.5	19.8	14.0
Q3.	Have you made a submission to any Council consultation before?	%	%	%	%
	First-time submitter	66.7	46.9	46.9	34.1
Q4.	As a first-time submitter, how would you have described yourself before making a submission?	%	%	%	%
	You were unaware of council consultations	25	18	7.9	19.7
	Just not interested	37.5	19.7	18.4	16.4
	Interested but didn't have the time	18.8	21.3	31.6	39.3

	Question statement	None	Fifth, sixth or bursary at secondary school	A basic, intermediate or advanced vocational certificate	Bachelor or higher degree
	Interested but not sure how to go about making a submission	25	24.6	31.6	23
	Other	12.5	23	13.2	3.9
Q6.	Method of submission	%	%	%	%
	Consultation form (paper)	54.2	56.2	50.6	49.2
	website form	4.2	8.5	14.8	15.1
	Written submission (other than council form)	25	14.6	17.3	20.1
	On another form sent to me by another interest group	4.2	6.2	3.7	1.7
Q8.	Consultation information	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
	Consultation information was easy to understand	3.08	3.45	3.46	3.71
	Consultation information was easy to access	3	3.45	3.43	3.66
	Adequate to feel well informed	2.83	3.39	3.35	3.37
	There was plenty of time to make the submission	3.43	3.65	3.57	3.86
	If you used the council submission form was it easy to use?	3.26	3.53	3.79	3.75
Q9.	What issues did you want the council to consider	%	%	%	%
	Infrastructure	62.5	57.7	49.4	62
	Community facilities	66.7	55.4	55.6	59.8
	Community services	58.3	46.9	45.7	50.8
	Cost affordability	62.5	51.5	54.3	41.9
	Environmental Issues	37.5	26.9	33.3	53.1
	Business and the economy	16.7	17.7	18.5	25.1
	Rating revenue and finance policies	41.7	46.9	39.5	33.5
	Cultural issues	25	11.5	12.3	16.8
	Transport	45.8	27.7	33.3	40.2
	Other	16.7	23.1	22.2	11.2

	Question statement	None	Fifth, sixth or bursary at secondary school	A basic, intermediate or advanced vocational certificate	Bachelor or higher degree
Q10.	Did you speak at the hearings	%	%	%	%
	Yes	33.3	22.3	24.7	34.6
Q11.	As a speaker did you feel	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
	You were advised of the hearing in plenty of time	4	4.12	4.05	4.2
	You received enough information to know what to expect	3.75	3.78	3.5	4.05
	You were made welcome at the hearing	3.33	3.75	3.8	4.18
	Councillors valued your presentation	3.75	3.32	3.06	3.53
	You felt comfortable speaking before Council	3.75	3.97	3.8	3.97
Q12.	Why did you choose not to speak	%	%	%	%
	You didn't have the time to appear	12.5	14.9	21.3	26.5
	You felt your written submission was enough	37.5	55.4	49.2	48.7
	You would not be comfortable speaking in public like that	25	19.8	31.1	12.8
	You were unsure of what was involved in speaking before council	6.3	14.9	14.8	7.7
	Other	31.3	17.8	26.2	34.2
Q13.	At the end of the whole consultation process did you feel	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
	You had a chance to influence the council's decision	3.05	2.8	2.92	3.16
	The final decision made by council showed they listened to submitters	2.85	2.77	2.89	2.9
	You were satisfied with the letter you received explaining the councils decisions	3.36	3.07	3.28	3.23
	Overall you were satisfied you made a submission to council	3.65	3.67	3.74	3.74

