

5. Decision-Making Processes

Introduction

The long-term planning process is, first and foremost, a decision-making process. Much of the process involves the gathering of information to inform decisions, but the LTCCP itself is a record of decisions made and a tool for communicating these to the community. Your decision-making processes most strongly reflect the second virtue – integrated decision-making.

Why are decision-making processes so important?

These processes enable decision makers to make informed decisions. To do this elected members need to have at least a general understanding of the LTCCP process and what part they are expected to play in the process.

How do decision-making processes relate to the legislation?

Decision-making takes place against the backdrop of the principles of local government contained in section 14. But the main legislative provisions relating to decision-making are in sections 76 to 81 of the Act. These include:

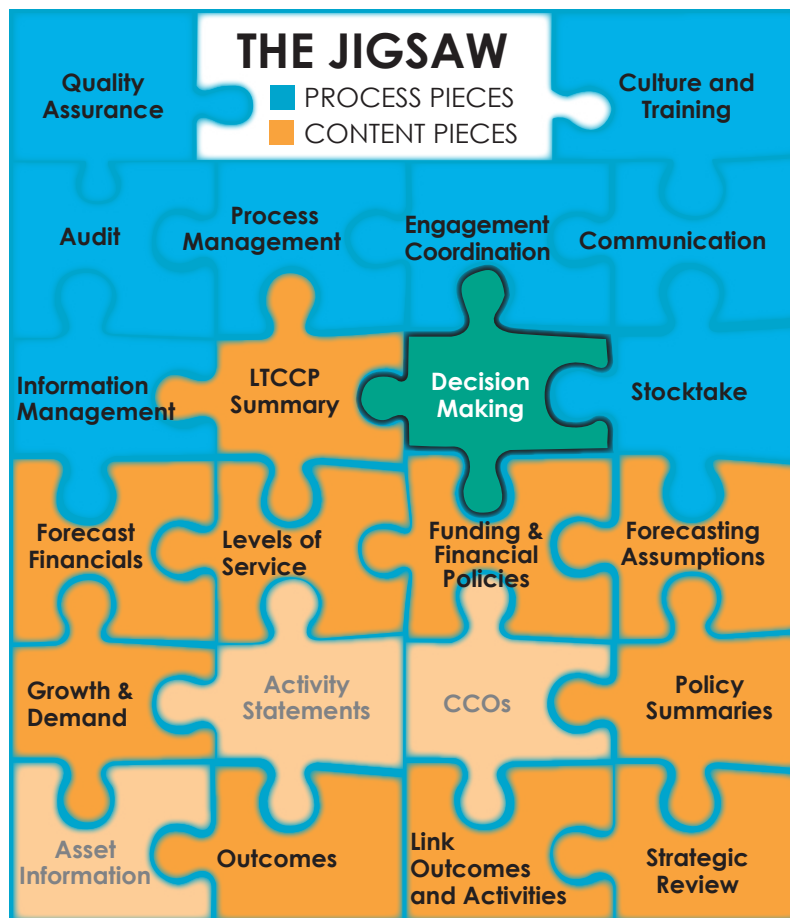
- the information and analysis to support the process (section 77)
- points in the process at which community views should be sought (section 78)
- obligations when decisions are inconsistent with existing plans and policies (section 80)
- obligations to encourage Maori to contribute to the process (section 81), and
- a provision that enables local authorities to scale their processes to the available resources and the circumstances in which the decision is taken (section 79).

What's involved in the decision-making process?

A plan and timeline needs to be developed to ensure that decision makers are given the best possible information at the right time, so that they can make an informed decision. This includes:

- what do we need to decide on?
- what decisions have already been made?
- what are the optimal points for decisions?
- what level of detail is provided?
- what's the best way for the decision makers to see 'the forest, not the trees'?

What other processes are linked to decision-making processes?



What were the weaknesses with decision-making processes in 2006?

Varied practice in the involvement of elected members.

Late starting meant some decision-making processes were squeezed.

What good practice information is available?

Local Government New Zealand et al, (2003). *The Knowhow Guide to Decision-Making*.

NAMS (2005). *Optimised Decision-Making*, contains useful discussion and tools for trading off levels of service and cost.

Office of the Auditor-General (2006). *Local Government Results of the 2004/5 Audits*, This report sets out some of the key issues and risks with the decision-making process that were identified in the 2005 key controls review and self assessment process.

Office of the Auditor-General (2007). *Turning Principles into Action: Decision-Making and Consultation Under the Local Government Act 2002*.