



Q&A for Peter McKinlay

	Question	Answer
1	How would you propose that the information that local government collects about their communities, has the same or better visibility as central government information? And what will be the role of communities - not councils - in collecting and disseminating that information?	Question unclear, could questioner please contact me directly
2	Your comments seem to be missing regional and local government - moving directly between central government and local place based communities.	Question unclear, could questioner please contact me directly
3	How can communities take responsibility if they don't have the resources (access to money, expertise, etc.)?	Part of the role of a council should be enabling empowered communities. This includes ensuring reasonable access to money, expertise et cetera. Remember, councils only have money because they've taken it from their communities in the first place. Portland Oregon provides a good example of a council which developed a policy for supporting resilient neighbourhoods which included provision for funding access to expertise et cetera for self identifying communities.
4	Do 'wellbeing councils' emerge from elected representative impetus, or from senior leadership? Or a mix of both?	Both and then more. First, the immediate challenge is changing the culture within councils so that they understand and respect the skills and knowledge within communities and also recognise that working with communities is in fact an investment not a cost. It does also need to be driven by community understandings of what is possible. One of the things which holds back the development of well-being councils, genuine community engagement et cetera in New Zealand is a lack of awareness of practice elsewhere. Another is the general lack of regard will have for local government. If you don't think you councils up to much, then you're not likely to turn to it as a leader in effecting change.
5	I'm concerned that the transformational change that society is facing - particularly related to climate change - will not be able to be managed by councils in their current form. And I doubt that they will be able to transform themselves quickly enough, thus becoming irrelevant. What are your thoughts on this?	There is a question of whether it's current form, current culture or the way the role of councils is perceived by key stakeholders. Central government over a number of years has done a great deal to suppress the proper role of local government, typically forcing councils back to acting more like local infrastructure companies than entities of local governance whenever councils look as though they wish to break out. That's often been supported by the business community which wants to see a primary focus on infrastructure and effective, efficient and low cost land use planning and management including consenting. From my perspective the immediate and needed change is for



		communities including the business sector, NGOs, iwi and others to understand the critical importance for initiatives such as climate change of building local governance capability and the best place to start is with the council
6	What is your understanding of the role of mana whenua in identifying the “communities” to which you refer	That’s primarily a matter for mana whenua to determine. The immediate and obvious challenge is the recognition of communities of place. Does this mean that mana whenua should be recognised for certain purposes acknowledging their traditional role within their rohe and if so what purposes but with the general community also being seen as having a separate voice in respect of place shaping? I suspect we are still only at the beginning of this debate
7	Thanks Peter. Stronger community engagement for a wellbeing council sounds great. But how to stop it being a case of only the loudest voices being heard? Or only those with leisure time and privilege to indulge having influence? Stop the nimbys always getting their way? Seems the real challenge is HOW you facilitate that conversation so it is geared towards being constructive, fair and open minded	Good point Chris. It needs to be an ongoing focus both of communities themselves, and of those who support communities including councils. Where this is well done there will typically be a very strong focus on ensuring that the voices seldom heard are actually included. It’s partly a question of structure, making sure that communities themselves are open in the sense of whatever structures (I typically use the term soft infrastructure) are involved are inclusive and it’s partly a commitment by councils, community groups and others.
8	Hi, what is one thing you suggest can be done to move councils from being and Administrative one to a Well-being one.	Central government genuinely, and not just as a matter of formality, embracing local government as a partner in enabling community well-being. This should include recognising that councils have a pivotal role to play in supporting communities in this determining their preferred futures and for the councils then acting amongst other things as advocate/intermediary especially in terms of service design and prioritising.
9	Many councils are facing financial challenges to varying degrees, some seen to be following the old adage ‘never waste a good crisis’ and making even more cuts/changes than are arguably needed. I think the important thing is to try and check out the veracity of the claims re their funding situation, but how do you see this fitting with the wellbeing optimisation that you speak of?	Councils have an insufficient understanding of the full range of financial powers and discretions they have. Properly understood these powers would enable councils both to maintain expenditure and mitigate the impact on ratepayers at the same time. Again this goes back to a question of culture. It’s not so much following the old adage, as following a business as usual approach despite the fact that we are facing greater change that has been demanded for many decades.
10	NZ Councils already have a public health role, in alcohol licensing but communities voice is barely heard. Can you suggest how the community might be better helped in this regard?	The problem with alcohol licensing is the legislation. It’s very difficult for councils as licensing authorities to consider community concerns. Over to central government to sort it





11	Totally agree with Peter's description of the understanding about community responsiveness, and with the suggestion of a well-being council.	Thank you
12	Who does Peter think should lead this Council approach? - my experience is that many Councillors don't long term community engagement while Council Officers are often very control focussed, risk averse and have limited experience of community development.	There are number of different and rather complex elements at play here. First, the current model for council governance is extraordinarily out of date with the practical consequence in many councils that is extremely hard for elected members to act as a governing body and set a new direction, especially if that direction is at odds with business as usual. Next, the emphasis over a number of years from central government, and from the business community, has been on councils acting as though they were local infrastructure companies with little value placed on their role in community governance. It is not helped by a generally low regard for the capability of local government, an attitude which has some basis in reality but also reflects deeply entrenched prejudices. It's worth having a look at the recent productivity commission report Local Government Insights
13	Have you seen an example in NZ where drawing on rich experience from around the globe AND find the answers already within local communities have worked beautifully together?	There is very little use made of overseas experience. The best examples of councils working well with the communities in New Zealand are found with smaller usually rural provincial councils where there is already a strong sense of community identity and almost everybody knows everybody else so engagement is much less a matter of carefully assessing what approaches will work best and much more one of natural human interaction because you keep bumping into each other. Worth having a look at Central Hawke's Bay district Council's THRIVE initiative.