	Question statement	None	Fifth, sixth or bursary at secondary school	A basic, intermediate or advanced vocational certificate	Bachelor or higher degree
Q16.	Representation	%	%	%	%
	Individual	66.7	83.8	82.7	76.5
	Business interests	4.2	8.5	9.9	7.3
	Community organisation	37.5	10.8	18.5	22.3
	Other	16.7	14.6	8.6	8.9
Q18.	Gender	%	%	%	%
	Male	54.2	59.4	54.4	56.1
	Female	45.8	40.6	45.6	43.9
Q19.	Age	%	%	%	%
	Under 20	0	0.8	0	0
	20-39	8.3	5.6	6.3	17.8
	40-60	20.8	34.9	37.5	48.3
	60-85	66.7	87.9	53.8	33.9
	Over 85	4.2	0.8	2.5	0
Q20.	Ethnicity	%	%	%	%
	European	80	86.5	92.2	85.2
	Māori	15	10.3	2.6	7.1
	Pacific Island	0	0.8	0	0.6
	Asian	0	1.6	1.3	1.2
	Other	5	0.8	3.9	5.9
Q21.	Household income	%	%	%	%
	Under $30,000	52.9	33.3	34.2	15.2
	$30,000-$49,999	35.3	23.9	16.4	14.6
	$50,000 - $69,999	0	18.8	24.7	14.6
	$70,000 - $100,000	11.8	9.4	9.6	23.8
	Over $100,000	0	14.5	15.1	31.8
Q23.	Household makeup	%	%	%	%
	Single	47.7	17.2	31.3	11.5
	Couple only	45.8	63.3	51.3	51.3
	Couple with children	4.2	12.5	22.5	31
	Solo parent	0	3.9	2.5	1.1
	Other	8.3	3.1	2.5	5.2

Appendix K – Cross-Tabulation of Household Makeup

	Question statements	Single person	Couple without	Couple with children	Single parent
Q1.	Where did you first read or hear about the consultation on the Long Term Plan	%	%	%	%
	Local newspaper	36.2	46.1	35.9	40.0
	Radio	2.9	5.2	2.2	0.0
	From another person	20.3	13.9	22.8	40.0
	Poster or advertising	7.2	3.5	2.5	10.0
	Council's website	2.9	2.6	5.4	10
	Council summary sent by post	46.4	40.4	38.0	10
	Other	7.2	11.7	10.9	20.0
Q2.	Once you found out about the consultation, where did you get information on the proposed Plan from?	%	%	%	%
	Council newsletter	34.8	25.7	21.7	30.0
	Council summary sent by post	47.8	42.8	44.6	60.0
	Council website	7.2	25.2	28.3	40.0
	Council offices/staff	17.4	24.3	17.4	20.0
	Council library	5.8	3.9	2.2	0.0
	Other	13.0	14.9	20.7	0.0
Q3.	Have you made a submission to any Council consultation before?	%	%	%	%
	First-time submitter	49.3	41.3	42.4	40
Q4.	As a first-time submitter, how would you have described yourself before making a submission?	%	%	%	%
	You were unaware of council consultations	23.5	12.6	15.4	0
	Just not interested	23.5	22.1	15.4	25
	Interested but didn't have the time	20.6	30.5	38.5	25
	Interested but not sure how to go about making a submission	23.5	24.2	25.6	25
	Other	14.7	17.9	7.7	25

	Question statements	Single person	Couple without	Couple with children	Single parent
Q6.	Method of submission	%	%	%	%
	Consultation form (paper)	60.9	49.6	47.8	80
	website form	4.3	14.8	18.5	10
	Written submission (other than council form)	20.3	17.4	13	10
	On another form sent to me by another interest group	7.2	3.5	2.2	0
Q8.	Consultation information	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
	Consultation information was easy to understand	3.49	3.6	3.58	2.9
	Consultation information was easy to access	3.52	3.54	3.57	3
	Adequate to feel well informed	3.39	3.42	3.24	2.7
	There was plenty of time to make the submission	3.73	3.77	3.7	3
	If you used the council submission form was it easy to use?	3.61	3.7	3.71	2.9
Q9.	What issues did you want the council to consider	%	%	%	%
	Infrastructure	58	59.1	55.4	70
	Community facilities	65.2	54.8	57.6	70
	Community services	55.1	49.1	44.6	60
	Cost affordability	50.7	47.4	38.0	80
	Environmental Issues	40.6	37.4	45.7	60
	Business and the economy	18.8	20.9	21.7	40
	Rating revenue and finance policies	44.9	39.1	31.5	50
	Cultural issues	22.3	15.2	6.5	30
	Transport	37.7	32.6	34.8	50
	Other	15.9	19.1	9.8	20
Q10.	Did you speak at the hearings	%	%	%	%
	Yes	13	31.3	27.2	20
Q11.	As a speaker did you feel	%	%	%	%
	You were advised of the hearing in plenty of time	4	4.21	4	3.5
	You received enough information to know what to expect	3.78	3.94	3.76	2
	You were made welcome at the hearing	4	4	4.08	2.5
	Councillors valued your presentation	3.75	3.29	3.76	1.5
	You felt comfortable speaking before Council	3.89	4.03	3.8	1.5
Q12.	Why did you choose not to speak	%	%	%	%

