

28 February 2013

Local Government reform in the Wellington region

Communications and engagement plan

1. Executive summary

This plan is designed to quickly raise awareness of the proposed model(s) for governance of the Wellington region and encourage a high level of engagement from the public and targeted stakeholder groups. Advertising (print, radio, online) and other communications (e.g. direct mail flyer) are concentrated at the beginning of the process.

The scale of communications and their timing is designed to:

- maximise the likelihood that people will be informed about what is proposed and why
- encourage early engagement and thereby maximise the amount of time that people have to engage.

Advertising will drive traffic to the joint website (www.regionalreform.org.nz), which is the preferred channel for public engagement and submissions (using Bang the Table). Paper submissions will be facilitated through a submission form included in the flyer delivered as unaddressed mail to all households in the region.

Note: This is not formal consultation – this will occur when the Local Government Commission, the body that makes the decision on reform, consults on its proposal expected later in the year.

The plan covers all joint communications and engagement for the councils that vote to take the Working Party's recommended proposal(s) out to public engagement. Where councils wish to undertake their own additional engagement this will be done through those councils' own websites and processes, but the joint website will allow people to easily connect to these. This includes councils that wish to engage more deeply on issues particular to their area, those that support engaging on multiple options, and possibly those that support other options exclusively. This last would be done on a reciprocal basis (i.e. their websites would also link to this site) and it would be made clear linking did not mean that the options or information on other sites was endorsed.

Existing council advertising has been used wherever possible to reduce costs (see budget).

The plan has been prepared jointly by staff of Greater Wellington Regional Council, Kapiti Coast District Council, Porirua City Council and Wellington City Council.

The Working Party is requested to approve the programme and budget and the approval process for sign-off of copy.

2. Objectives

The overall objective is:

- To inform and collect community and stakeholder views to assist the drafting of the final application to the Local Government Commission and to help achieve the 'demonstrable support' required.

Subsidiary objectives are:

- To promote public understanding of, and support for, the proposed model(s).
- To clearly communicate the process that participating councils will use to prepare an application to the Local Government Commission.
- To encourage significant public engagement in the process by ensuring that engagement processes and opportunities are clear, simple and coordinated.
- To manage communications risk associated with the proposal and the regional debate on competing models.

Councils will also develop their own communications and engagement programmes covering issues specific to their own communities and staff. These programmes will supplement and support this plan and officers have agreed to keep each other informed of local initiatives and to coordinate efforts.

3. Key messages

The following key messages will guide the communications. Further key messages will be developed once the Working Party has made its recommendation (e.g. how the proposal addresses concerns about local democracy).

It's your future: have your say.

- Significant local government reform is coming; we need to work to ensure that any reform delivers the best possible results for the Wellington region.

Four councils have worked together to develop these models because they would deliver benefits to the Wellington region:

- Stronger regional leadership delivering stronger economic development.
- More effective local government through economies of scale and by eliminating double-ups.
- Better planning and management of infrastructure and services, especially those that cut across current local body boundaries or serve the whole region.

The recommended model(s) support local democracy.

- (Sub messages will reflect any options recommended by the Working Party).

Citizens must have the final say on the shape of their local government.

- We will support a poll on whatever proposal the Local Government Commission puts forward – whether or not it is close to what we are proposing.

4. Maori

A meeting will be held with mana whenua iwi leaders in late March. Information will be sent to them prior to the meeting. From that meeting further engagement is anticipated, including with Maori more widely, including those who are not mana whenua.

5. Stakeholders

All citizens in area covered by the draft application.

Stakeholder groups with an interest in good governance and the future of the region including:

- Chambers of Commerce (and other business groups)
- Grey Power
- Wellington region MPs
- NZTA
- Health Boards
- Emergency services, including Police
- DOC
- Youth groups / councils
- Environmental groups
- Pacifica communities
- Other ethnic and religious groups
- Other communities of interest

