



# **CONSULTATION POLICY**

## **The Council Commitment to Consultation**

The Westland District Council is committed to on-going and effective community consultation. We welcome and value input from the people of Westland so we can consider and properly reflect their views in our decision making. We believe our decision making is greatly improved as a result and more accurately reflects the views and interest of the community.

Council is also committed to determining the overall view of the Westland community as accurately as possible and will use appropriate techniques to meet this objective.

Councillors have been elected to govern the Westland District and make decisions on behalf of the community. Consultation will enhance this democratic process by contributing to the decision making function of the Council.

The Council is committed to acknowledging the unique perspectives of Maori as Papatipu Runanga.

## **What is Consultation?**

Consultation can be defined as any contact with the community. For the purpose of this policy the Westland District Council has adopted the following definition of consultation:

## **Consultation is Dialogue Followed by Decision Making**

### **Consultation is NOT:**

- providing information
- a substitute for decision making
- always about reaching an agreement or consensus
- always about negotiation

### **Consultation is not always appropriate when:**

- a decision has already been made
- there is a need for commercial sensitivity
- the likely decision is apparent

- it is a small issue with little public interest

**According to this definition, consultation generally means Council will:**

- present a proposal that has not been decided upon
- listen to what others have to say
- consider their comments
- decide if and how the proposal should be changed
- report on the final decision, and then;
- respond to the people involved in the process.

Therefore, the public's role in consultation will generally be one of expressing an opinion not casting a vote (unless a referendum is held as a consultation technique). Consultation may include market research techniques such as surveys of all or some part of the Westland community.

**Types of consultation**

The Westland District Council identifies four main types of consultation. The extent of the dialogue differs in each of the four types. For each consultation, the Westland District Council will choose the type best suited to the decision making it must do.

1. Partnering - people are involved right from the beginning and work together or plan jointly to achieve mutually acceptable goals. The Council shares decision making with the group of people involved. To date, this type of consultation has not been used often and only within specific boundaries. An example is the grants made for rural townships upgrades where community groups submit proposals to Council.
2. Participatory - representatives of the community are involved throughout a decision making process. They work together with the Council to try to identify a compromise or consensus solution. Council facilitates the process, but retains final decision-making. The development of the Hokitika Town Centre Concept Plan and the connection of Kaniere Township to Council's sewerage system are examples. At various stages throughout these projects, community representatives had opportunities to work with the Council to progress the project.

3. Interactive - plans are formulated or modified after contact with the community. Reasonable information is provided and people are given reasonable opportunity to comment. Council leads the process with an example of this type of consultation being the development of the Council's Annual Plan. People are given detailed information on the proposed plan and their response is considered.
4. Reactive - information is provided to the community when their input or advice is required on a proposal that is, or is nearly, complete. The Council directs this consultation. We would use this type of consultation where there were only a few well-defined options and may obtain extensive specialist advice with public feedback being only one of the factors which would influence the decision.

**(Note: the word Consultation is used throughout this document in a general way to encompass all four types, unless it is stated otherwise).**

### **Consultation Principles**

Westland District Council uses the following principles to consult with the community. They may not all apply to a particular situation:

- **Inclusiveness**

Set up and run the consultation in a way which encourages the participation of people who are affected by a decision.

- **Timing**

Allow enough time for participants to contribute and to raise unexpected issues.

- **Focus**

Consultation is purpose-driven.

- **Information Provision**

Information relating to the consultation is readily available so that participants can make informed and timely contributions.

- **Resourcing**

Consultations are carefully costed. The Council will consider providing some form of assistance to groups who would otherwise be unable to contribute.

- **Responsiveness**

The Council is genuinely committed to considering and responding to participants' contributions.

- **Consultation with Maori**

Council consultation acknowledges the unique perspectives of Maori as Papatipu Runanga in the District.

- **Accuracy**

Use market research and other quantifiable research methods if necessary to ensure the information gathered summarises the views of a whole community.

- **Implementation and Feedback**

Evaluate all consultations after the decision making is complete. Provide feedback to participants whenever possible.

- **Pragmatism and Balance**

Consultation will not take place when a decision has essentially been made, where the Council must act quickly in the interests of the District, or the issue is not of significance.

### **The People and Community of Westland**

Includes resident ratepayers, non resident ratepayers, residents of Westland, community and volunteer organisations and key stakeholders of Westland District.

**Adopted by Council 18 August 2005.**