	Question statements	Single person	Couple without	Couple with children	Single parent
	You didn't have the time to appear	23.3	13.3	34.3	35
	You felt your written submission was enough	43.3	54.4	50.7	37.5
	You would not be comfortable speaking in public like that	18.3	20.3	16.4	25
	You were unsure of what was involved in speaking before council	15	8.2	17.8	0
	Other	30	26.6	23.9	25
Q13.	At the end of the whole consultation process did you feel	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
	You had a chance to influence the council's decision	2.73	3.02	3.07	2.2
	The final decision made by council showed they listened to submitters	2.74	2.89	2.83	2.8
	You were satisfied with the letter you received explaining the councils decisions	3.29	3.24	3.07	2.9
	Overall you were satisfied you made a submission to council	3.58	3.75	3.6	3.33
Q16.	Representation	%	%	%	%
	Individual	84.1	81.3	73.9	90
	Business interests	4.3	7.8	13	10
	Community organisation	15.9	17	21.7	20
	Other	5.8	12.2	9.8	0
Q18.	Gender	%	%	%	%
	Male	38.8	60.4	67.4	66.7
	Female	61.2	39.6	32.6	33.3
Q19.	Age	%	%	%	%
	Under 20	0	0	1.1	10
	20-39	9.1	9	18.9	10
	40-60	30.3	27.8	47.4	60
	60-85	57.6	62.8	5.6	20
	Over 85	3	0.4	0	0
Q20.	Ethnicity	%	%	%	%
	European	85.9	89.4	82	70
	Māori	12.5	5.5	7.9	20

	Question statements	Single person	Couple without	Couple with children	Single parent
	Pacific Island	0	0.9	0	0
	Asian	0	0.9	2.2	10
	Other	1.6	3.2	7.9	0
Q21.	Household income	%	%	%	%
	Under $30,000	69.1	21.9	7.3	30
	$30,000-$49,999	7.3	26.9	4.9	10
	$50,000 - $69,999	9.1	17.9	22	30
	$70,000 - $100,000	10.9	15.9	20.7	10
	Over $100,000	3.6	17.4	45.1	20
Q22.	Education	%	%	%	%
	None	14.5	5	1.1	0
	Secondary	31.9	36.5	18	55.6
	A basic, intermediate or advanced vocational certificate	24.6	18.5	20.2	22.2
	Degree or higher	29	40.1	60.7	22.2

Appendix L – Cross-Tabulation of Speakers and Non-Speakers

	Question statements	Speaker	Non-speaker
Q1.	Where did you first read or hear about the consultation on the Long Term Plan	%	%
	Local newspaper	42.2	39.6
	Radio	6.3	4.1
	From another person	21.9	16.7
	Poster or advertising	3.1	5
	Council's website	1.6	4.1
	Council summary sent by post	37.5	40.6
	Other	17.2	9.4
Q2.	Once you found out about the consultation, where did you get information on the proposed Plan from?	%	%
	Council newsletter	18.8	28.9
	Council summary sent by post	44.5	44.3
	Council website	25	22
	Council offices/staff	37.5	14.8
	Council library	4.7	3.8
	Other	16.4	16.7
Q3.	Have you made a submission to any Council consultation before?	%	%
	First-time submitter	28.9	47.5
Q4.	As a first-time submitter, how would you have described yourself before making a submission?	%	%
	You were unaware of council consultations	23.7	13.9
	Just not interested	15.9	22.5
	Interested but didn't have the time	18.4	31.1
	Interested but not sure how to go about making a submission	23.7	25.8
	Other	23.7	11.9
Q6.	Method of submission	%	%
	Consultation form (paper)	38.3	54.7
	website form	10.9	13.8
	Written submission (other than council form)	30.5	14.8
	On another form sent to me by another interest group	0.8	5
	email	0	0