6. Communications and engagement: main elements

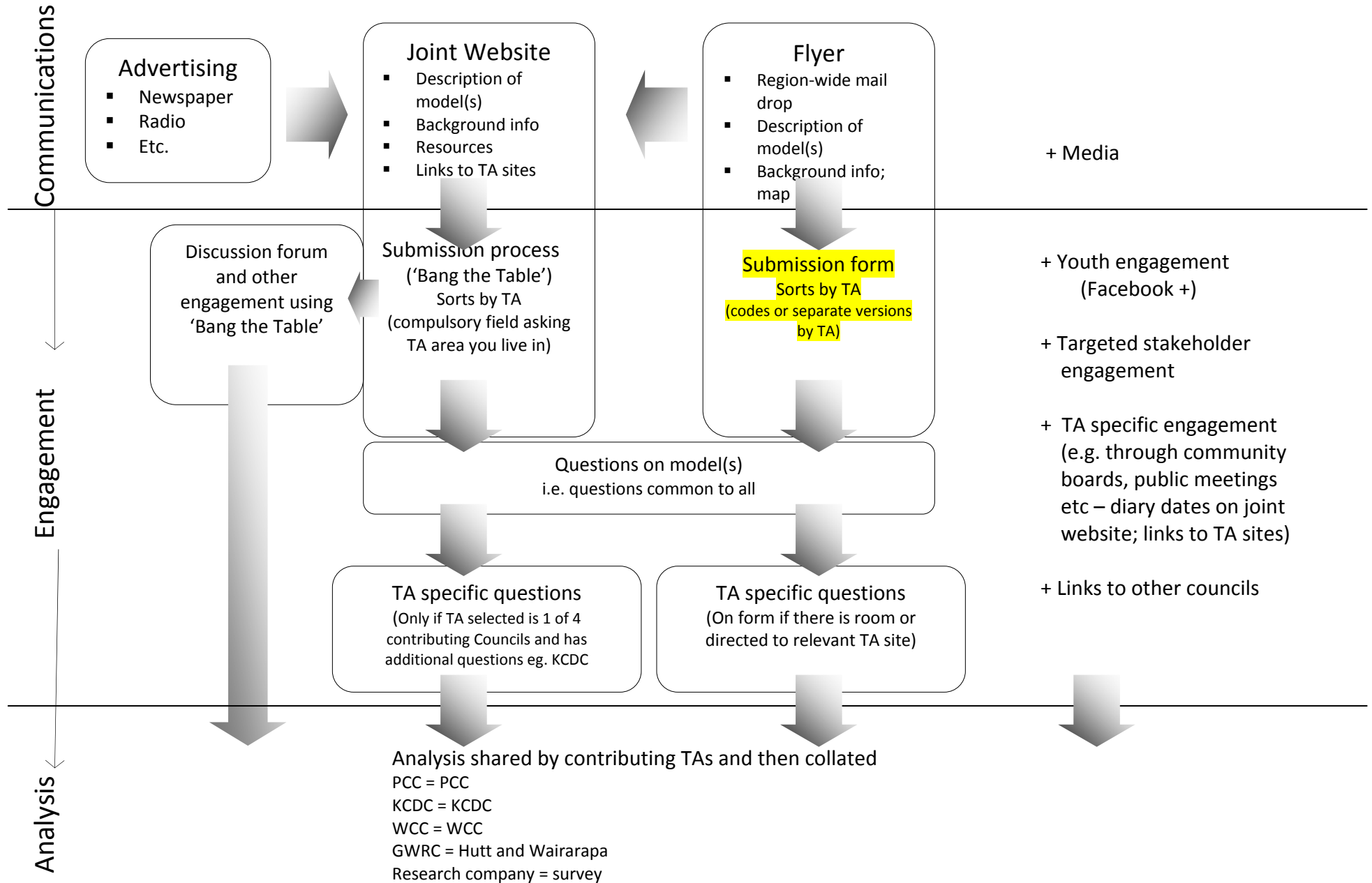
	Main features	Rationale / issues	Key dates (approx)
News media	Media release to announce Working Party's recommended models.	Proposed model(s) will become public as soon as recommendation goes to councils. The first set of council agenda papers will be available on 8 March. It is recommended that the Working Party announce its decisions on 7 March.	7 March Working Party media release + interviews.
	Reactive and proactive media handled by participating councils, but information actively shared between councils. May include advocacy of models by councillors who support the reform, including organised interviews, op eds and backgrounders targeted at local, regional and national media.	From 7 March media focus switches to the decisions of individual councils. Each council therefore has to manage its own media programme, but plans and releases will be actively shared to ensure the maximum possible level of coordination.	13 – 20 March – councils vote on whether to support the models going to public engagement
	Media Release to announce launch of website and invite public to have their say	Councils will have voted whether or not to go out to consultation. Website will be launched, inviting public to have their say on the proposed models.	21 March
Advertising – print and radio	Advertising in daily and community papers and on radio to raise awareness on the main features of the models and drive traffic to the website, which will contain more detailed information and provide opportunities to engage. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-3x full page advertisements in all daily & community papers 	Given the short timeframe to inform and seek engagement, advertising will need to be intensive and ready to begin as soon as the final council has voted. The advertising will provide basic information and will drive traffic to the website.	21 -22 March approx. – radio and print advertising launches.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40x 15 second advertisements on 4-6 local stations plus iwi stations. 		
Website / engagement with general population	<p>A jointly branded website (www.regionalreform.org.nz) will provide detailed information on the proposals and the main method of engaging on the region-wide issues relating to it/them. It will also make it easy for people to go on to engage on local issues on participating council sites (WCC, PCC, GWRC and KCDC) and inform them in general terms about options being promoted by other councils. Links will be offered on a reciprocal basis to Hutt and Wairarapa sites, while making it clear that this is in no way endorsing the content of those sites.</p> <p>Website content will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-level and detailed information on the proposal • Fact sheets on main issues (e.g. process, timetable, rationale for change). • Background information (e.g. PricewaterhouseCoopers, Panel and WCC reports; information on the Local Government Amendment Act 2012) • Invitation to engage – submission process plus moderated forum using ‘Bang the Table’ functionality (as was used by the Panel). <p>The website will provide the main opportunity for people to discuss and provide their views on the proposal and all advertising will drive traffic to the site.</p>	<p>Opportunities to understand and engage need to be as clear and as simple for people as possible, providing a single point at which region-wide issues can be addressed, while also allowing people to engage in local (TA specific) issues. The website will deal with all issues and content general to all participating councils and link to relevant pages of individual council websites, which will facilitate additional local engagement and provide local information.</p>	<p>18 March – Questions for public submission must be approved.</p> <p>21 March – joint website launches with information on the models supported by the councils for public engagement Public will be invited to have their say.</p> <p>19 April - submissions close</p>

