

3. Communication Plan

Introduction

Good communications is a vital tool in ensuring you and your local community hold the right debate. A communication plan should be developed at an early point in the process.

Why is a communication plan so important?

The effectiveness of your communications plays a large part in determining:

- the degree of buy-in you get from the elected members and staff
- the effectiveness of your consultation, and
- how well media and public relations aspects of the LTCCP are managed.

How does the communication plan relate to the legislation?

There is no legislative requirement for a communication plan but the following principles are all relevant:

- having regard to the views of communities
- the conduct of business in an open and transparent manner, and
- consultation.

What should be included in the communication plan?

Internal communication

The communication plan should set out:

- how staff and elected members will be kept informed of progress against the plan (including timeframes for input and decisions)
- communication methods
- how best to inform elected members in LTCCP workshops, and
- how best to present material in staff training.

The look of the LTCCP document

There should be general agreement on what the LTCCP document will look like, including:

- the 'big issues' that link through to the summary
- the timeframe to arrive at an agreed look, and
- issues such as size, structure, flow, terminology, use of visual aids.

External communication with the community

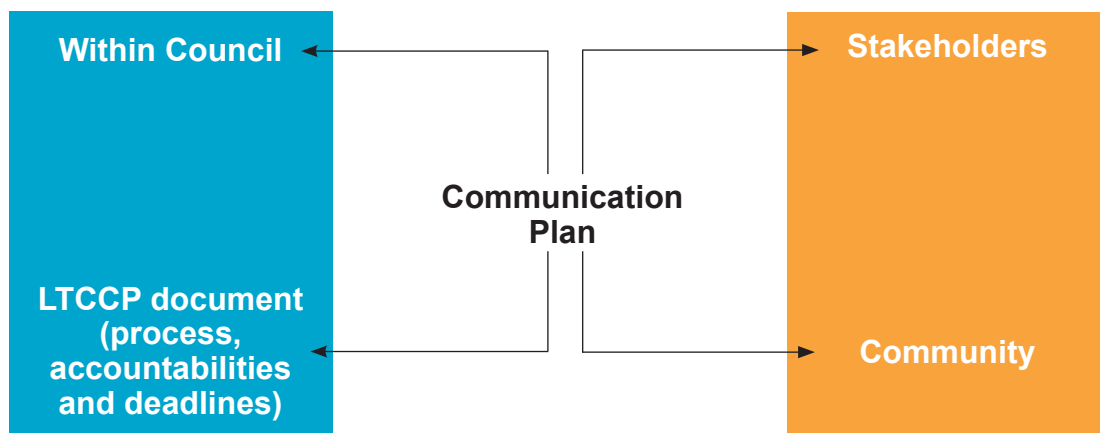
The communication plan should set out:

- which external parties need to be kept in the loop on the LTCCP development (neighbouring local authorities, business groups, ratepayer groups, Maori, media)
- when the communication is likely to occur
- what type of communication is envisaged
- identification and plans for managing communication/media risks, and
- how feedback will be given to the community.

Communications are separate from community outcomes process. It is important not to confuse communication activities with consultation activities.

Internal Focus
(Members and staff)

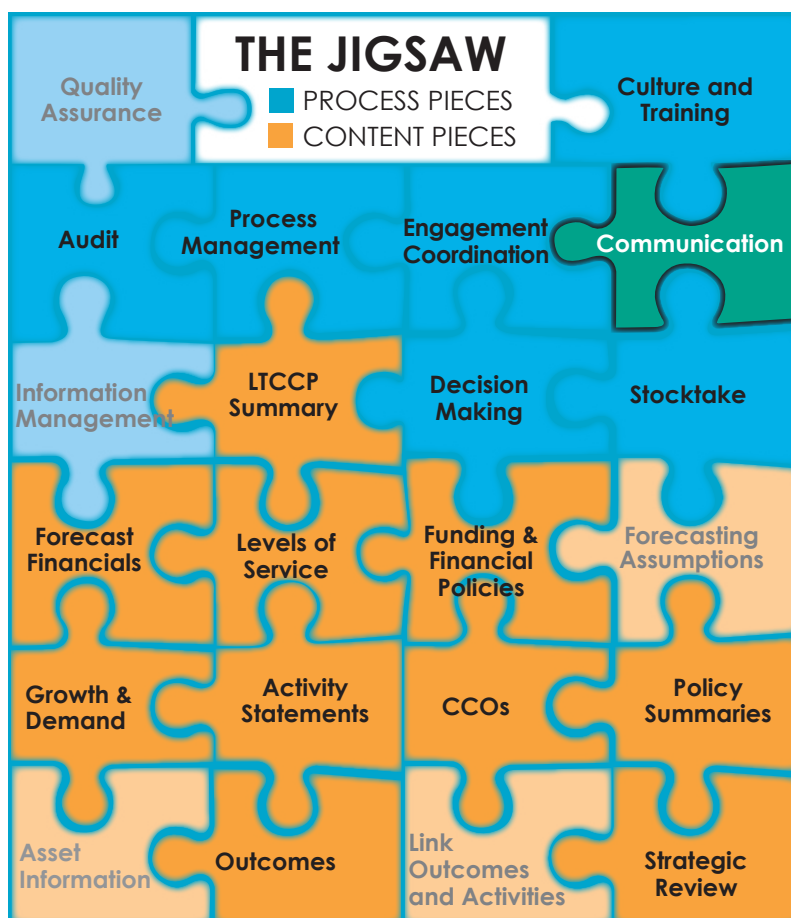
External Focus
(Community, media etc)



Who develops the communication plan?

Communications input is central to the preparation and execution of the plan. Those responsible for the communications plan should be identified at the outset.

What other processes are linked to the communication plan?



What were the communications weaknesses apparent in the 2006 LTCCPs?

Some LTCCP documents were large (in some cases 500 pages or more) and not easily understood.

Insufficient thought was applied early in the process as to how the LTCCP should look. Key issues and messages were not identified.

A focus on external communication undermined buy-in inside some local authorities.