	Question statements	Speaker	Non-speaker
	other	10.2	6.3
Q8.	Consultation information	Mean	Mean
	Consultation information was easy to understand	3.36	3.58
	Consultation information was easy to access	3.4	3.53
	Adequate to feel well informed	3.26	3.37
	There was plenty of time to make the submission	3.58	3.76
	If you used the council submission form was it easy to use?	3.42	3.71
Q9.	What issues did you want the council to consider	%	%
	Infrastructure	50	60.1
	Community facilities	43.8	62.6
	Community services	39.1	52.5
	Cost affordability	43.8	48.7
	Environmental Issues	39.8	39.6
	Business and the economy	22.7	19.2
	Rating revenue and finance policies	35.2	40.3
	Cultural issues	16.4	13.5
	Transport	33.6	35.2
	Other	20.3	16
Q11.	As a speaker did you feel	Mean	Mean
	You were advised of the hearing in plenty of time	4.13	Na
	You received enough information to know what to expect	3.87	Na
	You were made welcome at the hearing	4	Na
	Councillors valued your presentation	3.38	Na
	You felt comfortable speaking before Council	3.91	Na
Q12.	Why did you choose not to speak	%	%
	You didn't have the time to appear	Na	19.6
	You felt your written submission was enough	Na	50.2
	You would not be comfortable speaking in public like that	Na	19.9
	You were unsure of what was involved in speaking before council	Na	11.4
	Other	Na	27.4
Q13.	At the end of the whole consultation process did you feel	Mean	Mean
	You had a chance to influence the council decision	3.13	2.9
	The final decision made by council showed they listened to submitters	2.88	2.82

	Question statements	Speaker	Non-speaker
	You were satisfied with the letter you received explaining the councils decisions	3.12	3.2
	Overall you were satisfied you made a submission to council	3.69	3.69
Q16.	Representation	%	%
	Individual	68	82.5
	Business interests	7.8	8.3
	Community organisation	34.4	12.7
	Other	14.1	10.2
Q18.	Gender	%	%
	Male	65.8	54.1
	Female	34.2	45.9
Q19.	Age	%	%
	Under 20	0	0.7
	20-39	11.3	11.2
	40-60	40	40.5
	60-85	48.7	46.4
	Over 85	1	1.3
Q20.	Ethnicity	%	%
	European	90.3	84.4
	Māori	6.2	9.2
	Pacific Island	0	0.7
	Asian	0.9	1.4
	Other	2.7	4.4
Q21.	Household income	%	%
	Under $30,000	25.7	27.2
	$30,000-$49,999	18.8	19.2
	$50,000 - $69,999	14.9	18.4
	$70,000 - $100,000	15.8	15.3
	Over $100,000	24.8	19.9
Q22.	Education	%	%
	None	6.7	5.4
	Secondary	24.4	34.2
	Basic, intermediate or advanced vocational certificate	16.8	20.7
	Degree or higher	52.1	39.1

	Question statements	Speaker	Non-speaker
Q23.	Household status	%	%
	Single	7.8	19.7
	Couple only	62.6	52
	Couple with children	21.7	22
	Single parent with children	1.7	2.6
	Other	6.1	3.6