<p>Engagement with younger people</p>	<p>Facilitated meetings with invited representatives from senior secondary school councils / senior pupils, youth councils, university and polytech student representatives.</p> <p>Advertising on Facebook and Google targeted at 15-24 y.o. Initial engagement with this group through dedicated Facebook page.</p>	<p>The reforms will determine the kind of local democracy that young people have for the whole of their adult lives, but they are difficult to engage on local government issues. This approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • targets future leaders through facilitated meetings • uses targeted advertising with the positioning ‘Are you going to let your parents decide your future?’ • uses engagement channels young people use in their everyday lives. 	<p>Facilitated meetings from early April.</p> <p>Facebook advertising and Facebook page from 21 March.</p>
<p>Engagement with specific stakeholders</p>	<p>In addition to general engagement opportunities offered through the joint and council websites, groups which have a strong interest in the future of the region will be actively approached to encourage them to comment on the proposed models. These include business groups (e.g. Chambers of Commerce), Maori, Pacifica, youth groups etc. plus groups that contributed to previous processes (Panel, WCC engagement etc.)</p>	<p>The application needs to show demonstrable support and would benefit from the input of groups that have already thought deeply about reform and / or have a strong interest in the future of the region. Such groups should be actively approached to provide feedback.</p>	<p>From 25 March</p>
<p>Public meetings , roadshows and other engagement</p>	<p>A series of public meetings will raise awareness of the proposal and its benefits. These will be fronted by mayors, chair and councillors. In participating TLA areas these and other local initiatives will be organised by the host council. In non-participating TLA areas these will be organised and advertised by GRWC.</p>	<p>Provides opportunities for face-to-face engagement and takes the proposal to areas where TAs are pursuing different models.</p>	<p>Begins 2 April approx.</p>