Appendix M – Cross-Tabulation of Repeat and First-Time Submitters

	Question statements	Repeat	First-time
Q1.	Where did you first hear about the consultation on the Long Term Plan	%	%
	Local newspaper	40.7	40.2
	Radio	4.9	4.2
	From another person	15.2	22.2
	Poster or advertising	4.6	4.2
	Council's website	3.8	2.6
	Council summary sent by post	41.8	36.5
	Other	14.1	9
Q2.	Once you found out about the consultation, where did you get information on the proposed plan from?	%	%
	Council newsletter	27	24.9
	Council summary sent by post	48.3	38.6
	Council website	25.5	19.6
	Council offices/staff	19.4	23.3
	Council library	3.8	4.2
	Other	15.6	17.5
Q4.	As a first-time submitter, how would you have described yourself before making a submission?	%	%
	You were unaware of council consultations	Na	15.9
	Just not interested	Na	20.6
	Interested but didn't have the time	Na	29.1
	Interested but not sure how to go about making a submission	Na	25.4
	Other	Na	14.3
Q6.	Method of submission	%	%
	Consultation form (paper)	47.1	54.3
	website form	11.6	14.9
	Written submission (other than council form)	25.1	11.2
	On another form sent to me by another interest group	1.9	6.4
	email	0	1.1
	other	9.3	4.8
Q8.	Consultation information	Mean	Mean
	Consultation information was easy to understand	3.52	3.5

	Question statements	Repeat	First-time
	Consultation information was easy to access	3.47	3.53
	Adequate to feel well informed	3.3	3.4
	There was plenty of time to make the submission	3.7	3.72
	If you used the council submission form was it easy to use?	3.6	3.68
Q9.	What issues did you want the council to consider	%	%
	Infrastructure	59.3	54.3
	Community facilities	57.4	56.9
	Community services	49.2	47.9
	Cost affordability	46.5	48.4
	Environmental Issues	45.3	31.9
	Business and the economy	20.9	19.1
	Rating revenue and finance policies	38.4	39.4
	Cultural issues	13.2	16
	Transport	36.4	32.4
	Other	19	14.9
Q10.	Did you speak at the hearings	%	%
.	Yes	35.3	19.7
Q11.	As a speaker did you feel	Mean	Mean
	You were advised of the hearing in plenty of time	4.16	4.06
	You received enough information to know what to expect	4.01	3.51
	You were made welcome at the hearing	3.98	4.06
	Councillors valued your presentation	3.24	3.71
	You felt comfortable speaking before Council	3.92	3.86
Q12.	Why did you choose not to speak	%	%
	You didn't have the time to appear	24	14.7
	You felt your written submission was enough	46.7	54.9
	You would not be comfortable speaking in public like that	18.6	21.3
	You were unsure of what was involved in speaking before council	6	17.3
	Other	32.3	22
Q13.	At the end of the whole consultation process did you feel	%	%
	You had a chance to influence the council decision	2.92	3.04
	The final decision made by council showed they listened to submitters	2.76	2.96
	You were satisfied with the letter you received explaining the councils decisions	3.14	3.23

	Question statements	Repeat	First-time
	Overall you were satisfied you made a submission to council	3.61	3.79
Q16.	Representation	%	%
	Individual	77.3	79.7
	Business interests	9	7
	Community organisation	23.5	12.8
	Other	9.8	13.4
Q18.	Gender	%	%
	Male	59.6	54.4
	Female	40.4	45.6
Q19.	Age	%	%
	Under 20	0	1.1
	20-39	9.6	13.3
	40-60	43.9	35.6
	60-85	46	48.3
	Over 85	0.4	1.7
Q20.	Ethnicity	%	%
	European	86	86
	Māori	7.7	9.2
	Pacific Island	0.9	0
	Asian	1.3	1.2
	Other	4.3	3.5
Q21.	Household income	%	%
	Under $30,000	24.2	30.6
	$30,000-$49.999	20.9	16.3
	$50,000 - $69,999	15.8	19.7
	$70,000 - $100,000	15.3	15.6
	Over $100,000	23.7	17.7
Q22.	Education	%	%
	None	3.4	9.1
	Secondary	29	34.7
	Basic, intermediate or advanced vocational certificate	18.1	21.6
	Degree or higher	49.6	34.7
Q 23.	Household status	%	%
	single	14.8	18.7
	couple only	57	52.2

	Question statements	Repeat	First-time
	couple with children	22.4	21.4
	single parent with children	2.5	2.2
	other	3.4	5.5

Appendix N – Cross-Tabulation of Representation

	Question statements	Individual	Business	Community	Other
Q1.	Where did you first hear about the consultation on the Long Term Plan	%	%	%	%
	Local newspaper	45.9	30.6	36.9	38.0
	Radio	5.2	5.6	1.2	10.0
	From another person	15.0	33.3	28.6	16.0
	Poster or advertising	4.6	0.0	2.4	4.0
	Council's website	2.3	0.0	7.1	2.0
	Council summary sent by post	40.5	41.7	32.1	42.0
	Other	11.3	5.6.	22.6	14.0
Q2.	Once you found out about the consultation, where did you get information on the proposed plan from?	%	%	%	%
	Council newsletter	26.6	22.2	22.6	34.0
	Council summary sent by post	45.4	44.4	44.0	36.0
	Council website	18.8	47.2	32.1	14.0
	Council offices/staff	21.1	19.4	32.1	26.0
	Council library	4.6	0.0	3.6	6.0
	Other	16.5	16.7	14.3	32.0
Q3.	Have you made a submission to any Council consultation before?	%	%	%	%
	First-time submitter	43.1	36.1	28.6	50.0
Q4.	As a first-time submitter, how would you have described yourself before making a submission?	%	%	%	%
	You were unaware of council consultations	16.0	7.7	12.5	28.0
	Just not interested	18.0	38.5	25.0	24.0
	Interested but didn't have the time	28.7	30.8	29.2	24.0
	Interested but not sure how to go about making a submission	26.7	23.1	25.0	20.0
	Other	15.3	0.0	16.7	12.0
Q6.	Method of submission	%	%	%	%
	Consultation form (paper)	55.5	41.7	36.9	36.0
	website form	14.2	13.9	14.3	6.0

	Question statements	Individual	Business	Community	Other
	Written submission (other than council form)	13.9	19.4	28.9	28.0
	On another form sent to me by another interest group	2.6	5.6	1.2	14.0
	email	7.5	8.3	8.3	2.0
	txt	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	other	6.4	11.1	9.5	14.0
Q8.	Consultation information	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
	Consultation information was easy to understand	3.53	3.51	3.45	3.24
	Consultation information was easy to access	3.49	3.65	3.37	3.48
	Adequate to feel well informed	3.33	3.4	3.21	3.28
	There was plenty of time to make the submission	3.75	3.5	3.49	3.53
	If you used the council submission form was it easy to use?	3.65	3.92	3.51	3.37
Q9.	What issues did you want the council to consider	%	%	%	%
	Infrastructure	59.5	47.2	51.2	62.0
	Community facilities	58.7	38.9	67.9	54.0
	Community services	51.4	38.9	44.0	38.0
	Cost affordability	50.6	50.0	42.9	44.0
	Environmental Issues	40.2	44.4	42.9	34.0
	Business and the economy	19.9	41.7	23.8	20.0
	Rating revenue and finance policies	40.2	38.8	35.7	40.0
	Cultural issues	13.9	5.6	19.0	14.0
	Transport	35.0	19.4	32.1	42.0
	Other	18.2	27.8	22.6	18.0
Q10.	Did you speak at the hearings	%	%	%	%
.	Yes	25.1	27.8	52.4	36.0
Q11.	As a speaker did you feel	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
	You were advised of the hearing in plenty of time	4.13	4.3	4.18	3.76
	You received enough information to know what to expect	3.8	4.33	4.0	3.59
	You were made welcome at the hearing	3.9	4.67	3.98	3.82
	Councillors valued your presentation	3.32	3.9	3.25	3.29
	You felt comfortable speaking before Council	3.87	4.3	3.75	3.53
Q12.	Why did you choose not to speak	%	%	%	%
	You didn't have the time to appear	20.1	30.8	15.0	18.8