Social media	Existing council Facebook and Twitter accounts will be used to alert people to new information and drive traffic to the website. Dedicated Facebook page targeted at younger people (see Engagement with youth above)	Used in supporting role to provide early warning and build interest and involvement.	From 21 March
Publications / other collateral	Four page A4 publication delivered to every household in the region explaining the proposed models and inviting engagement using the included submission form or via the website. Additional distribution through council offices and council-owned drop boxes in railway stations and other public spaces.	Reinforces advertising and provides more detailed information. Directly reaches citizens in GWRC areas where TLAs support other options.	ASAP following councils' decisions to support; prior to public meetings Printing and distribution will take about 10 days after decisions

Communications and engagement process



7. Approval process

The timeline means that there will be a substantial amount of copy to approve quickly (web content; copy for newspaper, radio and online advertising; text of flyer and other collateral). We propose that this responsibility is delegated to chief executives.

8. Budget and resourcing

The following budgets exclude costs of activities by individual councils, graphic design costs (service provided by GWRC), all staff costs and, in the case of GWRC, contractor costs already committed. No allowance has been made for additional contractor costs on the basis that all four councils will contribute staff communications and engagement resources for implementation. Costs exclude GST.

No allowance has been made for the resourcing and budget required for the analysis of the written and on-line submissions. This is not a role that can be provided by Communications staff. Estimate is \$30,000 for two policy analysts, for one month.

Recommended budget

Represents the programme that, in the view of the communications representatives of the four councils, will have the best chance of meeting the objectives within the timeframe. This budget has been reduced by approximately \$35,000 from the previous draft plan by substituting advertising currently booked by contributing councils for other purposes (e.g. for regular newsletters).

	Activity / item	Estimated cost (\$)	Notes
News media		-	All media handled inhouse, including organising media conference
Advertising	1x full-page colour ad DomPost & Wairarapa TA + 2x DomPost and Wairarapa News using GWRC slots	8,000	Costs reduced by GWRC allocating its March and April 'Our Region' slots (+ contribution by WCC to be determined).
	2-3x full-page colour ads all community papers in region	21,000	Costs reduced by including council discounts and reducing from 3 to 2 placements in communities. Third placement achieved in Porirua, Kapiti and Wellington by these councils allocating 1x existing advertisement slots to project plus possible 'fill-in' advertising in communities in Hutt and Wairararapa.

	Radio advertising - 40x 15 second ads on commercial, iwi & Pacifica stations	6,000	Cost reduced by reducing frequency and number of stations with youth focus and using existing GWRC radio slots in March and April. Part of savings on youth stations invested in additional Facebook / online advertising. Youth, Maori & Pacifica focus: Mai, ZM, Atiawa Toa, Te Upuko, Nui & Samoan Capital. Older demographic (e.g. Breeze, More FM) using existing GWRC contract (GWRC will absorb additional cost)
	Facebook and Google advertising	4,000	The 15-24 y.o. Facebook audience in Wellington is 93,220. Ad targeted to this group. Click throughs go to Governance Facebook page.
	Market research on awareness of advertising / uptake of key messages	-	Using new GWRC research panel if available in time – cost met by GWRC
Website / public engagement	Build and hosting (using PCC staff and template)	5,000	PCC
	Bang the table	7,000	
	Drafting content	-	Inhouse – mostly GWRC
	Video for Facebook page	-	If required. Inhouse by GWRC.
Key stakeholder engagement	Meeting directly with key stakeholders	-	Inhouse
Youth leader engagement	Facilitated meeting with youth leaders	7,000	Allowance only. Funded from savings in Facebook and newspaper advertising.
Public meetings	Venue hire in other TLA areas	1,000	Allowance only
	Advertising public meetings	1,000	Allowance only

Social media	Tweeting & Facebook	-	Inhouse
Publications	Printing 200,000 A3 folded to A4	17,000	For distribution to whole region
	Mail drop	26,000	Unaddressed mail delivery by NZ Post to whole of region
TOTAL		\$103,000	Coms & engagement budget reduced by \$32,000, mostly by substituting councils' existing advertising slots.

9. Decisions requested

- i Agree to plan and budget and request chief executives to negotiate and agree division of budget between contributing councils.
- ii Agree to delegate sign-off of copy for research questions, advertising copy and other collateral to chief executives.