	Question statements	Individual	Business	Community	Other
	You felt your written submission was enough	51.4	34.6	45.0	53.1
	You would not be comfortable speaking in public like that	22.0	23.1	5.0	15.6
	You were unsure of what was involved in speaking before council	13.1	11.5	2.5	18.8
	Other	24.7	26.9	47.5	40.6
Q13.	At the end of the whole consultation process did you feel	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
	You had a chance to influence the council decision	2.93	3.15	3.11	2.9
	The final decision made by council showed they listened to submitters	2.81	3.19	2.94	2.76
	You were satisfied with the letter you received explaining the councils decisions	3.21	3.32	3.15	3.03
	Overall you were satisfied you made a submission to council	3.71	3.94	3.54	3.49
Q18.	Gender	%	%	%	%
	Male	57.2	54.3	55.1	61.7
	Female	42.8	45.7	44.9	38.3
Q19.	Age	%	%	%	%
	Under 20	0.3	0.0	1.3	0.0
	20-39	9.0	22.2	11.5	10.9
	40-60	38.6	52.8	44.9	34.8
	60-85	50.9	25.0	42.3	54.3
	Over 85	1.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Q20.	Ethnicity	%	%	%	%
	European	87.2	86.1	85.1	72.7
	Māori	7.3	8.3	10.8	20.5
	Pacific Island	0.6	0.0	1.4	0.0
	Asian	0.9	0.0	1.4	2.3
	Other	4.0	5.6	1.4	4.5
Q21.	Household income	%	%	%	%
	Under $30,000	26.6	3.6	22.4	40.5
	$30,000-$49.999	19.6	10.7	19.0	18.9
	$50,000 - $69,999	17.6	17.9	20.7	10.8
	$70,000 - $100,000	15.3	25.0	13.8	16.2

	Question statements	Individual	Business	Community	Other
	Over $100,000	18.9	42.9	24.1	13.5
Q22.	Education	%	%	%	%
	None	4.9	3.0	11.5	8.7
	Secondary	33.1	33.3	17.9	41.3
	Basic, intermediate or advanced vocational certificate	20.4	24.2	19.2	15.2
	Degree or higher	41.6	39.4	51.3	34.8
Q 23.	Household status	%	%	%	%
	single	17.3	8.8	14.5	8.9
	couple only	55.7	52.9	51.3	62.2
	couple with children	20.2	35.3	26.3	20.0
	single parent with children	2.7	2.9	2.6	0.0
	other	4.2	0.0	5.3	8.9

Appendix O – Measures Of Central Tendency In Submitter Survey Responses

Note: All measures are calculated excluding the 'don't know' response category

Table 40: Measures of location and variability

Question statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Coefficient of variation (CV)%
Consultation information was easy to understand	3.52	1.103	31.32
Consultation information was easy to access	3.49	1.101	31.54
There was adequate information to feel well informed	3.34	1.120	33.52
There was plenty of time to prepare a submission	3.71	1.112	29.99
The Council submission form, was easy to use	3.63	0.977	26.92

Table 41: Measures of location and variability for speakers at hearings ratings

Question statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Coefficient of variation (CV) %
You were advised of the hearing schedule in plenty of time	4.13	0.878	21.26
You had/received enough information to know what to expect at the hearing.	3.87	1.035	26.74
You were made welcome in the hearing	4.00	1.019	25.49
Councillors valued your presentation	3.38	1.132	33.48
You were comfortable speaking before Council	3.91	1.031	26.36

Table 42: Comparison of position and variability measures for overall satisfaction levels of submitters

Question statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Coefficient of variation (CV) %
You had a chance to influence the council's decision	2.97	1.265	42.61
The final decision made by council showed they listened to submitters	2.84	1.160	40.85
You were satisfied with the letter you received explaining Council's decisions	3.18	1.087	34.17
Overall, you were satisfied you made a submission to Council	3.69	0.908	24.60

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